

A Historical and Conceptual Analysis of the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS), 1997 – 2009.

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DECLARATION

I, Olusegun Nelson Morakinyo, declare that ‘A Historical and Conceptual Analysis of the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS) 1997 – 2009’ is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Olusegun Morakinyo

10 November 2011



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To undertake a critical reflection of an on-going academic programme that both the author and the supervisors are active participants as academic coordinator and conveners respectively, it is necessary to have good relationship with and support from all participants. I am fortunate to have both Professor Ciraj Rassool and Professor Leslie Witz, in practice the co-conveners of the APMHS since its inception in 1998, as my supervisors for this work.

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Abstract

In 1998 the University of the Western Cape together with the University of Cape Town, and the Robben Island Museum introduced a Post-graduate Diploma in Museum and Heritage Studies. This programme was innovative in that not only did it bring together two universities in a programme where the inequalities of resources derived from their apartheid legacies was recognised, but it also formally incorporated an institution of public culture that was seeking to make a substantial imprint in the post-apartheid heritage sphere as part of its structure. In 2003 this programme attracted substantial funding from the Rockefeller Foundation and was rebranded as the African Program in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS). While this rebranding of the programme might seem to be innocently unproblematic and commendable as part of the effort at re-insertion of South Africa into Africa after the isolation of apartheid, an analysis of the concepts employed in the rebranding raises serious theoretical, conceptual, and disciplinary questions for heritage studies as an academic discipline and for its connections with other fields, especially the interdisciplinary study of Africa. What are the implications of a programme that brings together the concepts of ‘African-Heritage-Studies’? Does the rebranding signify a major epistemological positioning in the study of Africa or has it chosen to ignore debates on the problematic of the conjunction of the concepts? This study address these issues through a historical and philosophical analysis of the programme, exploring how it was developed both in relation to ideas of heritage and heritage studies in Africa and, most importantly by re-locating it in debates on the changing meaning of ‘Africa’ in African studies.

Keywords

‘African’, Heritage, Philosophy, Epistemology, Afrocentricity, African Philosophy, African heritage, African studies, Museums, ‘Africanist turn’.



List of Abbreviations

APMHS	African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies
ACTAG	Arts and Culture Task Group
AFRICOM	International Council of African Museums
AWHF	African World Heritage Fund
CHR	Centre for Humanities Research, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
UWC	University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa
UCT	University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa
RIM	Robben Island Museum
UNESCO	United Nations Education and Scientific Organization
IHR	Institute for Historical Research (CHR)
ICOM	International Council of Museums
ICOMOS	International Council for Monuments and Sites
ICTOP	International Committee for Training of Personnel
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

PREMA	Prevention in Museums in Africa
WAMP	West African Museum Programme
EPA	Ecole de Patrimoine African
PDMA	Programme for Heritage Development in Africa
CHDA	Centre for Heritage Development in Africa, Mombasa, Kenya
SAMA	South African Museum Association
DACST	Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology
IDAF	International Defence and Aid Fund
WHC	World Heritage Convention
RITP:	Robben Island Training Programme
CHEC	Cape Higher Education Consortium
FESTAC	African Festival for Arts and Culture
ASA	African Studies Association
AHSA	African Heritage Studies Association
CAS	Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, South Africa.
IAI	The International African Institute founded in 1926 in London as the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures.
NUB	National University of Benin

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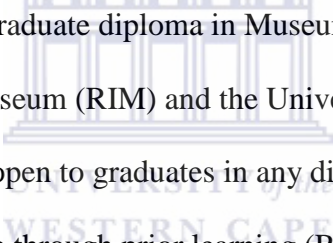


Introduction

Those who have chosen to regard 'Heritage' as an inferior domain have not understood the changed nature of their field.¹

Oh dear, dear, dear
Here we go again
A lecture on the African past,
Our great African Heritage
In one second, we will hear all about the great Ashanti Heritage, the great Songhay civilization, and the great sculpture of Benin, some poetry in Bantu ..., and the whole monologue will end with the word heritage!²

African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS)



The APMHS is a nine-month postgraduate diploma in Museum and Heritage Studies, jointly convened by the Robben Island Museum (RIM) and the University of the Western Cape (UWC), in Cape Town, South Africa.³ It is open to graduates in any discipline and those who can demonstrate commensurate aptitude through prior learning (RPL). As a rule, students are recruited from different African countries. The structure of the curriculum includes both UWC courses and courses offered by the RIM. A compulsory core course entitled 'Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies' offered by the UWC, which includes as a component an internship at a heritage institution, is the heart of the programme. Electives offered on the programme have included: 'Public History and Tourism'; 'Curatorship'; 'The Politics and Ethics of Collecting'; 'Visual History of Anthropology'. Some electives offered by RIM include: 'Oral History Research'; 'Collections Management'; 'Researching and Interpreting Heritage Resources';

¹ C. Rassool, 'The Rise of Heritage and the Reconstitution of History in South Africa', *Kronos*, No. 26, (August 2000), 23.

² L. Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*, (New York: Vintage, 1994), 56-57.

³ The programme had since 2010 incorporated a full Masters degree in Museum and Heritage Studies.

‘Communicating with the Public’; and ‘Management in Heritage Institutions and Agencies’.

Students participate in weekly seminars and attend symposiums and workshops during the programme, which culminate in a key colloquium at the end of the year.

The APMHS has two convenors, an academic coordinator and an administrator. The convenors are professors of the UWC History Department who have taught the core course consistently since the start of the programme. The RIM appointed an academic coordinator, currently based in the History Department, who assists in the teaching of the core course, coordinates, and teaches some of the RIM electives, with RIM staff and contracted heritage professionals at the UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye Archives. The programme’s administrative office is currently at the Centre for Humanities Research (CHR), UWC. Funding for the programme has come from both international and local donors.



The APMHS builds on a programme started in 1998 when UWC, together with the University of Cape Town (UCT) and the RIM, convened a postgraduate diploma programme in Museum and Heritage. This programme was innovative in that not only did it bring together two universities but also formally incorporated the Robben Island Museum, the first declared national heritage institution of post-apartheid democratic South Africa, an institution of public culture that was seeking to make a substantial imprint in the post-apartheid heritage transformation sphere as part of ‘museumness’. In 2003, this programme attracted substantial funding from the Rockefeller Foundation and was rebranded the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS).⁴

⁴ According to Leslie Witz in an Obituary to Ivan Karp, ‘it was through the Institutions of Public Culture programme and Ivan’s interventions, that the Postgraduate Diploma in Museum and Heritage Studies was sustained

This rebranding of the programme might be seen as innocent and commendable as part of the geo-political re-insertion of South Africa into the rest of Africa after the isolation by apartheid; or cynically, as yet another example of South African expansionism on the continent.

Nonetheless, a deeper analysis of the branding of the programme as 'African' raises serious conceptual and disciplinary questions. This is because the conjunction of the concepts 'African' and 'Heritage' not only raises questions on the configuration of museum and heritage studies as an academic discipline in the interdisciplinary study of Africa in the humanities, but also on the debates of the changing meanings of 'African' in relation to heritage studies in African studies.

The branding of academic institutions and disciplines as 'African' betrays an enduring preoccupation of post-independence scholarship in Africa, especially in the humanities, where the aspirations and search for distinctively 'African' features that would distinguish its literature, arts, history, and generally its paradigm of knowledge production, continue to be serious concerns. Given the implicit ideological and political character of the notions of 'African',⁵ these concerns radically challenge and rupture the very idea of the disciplines in the Western tradition.⁶

and developed into the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS), ... Ivan was instrumental in securing funding for the APMHS in the form a substantial grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Drawing upon museum professional from across the continent the APMHS has trained a cohort of practitioners who are no mere technicians but are engaged in questioning and changing museum and heritage practice in Africa. This is precisely the type of critical heritage practitioner that Ivan consistently sought to promote.' The obituary has been written by Professor Leslie Witz, AFRICOM, www.africom-1@list.africom.museum accessed 23/09/2011

⁵ See J. O'Barr , V.Y Mudimbe & co. (eds.), *African and the Disciplines*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993). See also the UCT African Studies current closure controversy 2011 and the 'Location African' Seminar series in Stellenbosch University and Rhodes University 'Thinking African' series 2011 for examples of the ongoing debates on the meaning of African in scholarship in Africa.

⁶ See L. T. Outlaw (Jr), 'African 'Philosophy'': Deconstructive and Reconstructive Challenges' in G. Floistad, *Contemporary Philosophy: A New Survey*, vol. 5, *African Philosophy*, (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987).

Paulin Hountondji asked, 'How African is African Studies given that the study of Africa developed as part of an overall project of knowledge accumulation initiated and controlled by the West',⁷ and suggested the Africanness of the scholar as the criterion for Africanity of scholarship. According to him, 'The Africanity of our philosophy will not necessarily reside in themes but will depend above all on the geographic origin of those who produce it.'⁸ This criterion suggested by Hountondji raises serious questions concerning what 'African' designates beyond its geographical designation when applied to things, people, and a way of being, and especially in a programme of disciplined study of museum and heritage studies in South Africa. As pointed out by Lucius Outlaw, it takes only a few probing questions to uncover that Hountondji uses 'African' as a 'signifier not just for geographical origins, but also for race/ethnicity'.⁹

As revealed in the history of the rebranding of the programme as 'African' in 2003, the impetus for branding the programme 'African' was funding provided by the Rockefeller foundation to the programme for the specific purpose of recruiting students from other African countries, as part of a general project to develop the heritage sector in Africa. This branding of the programme 'African', based on inclusion of students from other countries in Africa as dictated by donor funding conditions, is crucial in understanding the concern with clarification of the notion of 'African' in the APMHS.

A critical concern of this study is how the APMHS projected and represented a notion of 'African' from a post-apartheid perspective of African history in its curriculum,

⁷ P. Hountondji, 'Knowledge of Africa, Knowledge by African: Two perspectives on African Studies', *RCCS Annual Review*, 80, March 2008.

⁸ P. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth & Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 53.

⁹ Outlaw (Jr), 'African Philosophy: Deconstructive and Reconstructive Challenges', 34.

based on its intellectual history and the sociology of knowledge, but found the notion of 'African' it aims to project mediated by a geo-political developmental notion of 'African' through funding imperatives. In view of problems with Hountondji's notion of 'African' in African philosophy, implied in the inclusion of students from other African countries as constructive of its branding as 'African', the question of what the 'African' affixed to the programme designates beyond the African countries nationality of participants and geographical location of the programme becomes necessary. This question is even more pertinent given the continuing debate on the notion of 'African' in South Africa defined in ethnic terms in the context of heritage transformation post-1994.¹⁰ In South African official demographic non-racial politics, 'African' denotes ethnic groups like Zulu, Tswana, Pedi, Sotho or Xhosa, as reflected in the classification of 'Black' as consisting of 'African, Indian and Coloured people',¹¹ while in public discourse 'African' denotes citizens and African countries beyond South African geographic borders. However, interestingly, in the Afrikaans language the designation 'Afrikaner' referred to Dutch and other European migrants who settled in South Africa and denied rights to ethnic Africans derogatorily referred to as Bantu. Thabo Mbeki's 'I

¹⁰On the concept of heritage in South Africa pre-1994, see for instance Peter Merrington's argument that 'Our most common current usage of the term, to signify the management of common public cultural assets or the 'national estate', is marshalled towards a democratic and inclusive understanding of these assets, and the recuperation of lost indigenous patrimony, memory and value. The South African National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 states in its preamble that 'our heritage... contributes to redressing past inequities [and]... facilitates healing and material and symbolic restitution and it promotes new and previously neglected research into our rich oral traditions and customs'. Some reconstruction of what was meant by the idea of heritage a century ago. - (At a time when, it argued, this concept enjoyed an unprecedented range and depth of meaning) - both indicates the original initiatives in Britain and in South Africa for the establishment of national heritage preservation, and offers a prism for understanding colonialist social values at the time. This reconstruction also raises some rather awkward implications for our continued usage of the term.' - P. Merrington, 'Cape Dutch Tongaat: A Case Study in 'Heritage'', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4, Heritage in Southern Africa (Dec., 2006), 683-699.

¹¹ Nelson Mandela Speech at the formal opening of Robben Island Museum, Heritage Day, 24th September, 1997

am an African'¹² speech shows the extent of debates on the notions and meanings of 'African' in South Africa, especially given its appropriation by the Afrikaners and its ruling party, which calls itself the 'African National Congress' to reflect its African Nationalist ideology.¹³

Problems of the different racial, representational, geographical and historical complementary and contending configurations of notions of 'African' have been noted, for instance by Zeleza,¹⁴ and Ali Mazrui has problematised the notion of African in racial, continental terms and in terms of geo-political power relations.¹⁵ The critical question is whether the 'African' affixed to the programme in Museum and Heritage Studies implies simply the continental geographical location of the programme in Africa and the nationalities of the participants. Both of these are problematic given Mazrui's argument on the problems of arbitrariness of African external boundaries.¹⁶ More importantly, how does it how it engage the notions of 'African' in Anthony Appiah's Cosmopolitanism¹⁷ or Achilles Mbembe's Afropolitan notion of African?¹⁸

¹² Thabo Mbeki, 'I am an African' Speech, Statement of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, on behalf of the African National Congress, on the occasion of the adoption by the Constitution Assembly of the 'Republic of South Africa Constitutional bill 1996', Cape Town, 8 May 1996. http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/1996/960819_23196.htm accessed 20/10/2010

¹³ The question here is does the 'African' in the African National Congress represent African Nationalism and a Pan-Africanist notion of African; or all domiciled in Africa or all that identify as African or is it restricted to South African ethnic population, such as Zulu, Tswana, Xhosa, given its racist apartheid history and the anti-apartheid struggle and the process of Africanization as a measure of transformation.

¹⁴ P.T. Zeleza, 'The Inventions of African Identities and Languages: The Discursive and Developmental Implications', *Selected Proceedings of the 36th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, ed. O. F. Arasanyin and M. A. Pemberton, (Sommerville, MA: Caseadilla, Proceeding Project, 2006), 14-26.

¹⁵ A. Mazrui, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, (London: BBC Publications, 1986), 27.

¹⁶ Mazrui, *The Africans*, 28.

¹⁷ See A. Appiah, *In my Father's House: Africa and the Philosophy of Culture*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1993) and *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, (London: Penguin Books 2006).

¹⁸ See A. Mbembe, *On Postcolony*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

Alternatively, how does it fit Molefi Asante's ideological Afrocentric notion of 'African'¹⁹ and Tsenay Serequeberhan's hermeneutical notion of 'African' as a knowledge construct defined by consciousness of an ethics of justice?²⁰ In the context of this study, does the rebranding of the programme as 'African' signify the 'reconstruction of African History and Cultural Studies along Afrocentric lines' as articulated in John Henrik Clark's argument of the notion of heritage studies in African Studies as marking an ideological epistemological positioning in the study of Africa?²¹

There had been various evaluations²² and reflections on the programme, notably by Leslie Witz & Carohn Cornell, Ciraj Rassool, and Witz and Rassool.²³ However, there is to date no concise analysis of its intellectual history, its disciplinary demarcations or the epistemology of its pedagogy or, crucially, an interrogation and articulation of the notion of 'African' and the approach to heritage studies it espouses. The Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies has been running since 1998 and as an 'African' programme since 2003. The assumption of this study is that even if the programme did not articulate a clear epistemological foundation, pedagogical orientation and disciplinary demarcation of its notion of African and its approach to heritage studies at its inception, its existence for the last twelve years has obviously given it

¹⁹ See M. Asante *The Afrocentric Idea*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

²⁰ See T. Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse*, (London: Routledge, 1994).

²¹ J. H. Clarke, 'The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA): Some notes on the conflict with the African Studies Association (ASA) and the fight to reclaim African history': *Issue: A Journal of Africanist Opinion*, Vol. 6, no. 2-3 (Summer/Fall 1975), 7.

²² See for instance E. Finnegan, 'The African Postgraduate Diploma Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies: at the Confluence of Critical Theory, Public History and Socio-Political Transformation in South Africa', September 2006 (Robben Island Museum, Education Department, Academic Committee meeting brief, 30-31 October 2006)

²³ See L. Witz and C. Cornell – 'From Robben Island to Makapan's cave: Transforming Museum and Heritage Studies in South Africa' – Paper presented at the World Archaeological Congress, Cape Town, (10-14 January 1999), Rassool, 'The Rise of Heritage', C. Rassool and L. Witz, 'Transforming Heritage education in South Africa: A Partnership between the Academy and the Museum', SAMP 2001: Strengthening the Network: A meeting of African Museums of the Swedish African Museum Programme, (22-27 August 1999)

specific defining features. These features, which increasingly are crystallising and demarcating it as a distinct disciplinary field of knowledge production of Museum and Heritage in Africa, are what this dissertation engages.

The notion of African projected in the APMHS begins to emerge in a reflection on the first year of the core course of the programme prior to its rebranding as 'African' in 2003, by Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz, both convenors of the programme from its inception. They argued that although

There are clear examples for the course to draw on from South Africa, a country in which heritage is booming, where national heritage projects abound, where new areas, such as intangible heritage and 'amasiko' are emerging buzz-words, and where national parks are attempting to 'add people to the big five', as part of their transformation. However, the course also draws on other African case-studies, ranging from debates about slave heritage at Goree Island, the creation of national identity in Malawi and the neglect of Swahili heritage in Kenya. There is clear room for development here, as the programme attracts an increasing number of students from other African countries.²⁴

It might seem, by its emphasis on participation by other African countries and on 'African case studies' from Ghana, Kenya and Malawi, that the APMHS began projecting a notion of 'African' that is Sub-Saharan, with all its colonial anthropological baggage. However, I intend to argue, through a critical historical and conceptual analysis of its curriculum contents, pedagogical methodologies and sociology of knowledge, that the APMHS projects an epistemic, unarticulated notion of 'African' that unsettles essentialized assumptions of notions of 'African' in museum and heritage studies. The potential paradigmatic shift this epistemic, unarticulated notion of 'African' as an approach to heritage studies represents in the study of Africa in the

²⁴ C. Rassool and L. Witz, 'Transforming Heritage education in South Africa: A Partnership between the Academy and the Museum', SAMP 2001: Strengthening the Network: A meeting of African Museums of the Swedish African Museum Programme, (22-27 August 1999).

humanities demands careful investigation and attention, which is the focus of this study. This is because understanding how the notion of ‘African’ as an epistemic positioning unfolds in a critical analysis of the core course of the programme allows a new direction in the conceptualisation of notions of ‘African’ in museum and heritage studies that escapes simple essentialized categories such as race, geography and ethnicity.

Engagement with the enduring problem of the changing meanings of ‘African’ through the interrogation of the APMHS as competing ‘criteria on how to attain truth about African and express it in scientifically credible discourses’²⁵ is undeniably an epistemological, historical and pedagogical undertaking, which is at the core of this study. This study is thus concerned with the construction of the meaning of ‘African’ and how this meaning is articulated in a specialised academic discipline, specifically in the emergent field of the study of Africa designated the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies.²⁶ Hence, the orientation of this study is philosophical. It aims to explore the history of the epistemological criteria to attain the truth about Africa projected in the APMHS. At the same time, it is historical; it traces the histories of the sociology of knowledge, the methodology the APMHS adopted through its curriculum to ‘express ‘this truth’ in scientifically credible discourses’.²⁷ The methodology employed in this task is a critical analysis of selected prescribed readings of the core course of the programme, focusing on their theoretical conceptual implications and limits.

A crucial concern in engaging these problems therefore, is the epistemological and pedagogical implications of an academic programme that brings together the concepts of ‘African’ and

²⁵ V. Y Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*, (Oxford: James Curry, 1994), 39.

²⁶ Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*, 39.

²⁷ Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*, 39.

‘Heritage studies’ in post-apartheid South Africa. This concern with the implications of the conjunction of the contentious notions of ‘African’²⁸ and the dissonant meanings of heritage,²⁹ in a programme of museum and heritage studies in a post-colonial, post-apartheid interdisciplinary study of Africa, offers an opportunity for an incisive and critically self-reflective analysis of the intellectual history, sociology of knowledge, and epistemological positioning of the APMHS.

Methodologically my position as the Academic Coordinator of the APMHS during the duration of this dissertation and been supervised by the conveners of the programme since its inception makes this study a critical, reflective exercise. Apart from direct access to primary sources, knowledge of the intricate pedagogical and administrative operations of the programme, and collegial acquaintance with the conveners who are also the supervisors for this study, being an active participant in the programme during this study provided in-depth insight that is arguably impossible to capture from a distance. My active direct engagement with the object of study as the RIM-appointed Academic coordinator of the programme and with the conveners of the programme as supervisors of the dissertation has the potential risk of a lack of adequate critical distance that is necessary for objectivity in research. However, as shown in the thesis, the impetus for the study is a concern with the conceptual clarification of the meaning of ‘African’ affixed to the programme in Museum and Heritage Studies, and limitations of its public history approach to heritage studies as both critical and ‘African’, as theorised by both conveners.

Significantly, while the conveners of the programme maintained a theoretical distance to Chiekh

²⁸ There are extensive debate on the name African or African to designate people, historical, phenomenon of a section of humanity, given the genealogy of the name in the context of self-identification – see Ahotep – Soyinka – Chinweizu Abiririman theory.

²⁹ Report of the Arts and Culture Task Group, presented to the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Pretoria, June 1995 - ACTAG is a task force created by the South African Minister of Arts and Culture to advice on policies for heritage transformation from its apartheid legacy to one that reflects the new democratic ‘Rainbow nation’.

Anta Diop's works in African Heritage Studies, given the scientificity and racial essentialism contained in Diop's theses, this dissertation attempts advancing a thesis for the relevance and indispensability of consideration of Diop's theses in the field of African museum and heritage studies.

More importantly, while an evaluation of the programme in terms of its achievements and merits compared to similar programme of museum and heritage studies on the continent is a worthwhile endeavour, this has been done elsewhere.³⁰ Therefore, this study is not an evaluation of the APMHS. It attempts neither to measure the educational impact and dimensions neither of the programme nor to do an ethnographic study of the programme. It does not engage with a detailed analysis of the pedagogical methods, operations or outputs of the programme like class participation; neither does it analyse student essays, internship journals or assessment grades and impacts of alumni of the programme in the sector, nor conduct direct oral interviews with past or present participants involved in the programme.

This work is a philosophical inquiry into the notions of 'African' in a programme of museum and heritage studies. This study engages with these issues through a critical, intellectual, historical analysis of the APMHS. This entails exploring how it was developed both in relation to ideas of Africa and Museum and Heritage studies in Africa, and most importantly, in locating it in the wider debates of the changing meanings of 'African' in knowledge production in the humanities while asking some critical questions about its conceptual implications and limits.

³⁰ See for instance E. Finnegan, 'The African Postgraduate Diploma Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies: at the Confluence of Critical Theory, Public History and Socio-Political Transformation in South Africa', September 2006 (Robben Island Museum, Education Department, Academic Committee meeting brief, 30-31 October 2006).

In addressing the question of what the 'African' in the APMHS designates, beyond its geographic location and the demographic composition of its participants, I explore what is distinctive about its approach to museum and heritage studies in Africa. I attempt to look at the history of existing programmes of museum and heritage studies in Africa as a background to locate the APMHS in the wider initiatives of museum and heritage studies on the continent. Through showing how the colonial pedigree of museum and heritage studies in Africa dictated their pedagogical focus on acquisition of technical conservation skills, with neither engagement with the meanings nor the ideological purpose of heritage studies in Africa, nor the geo-cultural-political implication of the universalized idea of heritage. I argue that heritage studies on the continent is at best a first order level of heritage studies, which the approach to heritage studies in the APMHS challenges by its pedagogical configuration. This criticism of the emphasis on the acquisition of conservation technical skills with the objective of 'adding-on' heritage in Africa to the UNESCO World Heritage list, as the objective of museum and heritage studies, is shown to be the critical point of departure for the diploma programme in museum and heritage studies, which evolved into the APMHS in 2003. These are the concerns of the first chapter of this study.

The second chapter is an historical construction of the origin and development of the APMHS. The chapter locates the origin of the APMHS in the sociology of knowledge of how RIM evolved through collaboration between different entities of the UWC, notably the Mayibuye Centre, which became the UWC-Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, the Institute for Historical Research, which became the Centre for Humanities Research, and the Public History research in the History Department at UWC. This chapter argues that the RIM/UWC collaboration in the APMHS constituted praxis of Public History and argues for a better appreciation of the APMHS

as an innovative public intellectual achievement, because of the theoretical potential it opened for new trajectories in the study of Africa.

While Chapters One and Two dealt with an historical analysis of the APMHS, Chapter Three begins the conceptual analysis of the programme by locating the APMHS in the wider debate of the study of Africa, especially in African studies. This chapter analyses the notion of African, as it relates to approaches to museum and heritage studies encapsulated and projected in the APMHS, in relation to the notion of 'African' in African studies. These issues are engaged within the broader debate of the meaning of 'African' in heritage studies and of the disciplinary space of heritage studies in postcolonial African studies. This chapter explores the challenge heritage studies represent to African Studies as an approach to the study of Africa. A critical concern that underlies this chapter relates to the cultural politics of knowledge production in the context of questions of privilege to epistemological perspective of African heritage studies by Africans and arguments for African heritage studies as a methodological inquiry that adheres to a set disciplinary paradigm.

Chapter Four furthers the conceptual analysis of the programme by exploring how the unarticulated, epistemic notion of 'African' unfolds in the core course curriculum of the programme to challenge dominant notions of 'African' in museum and heritage studies in Africa. The focus of this chapter is to understand how the notion of 'African' in the APMHS escapes the paradox of geography, ethnicity and race and challenges the notions of 'African' in heritage studies as pre-modern, traditional, ethnic, black and domiciled in sub-Saharan Africa or defined by the experience of slavery. Leaving the debate of what constitutes an epistemic notion of

‘African’ in the APMHS open-ended, the next, Chapter explores notions of heritage and the approach to heritage studies dictated by the notions of heritage encapsulated in the APMHS. It reveals how the different notions and practice of heritage informs different approaches to heritage studies. Through engagement with the different notions of heritage in selected readings of the core course, this chapter interrogates the conceptual limits of the approach to heritage studies as public historical production projected in the curriculum of the APMHS. In an analysis of the underlying theoretical assumptions that informed the APMHS approach to museum and heritage studies, this chapter argues that while the approach to heritage studies in the APMHS is critical, its epistemic positioning as ‘African’ is not articulated. The chapter concludes with consideration of the imperatives of an ‘Africanist turn’³¹ to better articulate the epistemic notion of ‘African’ and the approach to museum and heritage studies revealed in the APMHS.

Chapter Six concludes the dissertation with a focus on Chiekh Anta Diop, who along with Frantz Fanon is one of the two scholars Beverly Butler mentioned as representing the Africanist turn in contemporary heritage discourse in Africa. Butler’s invocation of Diop is engaged within the context of Mamdani’s insistence that engagement with Diop is not *a* debate in the study of Africa but *the* debate.³² I engaged Diop’s central thesis especially for its implication of the notion of ‘African’ as ideological epistemic positioning in museum and heritage studies. This chapter concludes by suggesting consideration of Diop’s perspective of African heritage studies in the APMHS curriculum, through a critique of a suggested course designed by the author in 2006.

³¹ B. Beverly, *Return to Alexandria: An Ethnography of Cultural Heritage revival and Museum Memory*, (California: Left Coast Press, 2007), Butler, Beverly ‘Taking on a Tradition’: African Heritage and the Testimony of Memory, in, Ferdinand De Jong and M. Rowlands, *Reclaiming Heritage: Alternative Imaginaries of Memory in West Africa*, (California: Left Coast Press, 2007).

³² M. Mamdani, ‘Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University in Cape Town, ‘The Debate’, *Social Dynamics*, 24.2, (1998), 1-32, 3.

Chapter One

Background to the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies: Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies in Africa

The impact of any museum training for Africans should be noticeable in the way their museums function and are run ... the way they interpret their collections and in the way they organise their educational programmes for the collective good of the public.¹

One of the major features of rebranding the programme 'African' in 2003 was the distinction it made between itself and other programmes of museum and heritage studies on the continent.

These other programmes 'blur[s] the category of heritage with that of conservation and thus emphasises the acquisition of a series of technical skills to conserve artefacts and develop collections'² as the focus of museum and heritage studies,³ according to the proposal for the re-branding of the programme 'African' in 2003. It argued that

Through linking together theory and practice, the Diploma is able to challenge the emphasis in several postcolonial African training programmes in culture and heritage, which has tended to argue for creating mostly technical-oriented museum professionals. In heritage training projects in Africa, there is generally little or no engagement around issues of public participation, community access, and the dilemma of representation that are key to transforming African heritage institutions into dynamic spaces of learning and recreation.⁴

This pedagogical positioning was arguably informed by the realisation that the 'domain of heritage requires serious examination, for it is here that attempts are being made to fashion the

¹ E. N Arinze, 'Museum Training Issues in Africa', Research Paper for *ICOM/ICTOP Study* series, vol. 10, 2002, 4.

² Proposal to Rockefeller Foundation for the Development of An African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies: Submitted by the Cape Higher Education Consortium, February 2003, Cape Town South Africa.

³ Like the School of Conservation in Jos, Nigeria; Ecole du Patrimoine (School of African Heritage) EPA in Benin; the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa CHDA and Africa 2009.

⁴ Proposal to Rockefeller Foundation.

categories and images of post-colonial and post-apartheid nationhood'.⁵ The APMHS therefore distinguished itself from similar programme on the continent through the offering of a programme of Museum and Heritage Studies that claimed to go beyond mere technical conservation and museographical training, 'to critically examine the legacies of colonialism and apartheid, and even current issues around globalization'⁶ in the configuration of African Museum and heritage studies. An expository and comparative historical analysis of the Museum and Heritage studies/training programmes on the continent that the APMHS contrasted itself with is necessary to better understand and appreciate the theoretical and practical implications of this claimed distinctiveness of the APMHS in the rebranding of itself as an African programme.

The existing literature on the origin, history and development of programmes of Museum and Heritage Studies and training in Africa is not only scanty but consists mainly of self-referential publications.⁷ Moreover, this literature is in the main premised on European models of Heritage and Museum studies,⁸ as is arguably the case with all other facets of knowledge production in or about Africa.⁹ Significantly, the literature revealed a shift in focus, from mainly museum studies

⁵ Proposal to Rockefeller.

⁶ E. Finnegan, 'The African Postgraduate Diploma Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies: at the Confluence of Critical Theory, Public History and Socio-Political Transformation in South Africa', September 2006 (Robben Island Museum, Education Department, Academic Committee meeting brief, 30-31 October 2006), 38.

⁷ This situation promises to be substantially altered with the recent publication by Patrick Abungu, a 2006 graduate of the APMHS - *The Role of Heritage Training in Community Development: the case of the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA)*, (London, Lambert Academic Publisher, 2011). It is unfortunate that this book was published late into this dissertation, for while this study is not primarily on the history and issues of museum and heritage studies in Africa in general but specifically on the notion of 'African' and the approach to heritage studies in the APMHS, the book would have nonetheless provided questions for critical engagement – especially because, as stated in the back cover review, 'The book traces the origins of heritage training and capacity building development in Africa and goes further to explore the idea of integrated approaches to both heritage training and management application on the ground'. More importantly, 'the role of the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA) and its approach to development of skills is analyzed comparatively with other heritage training institutions in different parts of the world' – http://www.bod.com/index.php?id=3435&objk_id=572882

⁸ See L. Witz, review of Alexis B.A. Adande and Emmanuel Arinze (eds), *Museum and Urban Culture in West Africa*, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol 11, no. 2, May 2005, 173-5.

⁹ Publications on Museum and Heritage are mainly through ICCROM-UNESCO Publications; see for instance *Museum International: A Continent of Achievement*, 229/230, Lorna and George Abungu eds. 2006.

to museum and heritage studies as part of the process of incorporating the discourses of intangible heritage and other domains of practice of heritage in a more holistic way.

Generally, the starting point of most reflections on the origin, history and development of museum and heritage studies is the recognition of the colonial legacy of museum and heritage institutions in Africa, and the need to decolonise and transform the sector into a vehicle for socio-economic-cultural-political objectives through appropriate training of professionals.

Emmanuel Arinze, George Abungu and Terry Little, along with Galia Saouma-Ferero,¹⁰ addressed the colonial legacy of museums in Africa in the context of development of museums and heritage studies, which provides a point of departure for understanding the origin and development of museum and heritage studies on the continent.

All these articles provided crucial background to the history of museum and heritage studies in Africa, but they did not engage the question of what is African in a programme of museum and heritage studies in Africa. More importantly, they revealed the orientation of technical conservation skills acquisition as the dominant approach to museum heritage studies in Africa. This approach has resulted not only in conceptual, theoretical and practical limitations on the nature, orientation and objectives of museum and heritage studies and training programmes in Africa, but it has also greatly inhibited its transformative potential as a terrain of critical post-colonial public scholarship. As pointed out by Witz, ‘the argument is that by focusing on a

¹⁰ E. N. Arinze, ‘African museums: The challenge of change’, *Museum International*, (UNESCO, Paris), No. 197 (Vol. 50. No. 1, 1998), G. Abungu, ‘ICCROM and Africa: changing the cultural landscape in museums and immovable heritage’, *Museum International*, No. 243, (Vol. 61, No. 3, 2009), 62-69, T. Little, (ed.), *PREMA and the Preservation of Africa’s Cultural Heritage: PREMA 1990-2000*, (Rome, ICCROM, 2001), G. Saouma-Ferero, ‘Africa 2009: a Story of African Empowerment’, *Museum International*, No. 229-230 (Vol. 58. No. 1-2, 2006), (UNESCO, Paris, 2006), 83-94

technical programme, opportunities are lost to critically examine legacies of colonialism, apartheid and current issues around globalization'.¹¹

The basic defining feature of the approach to museum and heritage studies in Africa reflected in these articles was their pedigree in Western heritage training initiatives. This dictated their pedagogical focus on the acquisition of 'technologies of heritage',¹² with the objective of including heritage as an 'add-on',¹³ an appendage to the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) as the objective of heritage studies in Africa. The AHD, according to Laurajane Smith, is the hegemonic notion of heritage derived from Europe's specific history of modernity that is constitutive and legitimating of what heritage is, and in defining who has the ability to speak for and about the nature and meaning of heritage.¹⁴ This perspective of heritage dictated the grounding assumption of heritage and museum studies in Africa, as stated by Terry Little, one of the pioneers of heritage conservation training in Africa:

In sub-Saharan Africa, since there was no conservation training in the region at that time (1986), we worked with the universities in London and Paris to create courses and curricula. Since there were no conservators to train, we had to work with all existing museum categories to create the vocation. Since the museum directors were themselves part of the problem, we have to motivate them and involve them in the training of their personnel. Since many of the museums we were involved with seemed foreign or dead to their communities, we worked with the community leaders and the media to create awareness.¹⁵

¹¹ Quoted in C Reeves, 'Summary Report – Evaluation of the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS), (February 2007), 3.

¹² Technology of heritage – UNESCO promotion of archive, artefacts, ritual practices, performances, and material spaces as technologies for producing pasts and futures – F. de Jong, and M. Rowlands (eds.) *Reclaiming Heritage: Alternative Imaginaries of Memory in West Africa*, (California: Life Coast Press, Inc., 2006), 16.

¹³ See L. Witz, 'Towards a history of post-apartheid pasts in South African museums', paper at Re-imagining Postcolonial futures: Knowledge Transactions and contest of culture in African present, UWC, 8-11 July 2009, on the concept of 'add-on' of African heritage.

¹⁴ L. Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 17.

¹⁵ T. Little 'The Future of Heritage in South Africa: Collaboration and Partnership' – www.sanch.org/colloquia/little.htm accessed 12/05/2010.

In order to understand the implications of the assumptions contained in this statement for the approach to heritage studies and the notion of ‘African’ it implied, the next section deals with the development of museum and heritage studies as a specialised academic discipline in Europe, and its colonial and post-colonial transplanting and appropriation in Africa. This is done through engagement with ‘international’ museum and heritage bodies such as the International Committee for Training of Personnel (ICTOP),¹⁶ a body of the International Council of Museums (ICOM),¹⁷ ICCROM and UNESCO, which, historically defined the parameters and discourses of museum and heritage studies in Africa, and is crucial to understanding the history, development and limitations of museum and heritage studies in Africa.

International Museum and Heritage Studies

The broader origin, history and development of programmes of Museum and Heritage Studies as a specialised field of study can be located in the ‘European’ role of museums, which changed in the nineteenth century from ‘a repository for private collections to a place of study and research which necessitated organised training designed to produce a new type of museum

¹⁶ ICTOP – International Committee for the Training of Personnel: ICTOP's primary aim is to promote training and professional development and to establish standards for museum personnel throughout their careers. ICTOP works closely with other ICOM committees to achieve this aim. Its activities include the publication of a newsletter twice a year; the periodic publication of the International Directory of Museum Training, and the organisation of annual meetings/conferences. ICTOP also acts as an advisor for the establishment of syllabi for personnel training. It is a body of ICOM, the international organization of museums and museum professionals, which is committed to the conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world's natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible. Created in 1946, and based in Paris (France), ICOM is a non-governmental organization (NGO) maintaining formal relations with UNESCO and having a consultative status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council.

http://ictop.alfahosting.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=50:guidelines-for-professional-development&catid=38:projects&Itemid=58 – accessed 10 August 2010.

¹⁷ ICOM – International Council of Museum - An organisation created in 1946 by and for museum professionals with a consultative status with UNESCO; see website – www.icom.org

professional'.¹⁸ Raymond Singleton, first Chairperson of ICTOP from 1968 to 1974, traces the origin of museum studies to the methods of acquiring training in museum professional skills through 'on-the-job apprenticeship'.¹⁹ This, according to him, allowed entering staff in the museum to acquire ideas and skills in an informal manner from more experienced staff of the museum. The limitation of this method of training, according to him, was that 'while the system permitted established techniques and procedures to be transmitted from one generation to the next. It left little room for initiative, innovation or progress because it failed to consider any of the basic fundamentals of museum purpose or functions beyond the limited focus of a particular museum'.²⁰

Apart from the origin, history and curriculum content and development of museum studies programmes, another very important issue in relation to the development of Museum Studies programmes discussed by Singleton was the appropriate location for such programmes. Singleton criticised the initial mistaken assumption that, 'since ready access to museum collections, staff and facilities was desirable for training purposes, the museum was the obvious place in which to establish training courses'.²¹ He argued that the inherent weakness of 'on-the-job apprenticeship' was replicated in the programmes of Museum and Heritage training located in museums, which provided little opportunity for wider exposure to broader museum dynamics. Singleton concluded that locating museum training programmes in museums resulted in a deficiency of preparation of museum professionals for facing the extraordinary variety of institutional challenges in the changing museum environment. This, he argued, was because 'the

¹⁸ H. R. Singleton, 'Museum Training: Status and Development', in *Museum*, No. 156 (Vol. XXXIX, no. 4, 1987), 221.

¹⁹ Singleton, 'Museum Training', 222.

²⁰ Singleton, 'Museum Training', 222.

²¹ Singleton, 'Museum Training', 223.

attention and focus of training programmes located in the museums are usually the policies, methods and challenges pertaining to a single institution with little opportunity for a wider appraisal of the general museum scene'.²²

The alternative location for Museum Studies programmes discussed by Singleton is the university. According to him, the University of Buenos Aires in Argentina pioneered the university location of a programme in Museum Studies in the 1920s.²³ In contrast to the risk of lack of exposure to the wider museum scene in the location of programmes of museum training in museums, the risk in locating a museum and heritage studies programme in the university is that it would be too remote from the actual museum scene. According to Singleton, 'the fear, indeed the suspicion, among senior museum staff was that such training would be so remote from the everyday problems and situations prevailing in museums as to be of little value; it would at best provide only a second-hand impression and would also probably be apt to concentrate on theoretical consideration only'.²⁴ However, Singleton suggested that in recognising these risks, 'the university department which offers training in Museum Studies is well placed to avoid them'.²⁵

This is because, as he went on to argue, 'not being museums and lacking in the numerous specialists which will be required to cover all aspects of the broad training syllabus, university departments are forced to look to museum colleagues for assistance'.²⁶ He argued, therefore, that 'it has been relatively easy for the university to provide students with the opportunity to visit,

²² Singleton, 'Museum Training', 223.

²³ Singleton, 'Museum Training', 223.

²⁴ Singleton, 'Museum Training', 223.

²⁵ Singleton, 'Museum Training', 223.

²⁶ Singleton, 'Museum Training', 223.

work in and meet the staff of many different types of museums, thus avoiding the main weakness [narrow focus] of museum-based training programmes'.²⁷ This collaborative arrangement, according to Singleton, helped not only to dispel the charges against museums of remoteness from the real world, but also provided students with opportunities to meet and exchange knowledge with museum specialists.²⁸

The International Council of Museums

The International Council of Museums (ICOM), since its first Interim Conference in Mexico in 1947, had been 'the professional and by definition the non-governmental world body for museums and the museum profession.'²⁹ According to Patrick Boylan, its chairperson of the International Committee for Training of Personnel (ICTOP) for 1998 to 2001, it had its 'turning point in museum training' in 1966. This was when plans were put in place for 'the bringing together of all European experts working directly in the museum training field'³⁰ A meeting was held in Brno in 1967, in then Czechoslovakia, with 13 participants from eight European countries, and with the objective of a pan-European coordination of museum training under ICOM. Apart from aspiring toward 'coordinating their teaching programmes, diplomas and teaching methods, the meeting in its decision aspired to a basic standard syllabus which might be adopted for both the existing training courses and for any new museum staff training programmes'.³¹ Crucially, as stated by Boylan, the 'meeting resolved:

²⁷ Singleton, 'Museum Training', 223.

²⁸ Singleton, 'Museum Training', 223.

²⁹ P. J. Boylan, 'Museum Training: a central concern of ICOM for forty years', in *Museum*, No. 156 (Vol. XXXIX, no. 4, 1987).

³⁰ Boylan, 'Museum Training', 226.

³¹ Boylan, 'Museum Training', 226.

(a) That museology is recognised as a true discipline in its own right. (b) it was necessary to place as much importance on teaching of museology as on museography, and distinguish between training for future heads of museums, who it was felt must receive a complete training, museological as well as museographical, in contrast with future museum technicians whose training could be strictly museographical in content.³²

The creation of ICTOP, in 1968, with Raymond Singleton as chairperson, was a direct outcome of the Brno meeting, according to Boylan.³³ It is interesting at this stage to note that part of ICOM's 'triennial programme' for 1967-71 was 'a series of regional museum training surveys and teaching visits', which included a visit by George-Henri Riverie to North Africa and by Yvonne Oddon to West Africa.³⁴ Significantly, an enduring result of the creation of ICTOP was the adoption in 1971 at the ninth ICOM general conference of an ICOM Basic Syllabus, authored by Yvonne Oddon, which set out the minimum elements that must be included in any basic professional museum training, whether at a university or in less formal training programmes.³⁵

These principal elements for museum studies were

1. Introduction to museology: history and purpose of museums.
2. Organisation, operation and management of museums.
3. Museum architecture, layout and equipment.
4. Collections: origin, related records setting-up and movement.
5. Scientific activities and research.
6. Preservation and care of collections.
7. Presentation: Exhibition.
8. The public (including public facilities)
9. Cultural and educational activities of museums.³⁶

This was the curriculum transported to Africa as the basis of museum education. The focus of this brief exposure to the broader origin and development of Museum Studies provided by

³² Boylan, 'Museum Training', 227. According to ICTOP Terminology 'Museology is the branch of knowledge concerned with the study of the theories, procedures, concepts, and organization of museums. Museography is the application of that thinking in museum'. 'ICTOP in Lubbock, Texas', ICTOP Annual Meeting Museums: Catalysts for Community Development Resolutions, Vol. 14, No. 1, (1996), 11.

³³ Boylan, 'Museum Training', 227.

³⁴ Boylan, 'Museum Training', 227.

³⁵ Boylan, 'Museum Training', 228.

³⁶ Boylan, 'Museum Training', 228.

Singleton was to show the origin of museum and heritage training as it was imported to the continent.

The challenges to the ideological assumptions implicit in this curriculum are definitive of the problems of knowledge production in the field of museum and heritage studies in postcolonial Africa. The hypothesis of this historical analysis of museum and heritage studies in Africa is the critical question posed by Martin Segger, ICTOP chairperson 1996:

How relevant is the traditional western museological model to the other half of the world ... Do we [the West] have the moral or intellectual authority to go on exporting expertise or even training to the rest of the world ... Is the now revered ICOM curriculum a crutch, a hindrance or in the worst case, yet another example of exploitative neo-colonialism.³⁷

This brief exposure to the broader origin and development of Museum and Heritage Studies provided by Singleton is historically Eurocentric. Museum and Heritage Studies in Africa are rooted in European infrastructural disciplinary exhibitionary complexes.³⁸ As shown through a brief analysis of museum and heritage studies programmes internationally, there is convergence in the orientation of Museum Studies in diverse countries, from Australia to Canada, Italy, and France,³⁹ but clear, distinctive differences in countries equally as diverse as Brazil, China and India.⁴⁰ These diverse examples make for a rich comparative analysis in understanding the distinctiveness of each of their museum and heritage studies programmes as a way of locating

³⁷ M. Segger, 'Message from the Chairperson', *IT Newsletter*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 1996, (Jane R. Glaser and Bruce C. Craig (eds.))

³⁸ See E. Said on *Orientalism* on imperial representation, and Tony Bennett, *Exhibitionary Complex*; also Rassool, Witz and Minkley on the Heritage Complex in chapter five.

³⁹ See Martin Segger on Canada, Geoffrey Lewis on the United Kingdom, Fernanda Fedi on Italy, Jean-Perre Sainte-Marie on France, Jane R. Glaser on the United States, and John C. Hodge on Australia in *Museum*, No. 156 (Vol. XXXIX, no. 4, 1987)

⁴⁰ See Fernanda de Camargo e Ameida-Moro on Brazil, Liang Jisheng on China, V. H. Bedekar on India in *Museum*, No. 156, Vol. XXXIX, no. 4, (1987), Rome, UNESCO publication.

and interrogating what is distinctively African, if anything, in a post-colonial museum and heritage studies in Africa.

Museum and Heritage Studies/Training in Africa

It is necessary to examine the origin, features and characteristics of some of the different programmes in museum training since the 1960s, starting with the Centre for Museum Studies, Jos, Nigeria, established in 1963.

According to the late Emanuel Nnakenyi Arinze (1945-2005), a pioneer of Museum and Heritage Studies in Africa, ex-Principal of the Centre for Museum Studies, Jos, Nigeria, ex-executive of Nigeria National Museums, West African Museum Programme (WAMP) chairperson, and ICCROM-PREMA consultant and ex-vice-chairperson of ICTOP:

In the beginning Africans were not given solid professional training that would empower them, nor were they encouraged to make the museums profession their career. What generally emerged was a situation where Africans served as attendants and cleaners. ... A few were taught how to operate a camera and move objects within the museum and in the field, but were denied the hard-core professional training essential for the profession.⁴¹

This colonially imposed situation, according to Arinze, resulted in a virtual lack of 'hard-core professionals' to respond to the needs of the newly emergent independent states 'for the museum to develop a vision or a mission consistent with the national goals and objectives'.⁴² It was this absence of professionals in the immediate post-independence period, according to Arinze, that inevitably 'entrenched the Western model stereotype of the museum training'⁴³ in post-colonial Africa. In a 2002 research paper for the ICOM/ICTOP study series, Arinze sketched a condensed

⁴¹ Arinze, 'African museums: The challenge of change', 30.

⁴² Arinze, 'African Museums: the challenges of change', 31.

⁴³ Arinze, 'African Museums: the challenges of change', 31.

history of the origin and development of museum and heritage studies and training in Africa, which provides a framework for charting the history of museum and heritage studies in Africa.

According to him,

In the last 25 years, various steps were taken to address the training issues affecting African museums, first in 1963, the Jos Centre were established by UNESCO in Nigeria; later in the 70's UNESCO established the Niamey Training Centre. Much later in the 1980's ICCROM established the PREMA programmes, which ran from 1990 – 2000 (Prevention in Museum in Africa)... In 2001-2002, ICCROM, at the end of its PREMA programme, established two special training centres, EPA in Porto Novo, Republic of Benin and PDMA in Mombasa, Kenya.⁴⁴

Arinze noted that apart from slight variations, the idea of museums in Africa was the same as in the colonial period, and argued for the need to create 'African-based museums' through a combination of scholarship and practical, hands-on experience in the training of African museum professionals.⁴⁵ In addition, he argued that African museum professionals should be trained to use their expertise to help Africans clearly understand both their cultural and natural heritage and how it can be used to deal with the vital issues of peace, democracy, and economic development grounded in cultural realism, within an African context.⁴⁶ Despite this vision of African museum training as a combination of scholarship and practical, technical skills, Arinze noted that the Jos Centre for Museum Studies was established in 1963 'as a bilingual project for training museum technicians'.⁴⁷

The Jos Centre sought to provide (in the words of Arinze) 'the much-needed training facilities for the conservation and preservation of museum objects, monuments, and the cultural and

⁴⁴ Arinze, 'Museum Training Issues in Africa', 1.

⁴⁵ Arinze, 'African Museums: the challenges of change'.

⁴⁶ Arinze, 'Museum Training Issues in Africa'.

⁴⁷ E.N. Arinze, 'Training in African museums: the Role of the Centre for Museum Studies Jos', *Museum*, No. 156, Vol. XXXIX, no. 4, (1987), 278.

natural heritage in an African context.’⁴⁸ He argued that the Jos Centre, located close to the National Museum of Jos, a zoo and botanical garden, as well as an open-air museum ‘where the best examples of traditional Nigerian architectural designs and building techniques have been reconstructed’⁴⁹ was an ‘ideal environment for the training of African museum personnel.’⁵⁰ What was ‘African’ in museum and heritage studies, according to him, was ‘a broad-based approach to training that focuses on the specific needs of African museums.’⁵¹

According to Arinze, the pedagogy and curriculum of the centre exposed students to theories of museology, through ‘various concepts of the museum and its historical development and evolution, as well as the scientology of museums, which deals with the ethos of museum philosophy and work’.⁵² Courses offered at the centre included an internship engagement, which entailed working with museum staff and doing practical conservation work on artefacts, which formed part of the curriculum of the programme. The specific courses it offered were:

- Museum Administration
- Museology; Museum Documentation
- Introduction to Ethnography
- Museum Education
- Museum Exhibition and Graphic
- Conservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage
- Archaeology and History of Africa
- Audio-Visual Techniques
- Maintenance of Monuments; Museum Security
- Photography; Library Science
- Ethnomusicology.⁵³

⁴⁸ Arinze, ‘The Role of the Centre for Museum Studies Jos’, 278.

⁴⁹ Arinze, ‘The Role of the Centre for Museum Studies Jos’, 279.

⁵⁰ Arinze, ‘The Role of the Centre for Museum Studies Jos’, 279.

⁵¹ Arinze, ‘The Role of the Centre for Museum Studies Jos’, 280.

⁵² Arinze, ‘The Role of the Centre for Museum Studies Jos’, 279.

⁵³ Arinze, ‘The Role of the Centre for Museum Studies Jos’, 278.

The 'well-defined training policy' of the Jos Centre, according to Arinze, benefited 'a corps of skilled museum professionals who helped in shaping a new focus for museums across the continent'.⁵⁴ These trained professionals developed capacity to challenge the stereotypical Western models they had inherited by 'launching the heritage of Africa to a global audience in a manner that brought pride and dignity to Africa'.⁵⁵ Notwithstanding the limitations of the colonial legacy, Arinze noted that a 'striking phenomenon' occurred in post-independence museums of Africa as they become 'symbols of Uhuru and effective vehicles for nationalism and for fostering national consciousness and political unity to the newly independent countries'.⁵⁶ Arinze notes that African museums have developed and tried to change their image through adequate training programmes; unfortunately, since the late 1980s, with few exceptions the training initiatives have ceased to evolve, and have become stagnant and confused.⁵⁷

This era of decay, which exposed the dependency problem of 'domestic and international aid in Museum Training in Africa' was typified by the decline of the Jos centre, Nigeria.⁵⁸ As stated in the ICOM's Secretary General Report for 1980-1983,

The lack of financial resources has necessitated the gradual handing over of responsibility for countries in which ... training centres are located and consequently many more centres are now operating far below the minimum level of funding. They are unable to retain personnel and the quality of training courses has obviously decreased. Furthermore, by placing responsibilities with the host country ... the training centre has been hindered by purely domestic, political and administrative factors.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Arinze, 'The Role of the Centre for Museum Studies Jos', 32.

⁵⁵ Arinze, 'The Role of the Centre for Museum Studies Jos', 33.

⁵⁶ Arinze, 'African Museums: the challenges of change', 31.

⁵⁷ Arinze, 'African Museums: the challenges of change', 32.

⁵⁸ Arinze, 'African Museums: the challenges of change' – Arinze explained how after withdrawal of UNESCO funding for the Jos programme, the Nigerian government was only able to sustain the programme for a limited period before it collapsed.

⁵⁹ See F.T Masao, 'The Balance between Domestic needs and International aid in Museum Training', in *Museum*, No. 156 (Vol. XXXIX, no. 4, 1987), 275-277.

The solution to these problems of museum training in Africa was, according to Arinze, ‘the Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), which had, since 1986, run training courses at various levels to address the specific problem of Prevention and Conservation in Museums in Africa (PREMA)’.⁶⁰

PREMA – Prevention and Conservation in Museums in Africa

PREMA was a training initiative developed in 1990 by ICCROM to provide training and technical assistance to museum professionals from sub-Saharan African countries. Its rationale was to provide conservation training tailored to Africa. Starting from the premise that the African museum professionals trained in conservation had received training in Europe or North America according to the specific needs and requirements of those countries, which are unsuitable in an African context,⁶¹ PREMA introduced a ‘tailor-made’ training programme for Africa. Commendable as the good intention of ICCROM was of providing Africa a ‘tailor-made’ programme of museum training through PREMA, the concern of this study is how fitting the tailor-made programme was, in that it continued to be manufactured in Europe and exported to Africa. This is because its flagship project, the International University course, was based in Rome from its inception in 1987 until 1993, when it was moved – first to Jos, Nigeria, then to other countries in Africa.⁶²

⁶⁰ Arinze, ‘African Museums: the challenges of change’, 34.

⁶¹ Little, *PREMA and the Preservation*, 10.

⁶² Little, *PREMA and the Preservation*, 10.

George Abungu argued that ‘among PREMA’s strengths was its flexibility to meet the specific needs of sub-Saharan African museums’,⁶³ and lauded the project as ‘a huge contribution to saving African heritage for future generations’.⁶⁴ He argued that among the successful outcomes of PREMA was the training of trainers,⁶⁵ because the programme ‘not only addressed the condition of material culture but also helped to train a generation of African professionals who would ensure the practice of good conservation for a long time to come’.⁶⁶ This training of trainers, he maintained, ‘exemplified ICCROM’s commitment to preserving and protecting sub-Saharan Africa’s movable heritage’.⁶⁷

However, Terry Little acknowledged the complexity of the geo-cultural politics of knowledge production inherent in a situation where ‘mainly European and American professionals based in Rome’⁶⁸ were formulating and directing museum and heritage training programmes in Africa for Africans as a fundamental challenge of the PREMA programme.⁶⁹ According to Little, PREMA seemed ‘to have been a success in achieving its principal objectives of the programme, ‘to establish by the year 2000, a network of African heritage professionals who can assume the responsibility of conservation of movable property’⁷⁰ and create a network of museum professionals trained in conservation and capable of training others in the future’

According to Abungu, PREMA was developed as

⁶³ G. Abungu, ‘ICCROM and Africa: changing the cultural landscape in museums and immovable heritage’, *Museum International*, No. 243, (Vol. 61, No. 3, 2009) UNESCO 2009, 62-69, 65.

⁶⁴ Abungu, ‘ICCROM and Africa’, 63.

⁶⁵ Abungu, ‘ICCROM and Africa’, 63.

⁶⁶ Abungu, ‘ICCROM and Africa’, 64.

⁶⁷ Abungu, ‘ICCROM and Africa’, 64.

⁶⁸ Little, ‘Collaborations and Partnership’ 2.

⁶⁹ Little, ‘Collaborations and Partnerships’ 5.

⁷⁰ Little, *PREMA and the Preservation*, 9.

A long-term programme to arrest decays and prevent the deterioration of collections in the museums of sub-Saharan Africa. Its two objectives were (a) to ensure the conservation of sub-Saharan African museum collections and (b) to establish a network of African professionals who could assume responsibility for the conservation of movable property and for future training.⁷¹

These objectives of the programme, according to Little, were in response to an assessment of the conservation problems and training needs of the African museum and heritage sector. This assessment, in his opinion, highlighted ‘the lack of trained personnel, the lack of possibilities of training, the lack of tools, the lack of motivation and a great sense of alienation by museum professionals’⁷² in Africa.

The structure of the PREMA programme consisted of an International University Course, which provided specialised theoretical training in conservation management, with the award to successful participants of a Diploma in Conservation Management for Museums of sub-Saharan Africa from the University College of London, Institute of Archaeology and the Universite de Paris I Pantheon - Sorbonne. The programme was an intensive nine-month training course, alternating each year between English and French,⁷³ and supplemented by an auxiliary national/sub-regional course, which offered basic training in preventive conservation for all levels of museum workers, including technicians, conservators, archivists, keepers and assistant keepers, with an emphasis on training trainers for future PREMA courses.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Abungu, ‘ICCROM and Africa’, 64.

⁷² Little, ‘Collaborations and Partnerships’, 10.

⁷³ Little, *PREMA and the Preservation*, 10.

⁷⁴ Little, *PREMA and the Preservation*, 15.

The regional\national courses were organised in collaboration with host museums and based on an agreement to implement a preventive conservation programme. At the 6th PREMA National/Sub-Regional course in Zimbabwe from November 1995 – 1996 for Southern African Countries, consisting of participants from Zimbabwe, Malawi, Lesotho, Swaziland and Namibia, the course curriculum for the nine weeks included an introduction to preventive conservation, identifying risk to collections, coping with main risks, caring for collections, and exhibition.⁷⁵ Tied to this was a one-week seminar for museum directors, aimed at integrating preventive conservation consciousness into all spheres of museum development.⁷⁶

According to Little, a measure of the success of this programme was the establishment of two formal training centres: EPA (l'Ecole du Patrimoine Africain), in Porto Novo, Benin in 1998 through a collaborative agreement between the National University of Benin (NUB) and ICCROM to serve French-speaking African countries. This is combined with the Programme for Museum Development in Africa (PMDA), based in Mombasa, Kenya, for English-speaking countries.⁷⁷ This was the outcome of the sixth (1998) PREMA review meeting in Benin. The meeting recommended that following the achievement of PREMA 1990-2000, 'a new five-year programme is launched from 2000 to support museums in sub-Saharan Africa'.⁷⁸ The recommendation stated that such a programme should be coordinated from two bases: Benin and Kenya. In addition, there was a recommendation that a 'foundation be created whose resources will be able to cover the functioning of the bases, while the rest of the running costs will be covered by revenue-generating activities, which UNESCO, ICCROM , WAMP and inter-

⁷⁵ Little, *PREMA and the Preservation*, 22.

⁷⁶ Little, *PREMA and the Preservation*, 16.

⁷⁷ Little, *PREMA and the Preservation*, 49.

⁷⁷ Little, *PREMA and the Preservation*, 15.

⁷⁸ Little, *PREMA and the Preservation*, 15

governmental and non-governmental, private and public organization are encouraged to support'.⁷⁹ The basis for the two institutions, according to Terry Little, was the success of PREMA in correcting the then-current, pitiful state of museum/heritage training in Africa, and creating the imperative for its sustainability. PREMA programmes, he argued, highlighted the fact that 'there appears to be a need for more technical training including workshops and seminars for technical and mid-level staff as well as attendants, custodians and guides who have the most contact with the public'.⁸⁰

Programme for Museum Development in Africa (PDMA) – Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA)

The PMDA Programme for Museum Development in Africa (PDMA), launched in 2000 as part of the outcome of the ICCROM PREMA 1990-2000 programme in collaboration with the National Museums of Kenya, evolved into CHDA – the Centre for Heritage Development in Africa – in November 2004, and is based in Mombasa, Kenya. According to the official website, CHDA is 'an international Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) dedicated to the preservation, management and promotion of cultural heritage in Africa through a programme of training and development support services. Its core value is in the preservation of immovable, movable and intangible cultural heritage in Africa'⁸¹ and its vision is to be a 'centre of excellence for heritage development in Africa'.⁸²

⁷⁹ Little, *PREMA and the Preservation*, 44.

⁸⁰ Little, 'Collaborations and Partnerships', 6.

⁸¹ Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA), www.heritageinafrica.org/about-us.html - accessed 23/06/10

⁸² Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA), www.heritageinafrica.org/about-us.html - accessed 23/06/10

CHDA's notion of 'heritage', which dictates its approach to heritage studies and is stated in its latest brochure, is that 'heritage' 'refers to both one's inheritance (language, culture, a way of seeing the world, for example) and objects or qualities that reflect one's culture: cultural traditions, historic buildings, World Heritage sites, even a birthright'.⁸³ This notion of heritage as inherited birthright (which can also be a World Heritage Site) informed the approach to heritage studies reflected in CHDA training courses, seminars, publications and advisory services. As stated in the brochure CHDA courses include 'both technical and hard skills and people-related or soft skills, which emphasise that heritage conservation, must use these resources, first, to be sustainable in Africa, and second, to deliver on the Millennium Development Goals'.⁸⁴ These include:

- Nominations – This course strengthens the capacity of state parties to prepare nomination files for inscription on the Lists of the (World Heritage) Convention, in particular to the Urgent Safeguarding List.
- Implementation – This course assists participants in acquiring a broad understanding of the activities and steps required for the implementation of the Convention at national level.⁸⁵
- World Heritage Nomination Dossier Training and Mentorship Programme is a two-year programme which assists state parties in the preparation of nomination dossiers for the World Heritage Committee. This capacity-building strategy includes two intensive, two-week contact-training sessions with support from the coordinating committee and mentoring in the development of the dossier.⁸⁶
- World Heritage and Sustainable Economic Development – a tailor-made short course for World Heritage Site managers, which focuses on how to develop sustainable tourism and other economic activities within or outside a World Heritage Site without affecting its outstanding universal value. It assists state parties to draw up a set of values and principles for economic activities.⁸⁷
- How to Design your Site Management Plan/System – a thorough, intensive course that addresses management planning issues. Practical work includes

⁸³ 'People are the real Wealth of a Nation': Centre for Heritage Development in Africa (CHDA) Brochure, 2011, 3. http://www.heritageinafrica.org/africa2009-achievements/cat_view/27-chda-brochure.html

⁸⁴ CHDA Brochure, 2011, 3.

⁸⁵ CHDA Brochure, 2011, 5.

⁸⁶ CHDA Brochure, 2011, 6.

⁸⁷ CHDA Brochure, 2011, 6.

documentation of the site, mapping, an introduction to GIS and the hosting of stakeholder meetings as a part of the planning and implementation process. A completed management plan/documentated management system is an outcome of this training.⁸⁸

- 'Conservation by Design' – a three-month programme that addresses conservators' needs for specialised training in practical, low-cost conservation practices. This is linked to product development within the crafts sector. An intersection between master craftspeople and the knowledge of conservators is created. Out of this, new, iconic products with deep roots in the historical material culture of the community from which the artefact has been sourced/collected are developed.⁸⁹
- 'Your Simple Guide to Museum Management' – a short, tailor-made course that introduces new entrants in the museum sector to the core functions of a museum. Focuses on key issues and problem-solving mechanisms that emerge in the day-to-day operation of museums.
- 'Lab in a suitcase' – a short introductory course for conservators in museums and community members who are heritage custodians. Simple, economical methods for the conservation of artifacts are introduced. The course also introduces participants to chemicals and conservation materials that are easily sourced in their environs.⁹⁰
- Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO training modules) - Ratification and inventorying – This course assists participants in acquiring a broad understanding of the functioning of UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the obligations of member states once they have ratified the Convention, and the process and rationale for ratification. There is some focus on legal frameworks.⁹¹

Apart from these standard courses, other activities of CHDA include seminars/conferences, consultancies and research, and the offering of internship placement to postgraduate scholars in heritage-related disciplines.⁹² As stated on its website, 'this strategy provides an opportunity, to develop administrative and planning competencies and benefit in terms of improving the management of sites, collections and public programming (including exhibitions)'.⁹³ As claimed

⁸⁸ CHDA Brochure, 2011, 5.

⁸⁹ CHDA Brochure, 2011, 7.

⁹⁰ CHDA Brochure, 2011, 6.

⁹¹ CHDA Brochure, 2011, 7.

⁹² CHDA Brochure, 2011, 3.

⁹³ CHDA Brochure, 2011, 2.

in its brochure, CHDA is taking the lead in training, with former participants launching courses on heritage and its management in universities (archaeology, anthropology, etc.).⁹⁴

Africa 2009

George Abungu stated that ICCROM ‘should be further commended for initiating the Africa 2009 programme to address conservation of immovable heritage in sub-Saharan Africa’.⁹⁵

According to him, the Africa 2009 programme was based on the premise that ‘the problems facing conservation in African heritage were technical in nature and that solutions must integrate conservation into the larger environmental, social, cultural and economic development framework’.⁹⁶ He stated that the training strategy focus of Africa 2009 was based on the result of a ‘preliminary needs assessment’ by ICCROM of the state of conservation of immovable cultural heritage in Africa, which identified (among other challenges) the lack of qualified human resources capability in the technical conservation of Africa’s immovable cultural resources. Africa 2009 was ‘conceptualised and developed’⁹⁷ to address these challenges by focusing on four main areas, according to Abungu:

- (a) Organised training through seminars, workshops and three-month training courses;
- (b) Promotion of networking and exchange of information and expertise through thematic seminars (directors’ seminars, research, establishment of database of resource persons, etc.);
- (c) Resource and support mobilisation through increased awareness among wider audiences;
- (d) Project Cadre and Project Situés, aimed at improving conditions for conservation at specific sites.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ CHDA Brochure, 2011, 7.

⁹⁵ Abungu, ‘ICCROM and Africa’, 65.

⁹⁶ Abungu, ‘ICCROM and Africa’, 123.

⁹⁷ Abungu, ‘ICCROM and Africa’, 123.

⁹⁸ Abungu, ‘ICCROM and Africa’, 67.

The Africa 2009 programme became operational in 1999. The stated aim of the course was to bring together a group of African heritage professionals to build a greater awareness of the most important issues in the area of conservation planning and management, especially as it relates to African immovable heritage. The programme was conducted in two nodes of operation – CHDA in Mombasa, Kenya for the English-speaking countries, and EPA, in Port Novo, Benin Republic, for the French-speaking countries.⁹⁹ Both hosted 11 regional courses and 11 directors' seminars, and contributed to the activities by providing staff and infrastructure in close collaboration with national institutions in Project Cadre. During the last phase of the programme, EPA and CHDA also took the lead in the coordination of some regional Projects Situés.¹⁰⁰

As stated in the 'Final Report of the Africa 2009 1st Regional course, held in Mombasa, Kenya from July to September 1999',¹⁰¹ the course aimed 'to bring together a group of approximately 20 African heritage professionals to work towards creation of a greater awareness of the most important issues in the area of conservation planning and management. The course also aimed at deriving a deepening of knowledge of the problems and challenges that are faced in carrying out conservation work in African contexts.'¹⁰² The nine-week course was divided into two main areas dealing with policy and practice at the national level, and with site planning and management.¹⁰³ According to the recruitment advertisement for the course, 'participants must be professionals (architects, planners, archaeologists, managers) with a university degree and a minimum of three to five years experience. They must either: 1) be in charge of

⁹⁹ Abungu, ICCROM and Africa, 66.

¹⁰⁰ J. King, 'Final report of the Africa 2009 Regional Course, Mombasa, Kenya, 5 July – 3 September, 1999'. <http://www.africa2009.net/common/reports/kc99.pdf>. Accessed 23/06/2010.

¹⁰¹ King, 'Final report of the Africa 2009, 1999', 2.

¹⁰² King, 'Final report of the Africa 2009, 1999', 2.

¹⁰³ King, 'Final report of the Africa 2009, 1999', 5.

management/conservation of a major site or region within their countries; or 2) have a significant decision-making role in regard to management/conservation of immovable cultural heritage within the central structure of their organisation'.¹⁰⁴ Topics covered in the course were:

- Week 1: Introduction to African Immovable Cultural Heritage and Introduction to Heritage Conservation;
- Week 2: Stakeholder Participation in Conservation of Cultural Heritage;
- Weeks 3 – 5: Management Planning Exercise;
- Week 6: Legal and Administrative Frameworks and Urban Conservation;
- Week 7: Tourism and Inventory and Documentation;
- Week 8: Partnership, Fundraising, and Advocacy.¹⁰⁵

The last Africa 2009 course was the '11th regional course on the conservation and management of immovable cultural heritage in Africa', in Mombasa, Kenya, from July to October 2009.

Compared to the first course of 1999, this was a 12-week course divided into two main parts.

'The first part deals with theoretical and policy framework of immovable heritage at international and local level, as well as current issues in the area of immovable heritage conservation. The second part involves practical, hands-on exercise and lectures on the management planning process as applicable to conservation and management of immovable heritage'.¹⁰⁶

The two operative components of the Africa 2009 programme are Project Cadre and Project Situés. According to Abungu, 'Project Cadre acted as the overall framework for the programme, offering a range of regional training and gathering and exchange of information and Project

¹⁰⁴ King, 'Final report of the Africa 2009, 1999', 5.

¹⁰⁵ King, 'Final report of the Africa 2009, 1999', 7.

¹⁰⁶ B. Rakotomamonjy, 'Conservation in Immovable Cultural Heritage: Final Report, 2010'.

<http://www.heritageinafrica.org/news/archives/25-11th-africa-2009-regional-course-begins-in-mombasa-.html>. accessed 23/06/2010

Situés was engaged in the improving of conservation at different sites by building awareness in the course of actual conservation projects'.¹⁰⁷

As stated in the 2010 final report of the 11th Africa 2009 regional seminar, Project Situés ensured that Africa 2009 was deeply rooted in the realities of the field while responding to the specific needs of selected sites in terms of training and implementation of conservation activities.

Projects Situés were designed with an emphasis on a 'planned intervention' philosophy rather than the implementation of 'emergency works'.

The following are the objectives for Project Situés; The stabilisation of the existing state of conservation of the site by minimising or stopping the major risks of degradation, while exploring the possibility of initiating a sustainable system for continued maintenance and preservation.

- A deepening of knowledge about the site, its values and the factors which affect it, leading to the elaboration of a management plan.
- The progressive enhancement of the conservation and presentation of the site, on a scientific and historical basis.
- In some cases, the development of nomination dossiers and management plans for World Heritage Sites.

Topics offered on Projects Situés included:

- Inventories
- Site documentation
- Conservation and rehabilitation projects for various typologies of heritage, including architectural, archaeological and natural sites
- Safeguarding and revitalisation of abandoned sites
- Strengthening of traditional knowledge systems
- Preparation of participatory management plans
- Improvement of conservation strategies
- Enhancement of site presentation and promotion

¹⁰⁷ Abungu, 'ICCROM and Africa', 63.

- Preparation of World Heritage nomination files.¹⁰⁸

As stated in the 2010 Report, Project Cadre was ‘developed at the regional level as the overall framework for the programme’.¹⁰⁹ The report stated that ‘Project Cadre called for reflection and the progressive development of ideas, guaranteeing continuity within individual activities, and allowing for the dissemination of results obtained by the programme. Courses, seminars, research projects, and the improvement of networking were implemented, based on the realisation that the best way to treat problems is to work together, share ideas, and develop common frameworks, which can be adapted to specific local needs’.¹¹⁰ The activities under this framework of Project Cadre included:

- Three-Month Regional Courses
These courses were organised alternately for Francophone and Anglophone countries. They aimed at improving the skills and knowledge of professionals in both conservation and management. The courses were implemented in partnership with the EPA and CHDA (formerly PMDA) together with the national heritage organisations where the course was taking place. The course included fieldwork and emphasised hands-on experience and interactivity. Each year, improvements were made to accommodate new thinking and to expand the network of African resource people. By 2009, about 90% of the resource persons were African professionals.
- Technical Courses: These courses were intensive, one-month activities which focused on technical issues rather than management aspects. Thus, they were complementary to the three-month Regional Courses.
- The Directors’ Seminars were a very important mechanism for ensuring an active and effective partnership with national and regional institutions. A total of eleven Directors’ seminars were held during the life of the programme.¹¹¹

The Regional course was followed by a Directors’ Seminar with three main objectives:

1. To allow participants of the regional courses to present what they had learned during the course, enabling the directors to use them appropriately in their institutions.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Final report of the Africa 2009, 2010’, 10.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Final report of the Africa 2009, 2010’ 10.

¹¹⁰ ‘Final report of the Africa 2009, 2010’, 8.

¹¹¹ ‘Final report of the Africa 2009, 2010’, 8.

2. To present the state of implementation of Africa 2009 to the directors and get input from them to ensure that the programme would meet the needs of their institutions.
3. To network and produce recommendations with specific proposals for the future of Africa 2009.

- Regional Thematic Seminars

As a means of advocacy and awareness-raising, the thematic seminars at national and regional levels brought together professionals, community leaders and decision- and policy-makers to bring into focus selected important issues facing conservation in the region. These seminars were instrumental in sensitising community leaders as well as decision-makers on the important role that heritage plays as a tool for national cohesion and development.¹¹²

- Special Seminars

Among the aims of the programme was the need to highlight the role of heritage in sustainable development, and especially the role that AFRICA 2009 could play in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Consequently, two special bilingual seminars were organised. The first seminar, on 'Heritage Management and the Challenges of HIV/Aids', addressed the necessity for heritage institutions to be sensitive to communities' developmental needs by finding viable roles that heritage places can play in addressing issues related to the HIV/AIDs pandemic.

- Research Activities

In recognition of the fact that there were very few resources on heritage management and conservation in Africa, a decision was made to incorporate research. Consequently, research projects on various aspects, including prevailing policies, legal frameworks and traditional conservation techniques, were carried out. The research projects contributed to the understanding of the current problems and practice, suggesting possible solutions. Research activities were also aimed at providing platforms where professionals could develop new knowledge, as well as gain experience and skills.

- Publications

As there was a lack of relevant publications related to the conservation of the immovable cultural heritage in the region, efforts have been made to ensure that the information collected and produced during the 12 years of the programme is well disseminated. In addition, information produced within Africa 2009 has been systematically collected so that it can continue to be used as a resource by regional training.¹¹³

¹¹² 'Final report of the Africa 2009, 2010', 10.

¹¹³ 'Final report of the Africa 2009, 2010', 12 – 14.

George Abungu praised Africa 2009 for saving African heritage for future generations.¹¹⁴ He lauded ICCROM for showing commitment to both movable and immovable cultural heritage in Africa, and for dealing ‘realistically with clear-cut issues concerning the conservation and management of the cultural heritage of the continent, which has added tremendous value to heritage protection and has made them an outstanding example of best practice emulated elsewhere in the world.’¹¹⁵ This, he argued, was because ‘the programme has been able to address the problems facing conservation through technical solutions, and to promote the successful integration of immovable cultural heritage with its social, environmental and economic environment’.¹¹⁶ As argued further by Abungu, a reason for the success of PREMA’s technical conservation approach in African museum and heritage studies was its ‘participatory methods’ and tangible results. According to him, this provided:

A networking model for the sector, reinforced capacities in various areas and, above all, renewed confidence and enhanced skills among African heritage professionals. The participation of African heritage professionals and institutions gave rise to an awareness of responsibility for African heritage stemming from a new sense of ownership.¹¹⁷

He therefore commended ICCROM for its commitment to Africa 2009 as ‘the only programme which has consistently, over a period of ten years, invested substantially in the preservation and management of immovable cultural heritage, an area in which African governments have not invested, even as custodians’.¹¹⁸ One of the crucial activities of the Africa 2009 programme was implementing the UNESCO Global Strategy. According to the 2010 report, ‘the Africa 2009 programme, which was placed in continuity to the Global Strategy, has played an important role

¹¹⁴ Abungu, ICCROM and Africa, 62.

¹¹⁵ Abungu ICCROM and Africa, 69..

¹¹⁶ Abungu ICCROM and Africa, 69.

¹¹⁷ Abungu ICCROM and Africa, 69.

¹¹⁸ Abungu ICCROM and Africa, 68.

in this matter'.¹¹⁹ As argued by Abungu, 'through Africa 2009 it was realised that there was a need, not only to assist state parties in ratifying the 1972 Convention, but also to collaborate in the implementation of the Global Strategy to increase the representation of African heritage on the World Heritage List'.¹²⁰ Mechanisms in the Africa 2009 programme used to achieve the Global Strategy objectives, according to Abungu, included:

- assisting in the preparation of files for the World Heritage List;
- encouraging the identification of Projects Situés for the preparation of management and conservation plans for sites identified on tentative national lists;
- assisting in preparation of international assistance requests to the African World Heritage Fund.¹²¹

As stated on the UNESCO website, 'the Global Strategy was launched in 1994 by the World Heritage Committee for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List. Its aim is to ensure that the List reflects the world's cultural and natural diversity of outstanding universal value'.¹²² According to the website, by 'adopting the Global Strategy, the World Heritage Committee wanted to broaden the definition of World Heritage to better reflect the full spectrum of our world's cultural and natural treasures and to provide a comprehensive framework and operational methodology for implementing the World Heritage Convention'.¹²³ 'This new vision', according to the website, 'goes beyond the narrow definitions of heritage and strives to recognise and protect sites that are outstanding demonstrations of human coexistence with the land, as well as of human interactions, cultural coexistence, spirituality and creative expression'.¹²⁴ 'Crucial to the Global Strategy are efforts to encourage countries to become State

¹¹⁹ 'Final report of the Africa 2009, 2010', 20.

¹²⁰ Abungu, 'ICCROM and Africa', 67.

¹²¹ Abungu, 'ICCROM and Africa', 68.

¹²² UNESCO World Heritage Convention Global Strategy, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/globalstrategy>, accessed 17/06/2010

¹²³ UNESCO Global Strategy

¹²⁴ UNESCO Global Strategy

Parties to the Convention, to prepare Tentative Lists and to prepare nominations of properties from categories and regions currently not well-represented on the World Heritage List.’¹²⁵

The implementation of the ‘Global Strategy’ to obtain a more balanced representation includes ‘national efforts to prepare or update ‘Tentative Lists’ and to nominate new sites through the ‘Preparatory Assistance’ programme that included both regional meetings and provision of technical and/or financial assistance’.¹²⁶ As stated in the Africa 2009-2010 report, ‘in line with the Global Strategy, Africa 2009 has favoured the recognition of a broad spectrum of heritage properties. African professionals now adopt this as witnessed by the serious evolution of the tentative lists of properties that can potentially be inscribed on the World Heritage List, which are being prepared by African heritage institutions’.¹²⁷

According to Lasse Steiner and Bruno S. Frey, in a paper analysing the efficacy of the Global Strategy to remedy inherent imbalance in the World Heritage System, they traced the origin of the Global Strategy initiative to ‘the highly unequal distribution of Sites according to countries and continents’.¹²⁸ They argued that although 46 per cent of the Sites are in Europe, only nine per cent are in Africa. This imbalance of World Heritage Sites according to continents and countries, they argued, has ‘been present from the beginning, and it has become a subject of major concern within the World Heritage Commission and the World Heritage Centre, UNESCO, and beyond’.¹²⁹ Some scholars have questioned the legitimacy of the List and argued

¹²⁵ UNESCO Global Strategy

¹²⁶ Final Report, 2010’, 20.

¹²⁷ Final Report, 2010’, 26.

¹²⁸ L. Steiner and B. S Frey, ‘Imbalances in World Heritage List: Did the UNESCO Global Strategy work?’ Working Paper, No. 14, University of Zurich, (2011), 3. www.econ.uzh.ch/static/wp/econwp014.pdf, accessed 10/08/2011

¹²⁹ Steiner and Frey, ‘Imbalance in World Heritage List’, 3.

that ‘the concept of World Heritage is flawed by the fact that it privileges an idea originating in the West, which requires an attitude toward material culture that is distinctly European in origin’.¹³⁰ Steiner and Frey therefore concluded that ‘the imbalance did not decrease and perhaps increased over time, thus reflecting the inability of the Global Strategy to achieve a more balanced distribution of Sites’.¹³¹

The argument that the World Heritage List ‘was conceived, supported and nurtured by the industrially developed societies, reflecting concern for a type of heritage that was highly valued in those countries’,¹³² is a common criticism of the World Heritage System, especially in relation to African heritage and the World Heritage List. As Francesco Bandarin, the Director of the World Heritage Centre, acknowledged, ‘inscription has become a political issue. It is about prestige, publicity and economic development’.¹³³ The World Heritage System is thus (to Steiner and Frey) ‘highly politicised, as many political and bureaucratic representatives of countries consider it a worthwhile goal from which they personally profit’.¹³⁴

As seen in all the training of both CHDA and Africa 2009, the focus and ultimate objective of Heritage training is ‘the preparation of nomination dossiers for the World Heritage Committee’¹³⁵ to increase the representivity of African Heritage on the World Heritage List’.¹³⁶

Notwithstanding CHDA’s claim that it ‘is concerned with a broad holistic development of African Heritage’, its origin in conservation management training for preparation of dossiers and

¹³⁰ Steiner and Frey, ‘Imbalances in World Heritage List’, 7.

¹³¹ Steiner and Frey, ‘Imbalances in World Heritage List’, 2.

¹³² Steiner and Frey, ‘Imbalances in World Heritage List’, 7.

¹³³ Steiner and Frey, ‘Imbalances in World Heritage List’, 8.

¹³⁴ Steiner and Frey, ‘Imbalances in World Heritage List’, 7.

¹³⁵ CHDA Brochure, 6.

¹³⁶ ‘Final report of the Africa 2009, 2010’, 26.

Conservation Management plans for World Heritage Listing continues to be the focus of its programmes and activities, as stated on its website.¹³⁷

As stated on the CHDA website, a World Heritage Nomination Training Course from 15 to 26 November 2010 was conducted by the CHDA in Windhoek, Namibia, in conjunction with the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF), the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, and the Ministry of Youth and National Service, Sport and Culture of Namibia. The background to the course was located in ‘The African World Heritage Fund (AWHF), which launched in 2006 to support African State parties to implement the UNESCO Global Strategy of ensuring a geo-cultural balance on the World Heritage List. Towards this objective, AWHF put in place the training programme to build up competence of African heritage professionals in the development of nomination dossiers and management plans required by the World Heritage Committee when considering sites for listing on the World Heritage List.’¹³⁸



The advertisement stated that the course was to run in three phases, consisting firstly of a two-week workshop in Namibia, from 1-12 November 2010. This first meeting was to serve as an introduction to the nomination process, and evaluate initial country nomination proposals to establish follow-up work; followed by eight months of fieldwork by the participants in their

¹³⁷ Centre for Heritage Development in Africa, www.heritageinafrica.org/about-us.html - accessed 23/06/10 - The training it has conducted, as stated on its website, includes: Training in Conservation of Movable Heritage, Training in Conservation of Immoveable Heritage and Fund-raising; Training in Public Programming and Education; Training in the development of nomination dossier for World Heritage List; Training in Heritage Impact Assessment; Training in Exhibition Design; Training in Collections Management and Storage; and Training in stakeholder participation.

¹³⁸ The stated objectives of the course are: ‘to give competence to African natural and cultural heritage professionals, thereby improving the quality of African nomination dossiers submitted to the World Heritage Committee; to increase the number and diversity of African heritage properties on the World Heritage List. To reinforce the network of heritage professionals working on African World Heritage sites and set up a support and follow up mechanism to facilitate delivery of expected outcomes. Advertisement for World Centre for Heritage Development in Africa, Heritage Nomination Dossier Training.’ www.heritageinafrica.org/about-us.html - accessed 23/06/10,

countries, during which time they would receive the assistance of a nominated mentor with relevant expertise to enhance their nomination work. During this phase, institutions may receive up to US\$15 000 from the AWHF to carry out work required for the successful completion of the nomination. The course concluded with another two-week workshop, held in September 2011, to evaluate the nomination work done by participants, with a view to sending the completed nomination to the World Heritage Centre.

Although detailed course content of the proposed course was not supplied in the advertisement, the orientation of the course as stated in the advertisement allows a critical glimpse into the course. It focused exclusively on giving ‘competence to African natural and cultural heritage professionals thereby improving the quality of African nomination dossiers submitted to the World Heritage Committee in order to increase the number and diversity of African heritage properties on the World Heritage List’,¹³⁹ This stated objective allows us to understand how the PREMA/CHDA/Africa 2009 approach to African museum and heritage studies is a process of acquisition of ‘technologies of heritage’ for add-on of Africa heritage as an appendage to what Laurajane Smith referred to as the Authorized Heritage Discourse through inscription on the World Heritage List.¹⁴⁰

World Heritage List¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Advertisement, ‘Heritage Nomination Dossier Training’.

¹⁴⁰ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 37.

¹⁴¹ The World Heritage List is an international inventory of sites of ‘outstanding universal value which can be described as is one of the main tool of the UNESCO World Heritage System. The 1972 ‘Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage’, commonly referred to as the World Heritage Convention was adopted by the UNESCO in 1976 upon ratification by 25 countries. Its objective was to ‘ensure the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generation of cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value’ A. Laesk & A. Fyall, *Managing World Heritage Sites*, (London: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2006), 7.

According to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'World heritage is first and foremost a list. Everything on the list, whatever its previous context, is now placed in a relationship with other masterpieces, and the List becomes the context of everything on it'.¹⁴² She argues that the list is 'the most visible, least costly, and most conventional way to 'do something' – something symbolic – about neglected communities and traditions'. She goes further, suggesting that as a 'symbolic gesture' the list 'confer[s]' value on what is listed, consistent with the principle that you cannot protect what you do not value'.¹⁴³ This should be seen against the critique of the Heritage process suggested by Laurajane Smith, that 'the European sense of the historical monument as universally significant underwrites this convention, which inevitably universalises Western values and systems of thought, which has become global common sense'.¹⁴⁴ Critically, apart from criticism of 'universalising Western concepts of heritage and the value inherent within it', the process of World Heritage listing as the focus of heritage studies can be argued to be a mechanism of the AHD to 'add-on 'other' heritage', based on criteria dictated by its own geo-cultural political interest'.¹⁴⁵

Joost Fontein, argued that the World Heritage Convention, legitimises the Eurocentric discourse upon which the World Heritage System is founded; these discourses of heritage, according to him, are 'based on ideas of time and the past as a linear and progressive discourse of nature in opposition, and at threat from man (culture), and a discourse of nationalism and internationalism'.¹⁴⁶ One of the criticisms of the World Heritage Convention is its nature/culture

¹⁴² B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'World Heritage and Cultural Economics', in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformation*, Ivan Karp et al (eds.), (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 170

¹⁴³ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 'World Heritage', 170.

¹⁴⁴ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 37.

¹⁴⁵ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 28.

¹⁴⁶ J. Fontein, UNESCO, Heritage and Africa: an anthropological critique of World Heritage, *Occasional Papers* – The University of Edinburgh, Centre of African Studies, 2000, 31.

dichotomy, which to him was baggage of the influence of anthropology on the World Heritage Convention. He concluded that not only the discourse of the separation of nature from culture makes the Convention Eurocentric, but also ‘its restrictive concept of cultural heritage, with its monumentalist biases’.¹⁴⁷

That the World Heritage Convention is intrinsically Eurocentric is a fact admitted by even the most conservative advocate of the WHC,¹⁴⁸ but the actual ideological location and historical source of the criteria are rarely alluded to. This leads to a lack of concrete understanding of its history and its historicity. According to Ascension Hernandez Martinez, ‘the cornerstone of modern conservation and restoration’¹⁴⁹ was Cesare Brandi (1906-86) whose ideas on the Conservation versus Restoration debate in the protection of European architecture, ‘were incorporated into the international Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, more widely known as the Venice Charter of 1931. It was adopted as the principal doctrinal document by ICOMOS, founded in 1965, and since then it has become the main reference for assessment of cultural heritage sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List’.¹⁵⁰ This UNESCO paradigm, ‘translated to an African context’ according to De Jong, ‘encapsulates twin programmes, concerning restoration, architecture, and conservation – in particular, measures to counter illicit trade in antiquities and art objects’.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ A. Laesk and A. Fyall, *Managing World Heritage Sites*, (London: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2006).

¹⁴⁷ Fontein, ‘UNESCO, Heritage and Africa: an anthropological critique of World Heritage’, 36.

¹⁴⁸ Laurajane Smith, Ferdinand De Jong, and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett Beverly Butler and Joost Fontein all argued this point.

¹⁴⁹ Laesk & Fyall, *Managing World Heritage Sites*, 251.

¹⁵⁰ Laesk & Fyall, *Managing World Heritage Sites*, 152.

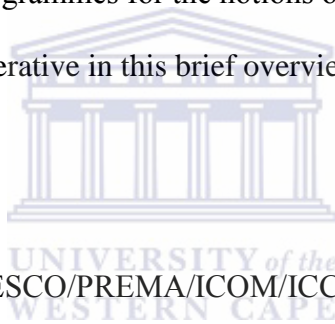
¹⁵¹ F. de Jong, and M Rowlands, (eds.) *Reclaiming Heritage: Alternative Imaginaries of Memory in West Africa*, (California: Life Coast Press, Inc, 2006), 17.

African museum and heritage studies

According to Corinne Kratz and Ivan Karp,

The International Council of Museums (ICOM), International Centre for Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and Swedish-African Museum Programme (SAMP) have been among the most important sustaining organisations for African museums, yet no one has considered the effects, both positive and negative, of these organisations on the work of museums and the orientation of museum professionals', especially in Africa.¹⁵²

Given this apt injunction by Kratz and Karp, it is necessary to understand the implications of these Western-initiated training programmes for the notions of 'African', 'African heritage', and the approach to heritage studies operative in this brief overview of the history of museum and heritage training on the continent.



Notwithstanding the merits of UNESCO/PREMA/ICOM/ICCROM and other agencies' interventions in African museums training programmes, there are considerable problems in the orientations to museum and heritage studies advocated. As seen in the pedigree and orientation to museum and heritage studies in these agencies' sponsored initiatives in Africa, they remain deeply Eurocentric. What is Eurocentric in museum and heritage studies is the universalising of museum and heritage studies programmes in an African context, through the imposition, adoption, appropriation and replication of European pedagogy. The peculiar, distinctive history of museums in Europe, which necessitated a specific training orientation and focus for European

¹⁵² I. Karp, C. A. Kratz, L. Szwaja, T. Ybarra-Frausto with G. Buntinx, B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and C. Rassool, 'Introduction', *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformation*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 15.

museum and heritage professionals, was universalised in Africa through uncritical appropriation, as seen in the curricula of museum and heritage studies in Africa.

The International Council of African Museums (AFRICOM), the central body for museums and heritage professionals in Africa, claimed the rationale for its existence was ‘to kill the Western model of the museum in Africa so that new methods for the preservation and promotion of Africa’s cultural heritage can be allowed to flourish’.¹⁵³ However, it continues to hold on to the apron strings of ICOM, which promised ‘to maintain close and privileged links with AFRICOM’.¹⁵⁴ The implications of this orientation for African museum and heritage studies is exemplified in the global strategy training designed to effect the ‘add-on’ of African heritage to the World Heritage List, without a critical engagement with the cultural politics implicit in this process.



As seen in the origin, history, development and curricula of heritage and museum studies programmes on the continent, the notion of ‘African’ as sub-Saharan is taken for granted. As seen in the PREMA Museum and Heritage studies, the ‘African’ focus is limited to sub-Saharan nationalities of professionals acquiring conservation technological skills and listing of heritage sites in these countries. Saouma-Ferero, who was responsible for the activities of the UNESCO Global Strategy in Africa, cautioned that it would be a ‘non-achievement’¹⁵⁵ if African experts did not ‘explore ways of understanding, defining and presenting their heritage from their own

¹⁵³ J R. Glaser and B. C. Craig (eds.) ‘Birth of the International Council of African Museums’, *Information on Training, Newsletter of ICTOP: the ICOM International Committee for the Training of Personnel*, Vol. 16, No. 2, (November 1999-2001). <http://www.icom.org/ictop/> accessed 12/04/2010

¹⁵⁴ Glaser and Craig, ‘Birth of the International Council of African Museums’.

¹⁵⁵ Galia Saouma-Ferero, ‘Africa 2009: a Story of African Empowerment’, *Museum International*, Vol. 58, No., 1-2, (2006), 87.

perspective rather than from the prevailing Eurocentric view'.¹⁵⁶ However, the philosophy and pedagogical orientation of museums and heritage studies focused on technical skills acquisition continues to rely on European models of heritage training. It is for these reasons, according to Saouma-Ferero, that 'African experts were empowered to present and define their heritage in ways that highlighted the specificity of African heritage in their own terms without necessarily referring to European categories of appreciation'.¹⁵⁷

The problem is that this 'highlighted specificity of African heritage' was construed in these training programmes as traditional, ethnic sub-Saharan. The feature of specificity of African heritage was defined by the lack of distinction between nature and culture, and beliefs in importance of sacred sites and the intrinsic relationship between tangible and intangible. These features of African heritage, including the role of traditional rulers and indigenous knowledge marked by oral tradition, risked not only essentializing the notion of African heritage as a distinct human experience shared only by a distinct breed of humanity, but also of relegating African heritage to a confined, marginalised exteriority, based on its supposedly specific African features.

As can be seen in numerous writings, African heritage is defined and conceptualised in these UNESCO/ICCROM/ICOM-sponsored training programmes as limited to inherited birthrights¹⁵⁸ of sub-Saharan Africa, consisting mainly of natural sites and pre-colonial cultural artefacts in intangible form, which were destroyed through colonialism and risk disappearing in the post-

¹⁵⁶ Saouma-Ferero, *Africa 2009: a Story of African Empowerment*, 87.

¹⁵⁷ Saouma-Ferero, *Africa 2009: a Story of African Empowerment*, 87.

¹⁵⁸ See CHDA definition of Heritage discussed earlier in CHDA Brochure 2011.

colonial present.¹⁵⁹ The approach to heritage studies, according to this notion of African heritage, is thus the acquisition of technical skills of heritage conservation to retrieve and preserve the remnants of these inherited, destroyed and neglected pre-colonial heritages, deemed to be at risk of disappearing through decay.¹⁶⁰

This uncritical appending to the sub-Saharan notion of ‘African’ and the emphasis on technical skills acquisition without questioning the power dynamics inherent in ‘heritage’ as a concept and practice places it on a first-order level of ‘African’ heritage studies at best. While all the training initiatives laid emphasis on socio-economic development as a desired outcome of heritage studies through engagement with state parties in implementing UNESCO guidelines, one topic that is missing in all the training initiatives is lack of engagement with the cultural politics of heritage and its implications for museum and heritage studies in Africa.

In 1998, when PREMA was inaugurating EPA Benin, and later PDMA in Mombasa, and Africa 2009 was yet to come, a process was developing between the RIM, the UWC and the UCT. These three institutions jointly convened a postgraduate diploma programme in Museum and Heritage Studies, which was renamed the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies in 2004. The programme claimed that it was ‘distinctive in that the kind of education it offers is driven by an emphasis on conceptual understanding of the terrain of public culture and of the challenges of social and institutional transformation and of the work of representation’.¹⁶¹ This

¹⁵⁹ Abungu, ‘ICCROM and Africa’.

¹⁶⁰ George Abungu and Arinze stated specifically that PREMA was developed to prevent deterioration of collections and Africa 2009 to address immovable heritage increasingly at risk’ in Abungu, ICCROM and Africa, 63.

¹⁶¹ Proposal to Rockefeller Foundation.

was ‘linked to new possibilities of developing significant layers of public intellectuals and fostering critical public scholarship as the central component of a democratic public sphere’.¹⁶²

In defining itself in relation to other heritage-training initiatives in Africa, the programme stated that ‘through linking together theory with practice, the Diploma is able to challenge the emphasis in several African postcolonial training programmes in culture and heritage which have tended to argue for creating mostly technically-oriented museum professionals’.¹⁶³ The APMHS approach to museum and heritage studies was therefore, premised on the objective of avoiding the ‘danger that heritage studies will become a form of technical training and a ‘new breed of heritage workers’ will continue to be manual functionaries’.¹⁶⁴

Notwithstanding this apparent rejection of a focus on technical training as an approach to museum and heritage studies, the programme has since its inception incorporated technical museology training through the offering of a course in heritage conservation technologies of Collections and Conservation management and Public Programming, as part of the electives offered by the Robben Island Museum. In spite of this incorporation of training in conservation technologies, the next chapter will attempt an exploration of the fundamental distinction between the approach to museum and heritage studies on the continent and the approach to African heritage and museum studies encapsulated by the APMHS.

¹⁶² Proposal to Rockefeller Foundation.

¹⁶³ Proposal to Rockefeller Foundation.

¹⁶⁴ Witz, ‘An Interim Position’, 12.

Chapter Two

The African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS): Towards an Intellectual History of a Knowledge Production Experiment

In seeking to ground our heritage in these ideals, we are striking out in a new direction.¹

We are interested in those forms of disciplinary practice in history and archaeology, which have sought expressly to transcend the bounds of the academy and to seek ways of negotiating historical and archaeological knowledge in a direct relationship with communities and other publics as a means of empowerment, democratisation, access and critical engagement. ...we are concerned about opening up and strengthening the possibilities for critical engagement, scholarship and knowledge formation.²

The various reflections on the origin and history of the Diploma Programme by Leslie Witz & Carohn Cornell, Ciraj Rassool and Erin Finnegan,³ useful as they were in laying the framework for an historical analysis of the APMHS, are scattered over diverse sources and contextually outdated. This is because the Diploma programme had changed drastically in its convening structure, curriculum content and pedagogical orientation since these last reflections. The dates of these reflections and the changes in contents, structure and student composition are not the only reasons an updated reflection of the programme is necessary. More importantly, it is necessary to understand how the expanding research in the field of Public History at UWC has defined the pedagogical distinctiveness of the APMHS approach to museum and heritage studies

¹ Nelson Mandela Speech at the official opening of the Robben Island Museum, Heritage Day, September 24 1997. <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/1997>, accessed 16/01/2009.

² C. Rassool, 'Power, Knowledge and the Politics of the Public Past'. – *African Studies*, Vol. 69, No.1, (April 2010), 79-101.

³ See 'L. Witz and C. Cornell, 'From Robben Island to Makapan's Cave: Transforming Heritage and Museum Studies in South Africa', paper presented at the World Archaeological Conference, (Cape Town, 10-14 January 1999), 1., C. Rassool 'The Rise of Heritage and the reconstitution of History'., E. Finnegan, 'The African Postgraduate Diploma Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies: at the Confluence of Critical Theory, Public History and Socio-Political Transformation in South Africa', September 2006, Robben Island Museum, Education Department, Academic Committee meeting brief, 30-31 October 2006.

in Africa, how this is related to the Robben Island Museum and its implications for heritage studies as a terrain of public historical knowledge production. These factors, combined with the distinction claimed from other programmes on heritage studies in Africa, make a critical reflection of the sociology of knowledge and intellectual history of the programme necessary. This chapter thus traces the history of the programme, from its inception in 1998 to its branding as the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies in 2003.

Leslie Witz, the convenor of the programme, and Carohn Cornell, then from the Academic Development Centre at UWC, traced the context in which the programme originated in the immediate post-Apartheid political imperatives of transformation in the cultural heritage sector in South Africa.⁴ They located the call for transformation in the heritage sector to Nelson Mandela's speech at the formal opening of the Robben Island Museum on Heritage Day in September 1997. In his speech, Mandela deplored the (then current) situation:

During colonial and apartheid times, our museums and monuments reflected the experiences and political ideals of a minority to the exclusion of others. ... Most people had little or nothing to say in the depiction of their history in textbooks, libraries, or research institutions.⁵ The demeaning portrayal of black people in particular – that is African, Indian and Coloured people – is painful to recall. ... Of our museums, all but a handful – three per cent – represented the kind of heritage, which glorified mainly white and colonial history. And even the small glimpse of black history in the others was largely fixed in the grip of racist and other stereotypes. ... Our cultural institutions cannot stand apart from our Constitution and our Bill of Rights. Within the context of our fight for a democratic South Africa and the entrenchment of human rights, can we afford exhibitions in our museums depicting any of our people as lesser human beings, sometimes in natural history museums usually reserved for the

⁴ Witz and Carohn, 'From Robben Island to Makapan's cave', 1.

⁵ This is an echo of 'little was said about ways in which the public could directly influence, alter and shape exhibits in the future' – L. Witz & C. Rassool, 'The Dog, the Rabbit and the Reluctant Historians', *South African Historical Journal*, 27:1, 238-242. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02582479208671748>, accessed 9/10/2009.

depiction of animals? Can we continue to tolerate our ancestors being shown as people locked in time?⁶

Part of the efforts to correct this uncomfortable climate in the heritage sector in South Africa condemned by Mandela was a series of initiatives, culminating in the establishment in 1998 of the Postgraduate Diploma in Museum and Heritage Studies. This diploma, jointly offered by the University of the Western Cape, the University of Cape Town, and the Training Programme of the Robben Island Museum, was described as ‘an ambitious and exciting programme to provide training ‘to effect change’ in the sector’, according to Witz.⁷ Witz reflected on ‘some educational practices in the Postgraduate Diploma in Museum and Heritage Studies’⁸ in its first four years, and reviewed the many strands that went into establishing the Diploma in 1997.⁹ According to him, the three strands that constitute the establishment of the Diploma were: ‘(1) the call by the Department of Arts and culture Task Team (ACTAG) for a proper training strategy and recommendation by the South African Museum Association (SAMA) for the establishment of a National Heritage Training Institute. (2) The Robben Island Museum’s aim of becoming a leading player in providing heritage education (3) The growing interest and teaching in the sphere of public history at the History Department of the University of the Western Cape’.¹⁰

In a Swedish African Museum Programme (SAMP) conference paper delivered in August 1999, Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz, the convenors of the programme since its inception, presented a detailed intellectual configuration and sociology of knowledge that informed the convening of the Diploma in Museum and Heritage studies in 1998. According to them,

⁶ Nelson Mandela, speech at the formal opening of Robben Island Museum, Heritage Day, 24 September 1997.

⁷ Proposal submitted to Rockefeller Foundation.

⁸ Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 1.

⁹ Witz and Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s cave’.

¹⁰ Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 1.

The basis of the new Postgraduate Diploma in Museum and Heritage Studies, which emerged, was a partnership between the academy and institutions in the public sphere. With the intention of the Robben Island Museum to create a platform for education, negotiations were entered into between the Robben Island Training Programme and representatives of the University of the Western Cape and the University of Cape Town. These representatives were academics in the disciplines of History, Art History, Fine Art, Archaeology, Literary Studies, Anthropology, Architecture and Urban Planning. In line with the goals of the transformation of Higher Education in South Africa, the partnership recognised the need to address historical inequalities between different universities. The creation of a partnership with the Robben Island Museum, and the involvement of representatives of other museums such as the District Six Museum and other heritage sectors, ranging from the built environment to national parks, ensured that the new area of learning would also constitute a space between the academy and the public domain. This has enabled us to think about training in museum and heritage studies as linked to new possibilities of developing public scholarship. Such education would not involve the mere technical process of simply training people for job categories in museums, but would emphasise an understanding of the conceptual challenges of transformation. If museums are going to take forward their objectives of transformation beyond limited frameworks, this will depend on the extent they are able to develop as sites of research, not only by academics, but by their own staff. This research needs to be rooted in their archives and collections.¹¹

They further stated that the beginnings and origins of the Diploma lay in a convergence of different initiatives and developments:

1. It emerges out of a meeting of interests in heritage education emerging out of a transforming South African Museums Association (SAMA) as well as new policy initiatives from within the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST).
2. Its origins also lie in the opening up of the space of 'public history', particularly in the wake of Nelson Mandela's 'walk to freedom' through the 'prison gate' at Victor Verster Prison in February 1990. Previously, radical historians had been limited to attempts to popularise academic social history research, especially aimed at a working class audience. Now 'public history' embraced those arenas and institutional settings in which the public encounters

¹¹ C. Rassool and L. Witz, 'Transforming Heritage education in South Africa: A Partnership between the Academy and the Museum', SAMP 2001: Strengthening the Network: A meeting of African Museums of the Swedish African Museum Programme, 22-27 August 1999.

productions of the past, particularly in visual form, each with its own codes. At the same time, the old ways in which historians have held on to notions of the inherent superiority of academic historical knowledge began to be called into question. These were some of the key issues which informed the way in which new courses in Public History and Visual History began to emerge at the University of the Western Cape. This was also connected to the development of research into museums, tourism, festivals, the TRC and photographic archives as sites of history.

3. At the same time, as well, the Mayibuye Centre came into existence at the University of the Western Cape. This was a project which sought to develop a museum of apartheid and an archive of resistance, and to provide a forum for discussion of heritage policy. The Mayibuye Centre, based on the archives of the old International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF), which had been returned to South Africa, was a central institution, which lobbied for the transformation of museums as well as other areas of heritage. The Robben Island Museum, 'cultural showcase of the new South Africa', can be seen as the culmination of the cultural work of the Mayibuye Centre and its antecedent institutions such as IDAF and even the Treason Trial Defence Fund of the 1950s.

4. More and more, institutions in the public domain were becoming sites of contestation over heritage and representation. New institutions such as the District Six Museum, which had developed as an independent museum space and an arena of knowledge production, began to see the need for educational programmes in heritage and the cultural work of museums.¹²

I have taken the liberty of quoting at length to show the different angles from which the history of the programme can be approached; the point of departure for this study, however, is the origin of the programme in the Robben Island Museum. The focus is on the RIM project at the University of the Western Cape, through its relationship with the Public History research project in the History department, and its connection to the Mayibuye Centre, now the Robben Island-UWC Mayibuye Archive, and the Institute for historical Research, now designated the Centre for Humanities Research. The importance of RIM as a point of departure was a recognition that the involvement of a heritage institution of RIM's history and status, both nationally and internationally, with the academy in conceptualizing a heritage programme in Africa is

¹² Rassool and Witz, 'Transforming Heritage education in South Africa', 1-2.

significant in the transformation of knowledge production in post-1994 South Africa.¹³ Tracing the history of how this fusion of the academy and an institution of public culture (with its origin in anti-apartheid resistance history) came to be defines the critical Public History approach to museum and heritage studies in the APMHS. An understanding of how this, in turn, defined RIM as a museum of public historical scholarship, and a description of its challenges, is also the objective of this chapter.

As stated by Rassool, the Project of ‘Public Pasts’ in the History Department at UWC was set up to explore ‘the mediations and transactions between the academy and public historical scholarship’ that were developing in post-apartheid South Africa. Crucially, according to him, ‘another expression of this was the emergence of the postgraduate Diploma in Museum and Heritage Studies’, which, he stated, its coordinators ‘argued was located between the academy and its public sphere’.¹⁴ To locate the APMHS specifically in this nexus of Public History, an extension of the question posed by Leslie Witz about the basis for the disciplinary location of the programme in the chair of Public History at the University of the Western Cape in 2001¹⁵ will guide the exploration of the intellectual history and sociology of knowledge of the APMHS. I will be taking further Witz’s question of what Public History is, and why and how the field of Public History is related to a programme on museum and heritage studies. This will be done by exploring how the specific strand of Public History developed at the UWC History Department is

¹³RITP report for 1998 – 2002 – RIM Institutional records, Robben Island Museum.

¹⁴ C. Rassool, ‘The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa’, (PhD. Dissertation, University of the Western Cape, May 2004), UWC Thesis, UWC Library, 178.

¹⁵ Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 1.

definitive of the Robben Island Museum as a museum of public scholarship, through its collaboration on the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies.¹⁶

Robben Island Museum, the Mayibuye Centre, the Robben Island Training Programme and the Diploma in Museum and Heritage Studies

Robben Island is a source of enlightenment and education on the dangers of myopic philosophies.¹⁷

According to Clifford Shearing and Michael Kempa, the Robben Island Museum was one of the initiatives of the new, democratic South African government to facilitate political transition from apartheid to a ‘fully established, inclusive, and prosperous democracy’.¹⁸ In their description:

Robben Island Museum is a site for the preservation and exhibition of objects thought to be of lasting value, but also a site designed to promote a hope sensibility; it is also more than that. It belongs to a class that we might think of as ‘governance museums’. That is, museums that are concerned with promoting sensibilities rather than with simply exhibiting valued objects. In these museums, the exhibits are intentional vehicles for shaping consciousness.

If we think beyond museums to symbolic sites more generally, we might think of Robben Island as a site of ‘figurative governance’. That is, as an instance of figurative sites designed to shape sensibilities that it is hoped will promote a desired future by promoting certain ways of thinking and therefore acting across the population to shape the identities of South Africans as part of ‘citizenship education’.¹⁹

‘Refusal’ is what Robben Island has been and is being designed to exhibit; and through this, to celebrate a ‘way of being’ worthy of South Africans.²⁰

¹⁶ Witz, ‘Interim Position’.

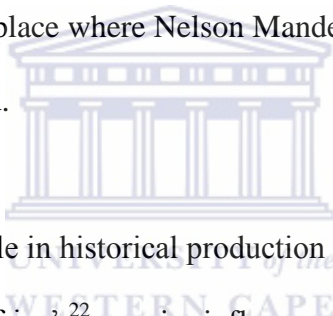
¹⁷ Walter Sisulu, Robben Island - Nomination file for World Heritage Status, Pretoria: Government of South Africa, 1999, 4.

¹⁸ C. Shearing and M. Kempa, ‘A Museum of Hope: A Story of Robben Island’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 592, Hope, Power and Governance (Mar., 2004), 65.

¹⁹ Shearing and Kempa, ‘A Museum of Hope’, 67.

²⁰ Shearing and Kempa, ‘A Museum of Hope’, 49 - 68.

Because of Robben Island's role as the Gulag of the apartheid system, and its central role in the narratives of resistance and the ultimate collapse of apartheid, its iconic status as a symbol of resistance, struggle, hope, and reconciliation was generally accepted in public and academic narratives of post-apartheid South Africa. It was in this socio-cultural-political climate in August 1995 that the South African Cabinet established the 'Future of Robben Island Committee',²¹ with Ahmed Kathrada, an ex-Robben Island political prisoner and confidant of Nelson Mandela as Chairperson, to decide on the future use of the Island. There were over two hundred public submissions to the committee proposing different uses for the island. However, the consensus of the committee was to transform the site into a museum of the struggle against apartheid, especially given its location as the place where Nelson Mandela and other leaders of the liberation struggle were imprisoned.



Based on its 'key and influential role in historical production and an active shaping force in the production of memory' in South Africa',²² a major influence on the recommendation that the Island become a museum was the proposal from the Mayibuye Centre at the University of the Western Cape. The Mayibuye Centre, established in 1991 at the UWC as a repository for the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF) archival holdings, submitted a proposal to Cabinet in September 1996. Details of the recommendation are contained in a 'Suggested Robben Island Action Plan for the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology' prepared by Andre Odendaal, then Director of the Mayibuye Centre at UWC, dated 4 March 1996.²³

²¹ The Cabinet established the Future of Robben Island Committee in August 1995 to deliberate and come up with acceptable proposal for the future of Robben Island, given its history and links to the biography of the most prominent leaders of the post-apartheid government, notably Nelson Mandela.

²² Rassool, 'The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa', 202.

²³ Andre Odendaal, Suggested Robben Island Action Plan for the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, March, 1996. (Cape Town, CHR archives, UWC)

The 'Robben Island Action Plan' submitted to the Minister stated that 'Robben Island occupies a unique place in South African history and is perhaps the most symbolically important historical site in South Africa'²⁴. Its vision for Robben Island consisted of four points:

- The island should become a lasting memorial to the struggle for freedom and democracy in South Africa;
- It should be developed as a dynamic 'living' heritage project, which can inspire and unite people in the process of nation building in South Africa, helping also to highlight the role of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology in the broader process of reconstruction in this country;
- This development should be based on a holistic and sustainable development and management plan involving the widest possible range of interest groups;
- The universal symbolism of Robben Island must be retained, inter alia by it becoming an internationally trend-setting historical and cultural heritage project for the 21st century from South Africa.²⁵

To realise these objectives, the proposal suggested 'A three-pronged strategy' for Robben Island, which includes:

- The formal declaration of Robben Island as a National Monument;
- An application to UNESCO for Robben Island to be declared a World Heritage Site;
- The declaration of Robben Island as a declared Cultural Institution (i.e. a national flagship museum, which will become part of the proposed Cape Town Flagship Museum umbrella structure). This model will entail running the island as a site museum, conserving the total environment (a la Tswaing), as well as converting the political prison into a 'Museum of Resistance'.²⁶

The 'three-pronged strategy', according to Odendaal, was to 'ensure a heritage-driven approach to Robben Island as a 'Museum of Resistance', under the auspices of Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, with the island being managed and subject to national (National Monument Council) and the International (World Heritage Convention) conservation

²⁴ Odendaal, 'Suggested Robben Island Action Plan'.

²⁵ Odendaal, 'Suggested Robben Island Action Plan'.

²⁶ Odendaal, 'Suggested Robben Island Action Plan'.

guidelines'.²⁷ Mr Lionel Mtshali, then-Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology declared, in a direct endorsement of proposals by Odendaal, stated that;

- Robben Island should be developed as a World Heritage Site, a National Monument and National Museum, which can become a cultural, Conservation showcase for the new South African democracy, while at the same time maximise the economic, tourism, and educational potential of the island and so encourage its multi-purpose usage.
- With regard to the Museum functions mentioned above, Robben Island should be run as a site museum, where the total environment is conserved in an integrated way, in line with modern international conservation approaches; and that the ex-political prison be converted into a Museum of the Freedom Struggle in South Africa.²⁸

The main, official mandate of RIM, as contained in the ministerial statement, thus focuses on four key aspects:

- The need to commemorate and conserve the historical and political importance of the island;
- Tourism as a means of generating income;
- The natural environment;
- Ensuring Robben Island's ongoing relevance as an inspiration and educational 'living memorial'.²⁹

A major recommendation of the Minister that revealed the origin of the Diploma in Museum and Heritage studies in the Mayibuye Centre, Institute for Historical Research and Research and Public History, is the directive contained in the recommendation, which stated

In order to equip the new Robben Island Museum in an expeditious and cost-effective way, the Minister requested the University of the Western Cape to agree to the incorporation of the Mayibuye Centre and the non-profit Robben Island Gateway project in the Robben Island institution.³⁰

²⁷ Odendaal, Suggested Robben Island Action Plan.

²⁸ Media Statement by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, The Future Management and Development of Robben Island, on Wednesday 4 September 1996. (Cape Town: CHR archives, UWC)

²⁹ Minister of Arts, 4 September 1996.

³⁰ Minister of Arts, 4th September, 1996.

This injunction was crucial because it was ultimately through the acquisition of the Mayibuye collections that Robben Island was eventually actualised as a museum with tangible archival collections, which resulted in its separation from the Institute for Historical Research (IHR) and the location of the Diploma in the Public History initiatives at the History Department. In furtherance of the ministerial mandate, the Interim management authority of the new Robben Island Museum requested Andre Odendaal, in his capacity as RIM interim director, to ‘start negotiation with UWC about implementing the Cabinet resolution as soon as possible’.³¹

To this effect, Odendaal circulated a ‘Discussion Document on Future Possibilities for the Mayibuye Centre, the Institute for Historical Research (IHR), and the University of the Western Cape in Relation to the Development of the Robben Island Museum’.³² A proposal contained in the ‘Discussion Document’ includes:

- UWC merges the collections of the Mayibuye Centre and the Institute for Historical Research and donates this on permanent loan to RIM (with the exception of only the University archives themselves);
- To facilitate this arrangement, a change in the legal status of the IHR and its component part is proposed: the IHR and Mayibuye Centre are formally dissolved as UWC entities, their staff are taken up into the RIM, and only the name of the Centre remains under the new arrangement with RIM (because of the established brand and linkage with UWC)
- RIM jointly sponsors a Chair in Public History in the History Department at UWC for 5 years;
- RIM sponsors the ‘Robben Island Research Project’ run in Conjunction with the department, providing for 3 doctoral students per year to study at

³¹The Working group consisted of the UWC Rector, Prof. Cecil Abrahams, H.C Bredekamp, Director IHR, Prof. Carolyn Hamilton, Wits University, Mr Ahmed Kathrada, RIM interim Board Chairman, Mr. Benedict Martins, Prof. Gary Minkley, History Department, UWC, Prof. Andre Odendaal, Robben Island interim CEO, Mr. Steytler, UWC community Law Centre, and Mr. G Thomas, Chairperson of UWC Council, (Cape Town, CHR archives, UWC.

³² ‘Discussion Document on Future Possibilities for Mayibuye Centre, The Institute for Historical Research (IHR), and the University of the Western Cape in Relation to the Development of the Robben Island Museum’, 9 June 1997, prepared by Andre Odendaal.

the University (from different departments if necessary), as well as joint annual conference/Activity.³³

As can be seen in the last two points in the proposal, especially the fourth, the origin and development of RIM was linked right from the very beginning to the Public History research at UWC history department, which tied the merger of the Mayibuye Centre and the IHR to RIM sponsoring research a Chair in Public History at UWC. More importantly, the centrality of the History Department to the origin of RIM was shown in the ‘immediate actions’ suggested in the proposal, which requested ‘other departments to start becoming involved in RIM developments’,³⁴ for example introducing courses related to Robben Island (as the History Department has done at post-graduate level).³⁵

Odendaal argued for the incorporation of the IHR/Mayibuye Centre and the involvement of the History Department in the Robben Island Museum institution, in terms of research. According to him, this arrangement would help develop capacity and promote UWC as a place for international research, which would attract scholars from throughout South Africa and abroad, and provide an opportunity for multi-disciplinary co-operation, encourage the involvement and

³³ ‘Discussion Document on Future Possibilities for Mayibuye Centre, The Institute for Historical Research (IHR), and the University of the Western Cape in Relation to the Development of the Robben Island Museum’, 9 June 1997.

³⁴ Odendaal, ‘9th June ‘Discussion Document’.

³⁵ Odendaal, ‘9th June ‘Discussion Document’ – According to Odendaal, of benefit to UWC, apart from the ‘prestige and recognition’ synonymous with an association with Robben Island, which highlighted ‘the relevancy of a previously disadvantaged HBU in national life and the process of reconstruction’ would be: ‘Another benefit linked to 4.4 [the above], is that this arrangement will do away with past overlaps and tensions between the three historical interest groups on campus. With the IHR/Mayibuye disappearing in their current form, rigid old distinctions between research and teaching centres, for example, will be done away with, and the History Department will become the central locus of integrated activity in terms of historical theory and practice at UWC. The new Robben Island Archives will serve as collections and research base for the Department, and the RIM will encourage and fund certain History Department-based projects.’

training of postgraduate students, and lead to joint projects and publications.³⁶ In conclusion, he argued in the proposal that:

- There was a moral issue; though UWC is the legal owner of the Mayibuye collections, they should be seen as part of the national heritage and not the narrow property of UWC. It was in this spirit that the ANC recommended that the massive, core IDAF collection, which enabled the Centre to be started, be donated to UWC in 1991...³⁷

Apparently, in response to Odendaal's 'Discussion Document' of the previous day, a draft counter-proposal by the Director, Senior Researcher, and Archivist of the Institute for Historical Research (IHR), dated 10 June 1997, was circulated. The Institute for Historical Research was an existing entity attached to the History Department in the Faculty of Arts. It incorporated the Mayibuye Centre when the latter was established in 1991 at UWC, and both of them constituted a Department in the Faculty of Arts.



The IHR proposal stated that '[T]he Director, Senior Researcher, and Archivist of the IHR support the suggestion of the IHR and Mayibuye Centre component that both the activities of the Centre and IHR be incorporated in Robben Island institutions, on condition that certain pre-conditions are adhered to'.³⁸ As shown in the preconditions, the emphasis was the assertion of the hierarchal order between the IHR and the Mayibuye Centre through emphasis on the inherent disciplinary interdependence of the IHR and Mayibuye Centre. The IHR 'Discussion Document' stated that 'the Director of the IHR is respectfully recognised as the overall head of both

³⁶ Odendaal, '9th June 'Discussion Document'.

³⁷ Odendaal, '9th June 'Discussion Document'.

³⁸ Discussion Document on the future of the IHR in Relation to the Development of the Robben island Museum, dated 10 June 1997 – un-authored, but it can safely be attributed to Prof. H.C. Bredekamp, then-Director of IHR (Cape Town: CHR archives, UWC).

components, the IHR and the Mayibuye Centre;³⁹ and that in terms of the Constitution of the IHR, the Mayibuye Centre and the IHR constitute one single department within the Faculty of Arts'.⁴⁰

There was a response to this rejection of the IHR's incorporation into RIM based on the precondition of the Director of the IHR being recognised as the overall head of both components. Odendaal, after series of meetings between the IHR and the History Department,⁴¹ circulated an updated 'Discussion Document' on 16 June 1997. This updated version specifically modifies the earlier proposal for changing the legal status of the IHR. It instead suggested that,

- To facilitate this arrangement, an administrative change in the status of the IHR is proposed: the IHR remains, but the component Mayibuye centre is formally dissolved as a UWC entity, its staff taken up into RIM, and only the name of the Centre remains under new arrangement with RIM, because of its established brand and linkage to UWC...⁴²

While the updated proposal conceded the independence of the IHR and acceded to its refusal to be merged with RIM, it did reiterate the proposal of RIM sponsorship of a Chair of Public History and doctoral research in the History Department. The updated proposal stated that,

- RIM would jointly sponsor a chair in Public History in the IHR for five years
- RIM sponsors the 'Robben Island Research Project' run in conjunction with the IHR and History Department, providing 3 doctoral students per

³⁹ 10 June 1997 Document on the future of the IHR in Relation to the Development RIM.

⁴⁰ The Director of the IHR, Bredekamp cited various institutional administrative protocols to support this assertion and concluded that 'the IHR does not have any serious objection to the merging of the IHR and the Mayibuye Centre and incorporation into the Robben Island Museum, as long as: the IHR Director shall be consulted about the appointment of any staff member in the RIM's Department of Documentation and Research', in 'Discussion Document on the future of the IHR in Relation to the Development of the Robben Island Museum', dated 10 June 1997.

⁴¹ Odendaal, letter to UWC vice Rector Prof. Cecil Abrahams, dated 27 June 1997 (Cape Town, CHR archives, UWC).

⁴² 'Discussion Document on Future possibilities for Mayibuye Centre, The Institute for Historical Research (IHR), and the University of the Western Cape in Relation to the Development of the Robben Island Museum', 16 June 1997 (Cape Town, CHR archives, UWC).

year to study at the University (from different departments if necessary), as well as a joint annual conference/activity.

One crucial point which clearly shows the intricate relationship of RIM as an institution to Public History Research, the History Department and the APMHS, was item 2.6 of the Proposal, which stated that:

- RIM seeks accreditation from UWC for its National Heritage Training Programme, and discusses ways of linking it to the proposed post-graduate diploma being suggested as an accompaniment to the new chair in Public History.⁴³

As seen in these proposals, Robben Island Museum has its roots in the public historical scholarship nexus between the Mayibuye Centre, IHR and Public History in the History Department at the UWC. More importantly, the proposals showed how a programme of museum and heritage studies from Public History research, through the Mayibuye Centre, is constitutive of Robben Island as a museum. This grounding of its museumness in the acquisition of a counter-archive of public historical knowledge production was reflected in the ‘immediate action’ of the updated ‘Discussion document’, which reiterated ‘introducing courses relating to Robben Island (as the History Department has done at post-graduate level) and pursuing the possibility of giving accreditation to Robben Island National Heritage Training Programme’.⁴⁴

The Robben Island Training Programme (RITP) and the Postgraduate Diploma in Museum and Heritage Studies

As seen in these activities going on at UWC, central to the RIM project is its aspiration to museum and heritage transformation in South Africa through an effort to position itself as a museum of public historical scholarship and research. This orientation informed numerous

⁴³ Odendaal, ‘Discussion Document. 16 June 1997’.

⁴⁴ Odendaal, ‘Discussion Document. 16 June 1997’.

initiatives and projects as constituents of the Robben Island Museum. One of these initiatives was the development of a museum and heritage training programme, to address skills transformation in the heritage sector. A precursor to this initiative was the survey of the demographic composition in the sector, and the review of the existing training programmes by Gerald Corsane in his capacity as the SAMA⁴⁵ Education executive member. Significant findings of the survey were not only that there were not enough black heritage professionals, but also that black people were employed in dead-end, low-level jobs without the prospect of upward mobility. The survey therefore suggested the need for developing a ‘fast track’ heritage management programme to train ‘black heritage professionals’.⁴⁶

In December 1996, Gerard Corsane (who eventually became the first Robben Island Training Programme coordinator) and Gordon Mertz prepared a ‘Business Plan for the establishment of the Robben Island Training Programme (RITP)’, at the request of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) who was considering seed funding for the project.⁴⁷ The background of the Business Plan noted that in all the policies on transformation issues relating to culture and heritage, ‘the provision of appropriate training opportunities has been identified as being vital for ongoing transformation in the heritage sector’.⁴⁸ The problem analysis of the Plan identified that ‘the opportunities which are available need to be constantly reviewed and updated

⁴⁵ SAMA – The South African Museum Association is an association of museums and museum professionals in South Africa.

⁴⁶ Report of Survey conducted by Gerald Corsane in *Robben Island Report 1998- 2002*, Robben Island Museum Institutional Archive, Robben Island.

⁴⁷ G. Corsane and G. Metz, ‘Business Plan for the establishment of the ‘Robben Island Training Programme (RITP)’ at the request of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), December 1996, updated March 1998, Robben Island Institutional archives, Robben Island.

⁴⁸ Corsane and Metz, ‘Business Plan’, 3.

to ensure that they meet the present needs, especially in terms of transformation and development of new approaches'.⁴⁹

The proposal therefore suggested the establishment of the Robben Island Training Programme (RITP) as an immediate priority. The specific objective of the programme was 'to train a core group of black heritage professionals and museologists who can take forward the process of transformation and champion the need for democratising the heritage sector, especially through the development of a co-ordinated training system based on accessibility, equality and redress.'⁵⁰ Its main immediate objective was therefore to develop and present a 'fast track' affirmative action education and training programme, and its long-term vision was to provide a foundation for the establishment of the National Heritage Training Institute (NHT).⁵¹

In line with vision of a vanguard of heritage transformation through critical scholarship, the Business Plan stated that 'the Robben Island Museum will be different to any of the traditional museums in the country.'⁵² It will consequently provide 'an ideal location for a new style of training programme, which will have 'an important impact on capacity building and redress in the heritage sector'⁵³ by offering a 'fresh approach to established paradigms'.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, this imperative for a new approach to heritage studies in the RITP, according to the Business Plan, was modelled on museum and heritage training according to the 'Standards and Ethics for

⁴⁹ Corsane and Metz, 'Business Plan', 9.

⁵⁰ Corsane and Metz, 'Business Plan', 1.

⁵¹ Report on the SIDA supported Robben Island Training Programme (RITP), prepared by Ruth De Bruyn, 2001

⁵² Corsane and Metz, 'Business Plan', 1.

⁵³ Corsane and Metz, 'Business Plan', 1.

⁵⁴ Corsane and Metz, 'Business Plan', 2.

Museum Training Programmes' of ICOM's International Committee for Training of Museum Personnel (ICTOP).⁵⁵

Crucially, the plan offered a rationale for the RITP partnership with the Universities of the Western Cape and Cape Town:

With the development of the RITP in 1997, it soon became apparent that it would benefit potential candidates if the training was certified through a tertiary institution; it was felt that by acquiring certification through a recognised institution the training would be given status and credibility. This would be important, as the affirmative action candidates would receive a respected qualification, which would give them a solid foundation and the standing for their work in the transformation process...⁵⁶

Based on the stated objectives, which were within the framework of the Odendaal proposal, the RITP approached the UWC History Department with a proposal to co-convene a programme in museum and heritage studies, which was accepted. This merger resulted in RITP-designed courses being restructured and incorporated as components of the postgraduate diploma programme in Museum and Heritage Studies Core course and electives.⁵⁷ The incorporated RITP curriculum, modelled on the ICTOP basis standard for museum and heritage studies, consisted of an introductory Orientation Module and six other modules. The orientation module was designed to introduce students to the purpose of museum and heritage studies and key concepts in museum and heritage studies; the second module incorporated into the core course was⁵⁸

Heritage Institutions for a new South Africa;
Historical context: the development of heritage interest groups, heritage institutions, heritage organisations and museums;

⁵⁵ Corsane and Metz, 'Business Plan', 10.

⁵⁶ Corsane and Metz, 'Business Plan', 9.

⁵⁷ Corsane and Metz, 'Business Plan'.

⁵⁸ G. Corsane, Robben Island Training Programme proposed course outline submitted to the UWC History Department, 1997, Leslie Witz private collection.

Philosophical context and contemporary issues: Changing philosophies and paradigms in heritage studies and museology;
Organizational structures: The history, role, structure and status of governmental and non-governmental bodies and their interrelationships;
Legal context Professional context.

The other modules designed for the RITP that became electives on the programme were:

- Heritage Management and Collections Management;
- Researching and interpreting Heritage Material;
- Heritage and the Public I: Communications, Education, Exhibitions, Publications and Human Agencies;
- Heritage and the Public II: Tourism, Public Relations and Marketing;
- Management in Heritage Agencies.⁵⁹

The first two items of this RITP curriculum were incorporated into the core course of the Diploma programme in a fundamentally different way. The conceptual issues were included and the technical topics were dropped. The remaining four modules remained the same, except for the topics on Legal and Professional context added to the 'Management in Heritage Agencies' module to constitute the four UWC-accredited Robben Island Museum offered-electives on the programme. According to Corsane, 'this was a very important achievement as the Diploma will be one of the first qualifications in the country for which two universities will be equally involved in certification'.⁶⁰ The programme had its first intake of about 41 students in March 1998, with personnel and resources drawn from the three convening institutions and with the Robben Island Museum and the University of Cape Town's Michaelis School of Fine Arts as nodes for the diploma.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Corsane, RITP Curriculum, 2 – 3.

⁶⁰ Corsane and Metz, 'Business Plan', 9.

⁶¹ Corsane and Metz, 'Business Plan'.

RIM formally opened in September 1997 and the programme started in March 1998. On 8 July 1998, Andre Odendaal, (then RIM Executive Director) circulated an updated version of his earlier 'Discussion Document',⁶² titled: 'Discussion Document of the Joint UWC/RIM Working Group Re-Proposal for a Cooperation Agreement between the University of the Western Cape and The Robben Island Museum relating to the Mayibuye Centre and other Joint Arrangements'.⁶³ Although the new Discussion Document focused mainly on the incorporation of the Mayibuye Centre into the RIM, significantly it contained as one of its core recommendations a section that is crucial to understanding the challenge of the structural location of the RITP and the disciplinary location of its approach to museum and heritage studies. This section proposed that:

- The staff and administrative component of the Robben Island Heritage Training project are located at the IHR, UWC, consolidating the UWC role in the new Post-Graduate Diploma in Museum and Heritage Studies awarded jointly by UWC and UCT;
- The IHR and History Department at UWC start a Robben Island Project together with RIM, initiating various postgraduate and undergraduate courses and research projects relating to Robben Island.⁶⁴

Gerald Corsane, the first RITP Coordinator, subsequently prepared details for the operation of the proposal titled 'Positioning RITP in Relation to IHR at UWC and RIM'.⁶⁵ The document set out a structure for the RITP in the programme at UWC. It stated that

- The physical base for the RITP will be located within the IHR at the UWC. However, during the contact period for training, which takes place on Robben Island, office and accommodation space will be made available for RITP personnel at RIM.⁶⁶

⁶² Odendaal, 'Discussion Document on 16 June 1997.

⁶³ Discussion Document of the Joint UWC/RIM Working Group Re-Proposal for a Cooperation Agreement Between the University of the Western Cape and The Robben Island Museum relating to the Mayibuye Centre and other Joint Arrangement, Andre Odendaal, 8 July 1998

⁶⁴ Odendaal, Discussion Document, 8 July 1998.

⁶⁵ G. Corsane, 'Positioning RITP in Relation to IHR at UWC and RIM', Annex C – 1998, (Cape Town, CHR archives, UWC)

⁶⁶ Corsane, 'Positioning RITP', 1.

- The Head of the Robben Island Training Programme will be given the title ‘Senior Lecturer’ and the Course Coordinator ‘Lecturer’.⁶⁷

Specifically in relation to the guiding question of this chapter, regarding what Public History is and how the field of Public history is related to a programme in Museum and Heritage Studies co-convened by the Robben Island Museum.⁶⁸ The document stated;

- The Head of the Robben Island Training Programme will have a communication line with the director of IHR at UWC, through the Chair of Public History. The Head of the RITP will have a direct line of responsibility and communication line with the Robben Island Museum through the Manager of the Education Department.⁶⁹

One of the constant points in all discussions of the RIM-UWC working group in connection to the formation of RIM was the focus on Public History, especially expressed in the desire to endow a Chair in Public History at the UWC History Department, in addition to acquiring the Mayibuye archival collections as a central component of its museum structure. This concern however, was not without its own tensions, between the History Department and the IHR, and the RITP and the History Department, over the disciplinary location of the proposed Chair of Public history and the location of the RITP in the Chair of Public History. This problem of disciplinary and structural location of the programme was the basis of Witz’s question discussed earlier.⁷⁰ According to the minutes of the UWC/RIM Working Committee held on 14 August 1998, point six on the agenda states:

Annex C: RITP in relation to UWC was not discussed in detail. Initial discussion pointed to the fact that this matter is still far from settled or agreed upon. In particular, it was felt that there was not enough clarity in the proposal around motivations and strategic thinking. The document needs to outline what a benefit such a positioning of the RITP would be for UWC and for RIM.

⁶⁷ Corsane, ‘Positioning RITP’, 1.

⁶⁸ See Witz, ‘Interim Position’.

⁶⁹ Corsane, ‘Positioning RITP’

⁷⁰ See Witz, ‘Interim Position’.

It was agreed that Gary Minkley would put forward the History Department's view on this proposal, and that together with Henry Bredekamp and Gerard Corsane, re-look at Annex C in terms of motivations and gains for UWC and for RIM.⁷¹

In the 'Report of the Location of RITP – History Department – UWC' subsequently prepared by Gary Minkley for the UWC/RIM Working Group⁷² in response to the RITP proposal, as requested in the minutes of the meeting, it is stated that the 'History Department feels very positive about the relocation of the RITP to the University campus because it would:

- (a) Strengthen the field of Public History in Historical Studies in UWC;
- (b) Provide significant administrative support for the Diploma in Museum and Heritage Studies at the site of its administration;
- (c) Provide an academic environment and a source of educational integrity for the RITP;
- (d) Provide for a more integrated Diploma and enhance the development of subsequent courses in related programmes;
- (e) Add new staff members and expertise at a time when posts in the field of historical studies and at the University are under threat.'⁷³

Nevertheless, he pointed out the challenges and limitations of locating the RITP at the IHR, and expressed the Department's opinion that locating what was essentially a teaching and training programme in an almost exclusively research-based institute was extremely problematic, for two reasons:

- The absence of teaching environment, infrastructure and engagement with the broad disciplinary aspect implied in the RITP;
- The fact that the History Department at UWC has led the way in the field of Public History and remains its area of concentration and development. This is apparent from the key role the Department plays in the Diploma, through its projected development within the programme structure planned for implementation from 1999 (and including CSD Public History team research projects and participation).⁷⁴

⁷¹ Minutes of the UWC/RIM Working Committee held on 14 August 1998 (Cape Town, CHR archives, UWC).

⁷² 'Report of the Location of RITP – History Department – UWC' subsequently prepared by Gary Minkley for the UWC/RIM Working Group, 1998 (Cape Town, CHR archives, UWC).

⁷³ Minkley, 'UWC/RIM Working Group', 1.

⁷⁴ Minkley, 'UWC/RIM Working Group', 1.

Although the brief report warned of the staffing implications, in the context of the ‘rightsizing’ of academic positions then going on at UWC, it nonetheless concluded that:

The History Department therefore proposes that the RITP should be located within the History Department – as the teaching component of historical studies at the University rather than within the IHR – which primarily remains a research institute.⁷⁵

Apart from the incorporation of the training modules designed for the RITP as part of the core course and elective for the programme,⁷⁶ the results of this proposal are unclear, as the RITP was never structurally relocated to UWC’s History department until later in 2009, under different circumstances, discussed as part of the conclusion to this chapter. As the Annex C document prepared by Corsane reflected, the driving impetus for the proposal for the RITP to be located within the IHR at UWC was the desire to align the RITP approach to heritage studies, modelled on the ICTOP curriculum, to the Public History approach of heritage studies developing in the History Department. The failure of the proposal that ‘the Head of the Robben Island Training Programme will have a communication line with the director of IHR at UWC, through the Chair of Public History’⁷⁷ is crucial. This is revealed in the tensions between the approaches to heritage studies not only of the RITP in relation to the Public History orientation of the History Department to the heritage studies of the Diploma, but also in the contestation of the location of the Chair of Public History, between the History Department and the Institute for Historical Research (IHR).

⁷⁵ Minkley UWC/RIM Working Group’, 1.

⁷⁶ The six modules originally designed for the RITP was restructured and incorporated into the diploma programme. Two of the RITP modules (Modules 1 ‘Heritage Institutions for a New South Africa: Historical context and Philosophical context and contemporary issues and module 4: Representation and Heritage tourism), with Heritage Management and collection Management, Researching and Interpreting Heritage material, Communicating with the Public and Management in Heritage agencies, constituting electives for the programme.

⁷⁷ ‘Positioning RITP’, the proposal suggested that the ‘The Head of the Robben Island Training Programme will have a communication line with the director of IHR at UWC, through the Chair of Public History’.

Nevertheless, the Public History approach to heritage studies and the ICTOP approach of RITP continued to co-exist as part of the Diploma until the departure in 1999 of Gerard Corsane, the RITP coordinator, who had designed the RITP courses. The challenges to the RITP as a fall-out of the failure to relocate to UWC and fully integrate the RITP to the Public History approach of the Diploma came to a head with Corsane's departure.⁷⁸ Due to changes at RIM, subsequent developments in the RITP structure and course delivery made the convening board 'concerned over RITP teaching methods and support structure for students'.⁷⁹ This necessitated hiring a consultant to assist the Robben Island team in reviewing the RITP in relation to its objective and founding intentions.⁸⁰

One of the measures to rectify these concerns was the convening of an Academic Review Committee by the Education Department at RIM in 2005 to evaluate the RITP elective and provide academic quality assurance for the RITP. Members of the committee included the Head



⁷⁸ In 2001, Ruth de Bruyn, the consultant hired, prepared a 'Report on the SIDA supported Robben Island Training Programme (RITP)'. The review noted that 'staff of the RITP (previously Gerard Corsane, now Ramzie Abrahams) has done excellent proactive work in gaining recognition for Heritage Management Studies. In presenting [the Diploma with the UWC and UCT, the RITP has contributed to a 'significant achievement within the context of transforming Higher education. With the departure of Gerard Corsane there appears to be a high staff turnover of RITP personnel. Between 2000 and 2002 the RITP had 3 coordinators in quick successions; Lucy Alexander, who apparently followed Gerard Corsane was followed by Ramzie Abrahams in 2001 and in 2002 Bulelwa Mbangi and Zuleiga Rossouw were the coordinators. This obviously has a negative impact on the development and offering of the RITP courses offered as part of electives on the Diploma and its relationship to constituent convening partners. The report noted that 'RITP fulfilled the condition of the contract [to SIDA] very successfully'; nonetheless, it pointed out 'a number of factors' as the 'causes of current difficulties'. The main cause of the current difficulties facing the RITP, according to the De Bruyn report, was 'Gerard Corsane leaving the project - Mr Corsane appears to have been the mastermind behind the planning of the RITP projects from 1996 onwards. It is likely that a number of matters 'fell through the gap' in the period between his leaving for Leicester University in October, 1999 and the appointment of new staff in 2000' - Report on the SIDA supported Robben Island Training Programme (RITP), prepared by Ruth de Bruyn, 2001, Robben Island Museum Institutional archives, Robben Island.

⁷⁹ Minutes of APMHS board meeting held at CHEC office, 15th March 2006, (Cape Town, CHR archives, UWC).

⁸⁰ De Bruyn Report - To assist the Robben Island Team in reviewing the RITP in relation to its objectives and intentions - To assess the progress achieved so far on the 2009 and 1999 course, and its impact (short and long-term) on the present batch of students and their future possibility to get work within the museum sector - For the consultant to try to identify measures to be taken by the RITP staff to improve selection/recruitment processes and procedures for future training in order to both get sufficient numbers of enrolled and students with the right background.

of RIM (Department of Education) Ms. Deidre Prins Solani and other RIM executives, academics in the field of Public History Professors Gary Minkley and Stanley Ridge, heritage conservation professionals, Dr Harriet Deacon, an alumna of the Diploma, and a representative of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). More importantly, it included George Abungu of the PREMA/CHDA/Africa 2009 programmes, an indicator of the RITP African focus its approach to heritage studies. One of the key recommendations of the committee was the appointment of an academic coordinator to manage the RITP electives and provide synergy with the core course.⁸¹ The appointment of an academic coordinator was acknowledged by Witz as a sign that the ‘Robben Island Museum remains a committed and valuable partner on this programme in that they have taken significant steps to improve their coordination, quality assurance and evaluation’.⁸²



Public History, Robben Island Training Programme and the diploma programme in Museum and Heritage Studies

As shown in the preceding section, the question of how the field of Public History is related to a programme in museum and heritage studies is obvious, given that the concern with Public History has been central to both the formation of RIM and the development of the Diploma in Museum and Heritage studies. However, the question of what Public History is, and why it is related to a programme in museum and heritage studies, is still unanswered. According to Witz and Cornell, although the ACTAG report of 1995 ‘called for a proper training strategy’⁸³ for transformation of the heritage sector from its image as the bastion of colonialism and apartheid,

⁸¹ Minutes of APMHS board, 15 March 2006.

⁸² L. Witz, Graduate Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (Postgraduate Diploma and Master’s): A proposal for a joint programme to be offered by the University of the Western Cape and Robben Island Museum, 2008.

⁸³ ACTAG 1995 Report is a transformation policy framework for the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector.

‘how this was to be put in practice was left in rather vague terms’.⁸⁴ In the ACTAG context of transformation, ‘heritage’ is marginalised, black living heritage almost naturally occurring, and ‘heritage training revolves around acquiring professional and technical expertise in a particular field to discover, present, and influence interpretation of those findings’.⁸⁵ The problems with this notion of heritage and its implications for heritage studies, according to Witz and Cornell, led to ‘intense debates’ of ‘[W]hat should be the approach towards heritage training?’⁸⁶

Witz and Cornell argued that the ACTAG’s stated need for ‘museum critical theory to develop heritage practitioners as independent thinkers, who would constantly challenge the underlying assumptions of heritage’ was the point of convergence between the heritage studies perspective of public history and the notion of heritage as almost naturally-occurring, living heritage projected in the ACTAG report.⁸⁷ This Public History perspective viewed ‘heritage studies as a field in its own right, which is concerned with understanding the conventions and means by which heritage is produced’.⁸⁸ Heritage, according to them ‘is recognised as a specific type of history with its own specific modes and conventions. The role of heritage studies is to discover different areas and modes of heritage production and to analyse the meanings which are produced’.⁸⁹

This approach to heritage studies, they argued, ‘arose out of the fact that the Diploma is a partnership between the heritage sector and the universities. An indication that heritage was

⁸⁴ Witz and Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s cave’, 3.

⁸⁵ Witz, ‘Interim position’, 3.

⁸⁶ Witz and Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s cave’, 3.

⁸⁷ Witz, ‘Interim position’, 5.

⁸⁸ Witz and Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s cave’, 3-4.

⁸⁹ Witz and Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s cave’, 4.

being treated in its own right as a serious discipline'.⁹⁰ It is in understanding how this intersection between the academy and an institution of public culture defines the specific strand of Public History in the APMHS that answers the question of what Public History is, and why it is related to the Robben Island Museum in a programme of Museum and Heritage Studies as a terrain of new knowledge production.⁹¹

Leslie Witz revealed the argument for heritage studies as a serious academic field of study in a paper, 'Museum and Heritage Studies: an Interim Position?'⁹² The paper, presented at the 'Workshop of Mapping Alternatives: Debating New Heritage Practices in South Africa', was a sequel to an earlier article, 'From Robben Island to Makapan's Cave',⁹³ co-authored with Cornell. Witz reflected on the minutes of the meeting in September 1997 of the first convening committee of the programme, which he was requested to collate in July 2001. He stated that he was concerned with an item in the minutes of that first meeting which stated: 'Leslie Witz agreed to be the interim Chairperson of the Convening Committee until the Chair of Public History at the University of the Western Cape assumes this position next year'.⁹⁴ This item, according to Witz, led him into thinking not only 'whether I [he was] am legally still the 'interim Chairperson?''⁹⁵ but more importantly,

What, for instance, was being meant by 'public history' and what does it mean to be a public historian? Why and how is this field of public history related to a programme on museum and heritage studies? And is public history and its association with heritage studies merely an interim phase until one returns to the word of 'real history', in the archive and lecture room?⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Witz and Cornell, 'From Robben Island to Makapan's cave', 5.

⁹¹ Witz, 'Interim Position', 1.

⁹² Witz, 'Interim Position', 1.

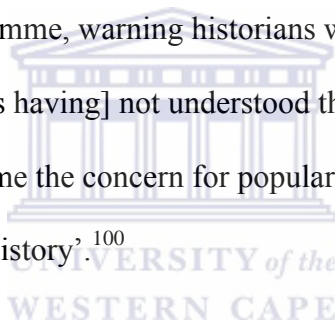
⁹³ Witz and Cornell, 'From Robben Island to Makapan's cave', 4.

⁹⁴ Witz, 'Interim Position' 2.

⁹⁵ Witz, 'Interim Position', 2.

⁹⁶ Witz, 'Interim Position', 1.

In answering these questions, Witz engaged the intellectual history of Public History in connection to the origin and basis of the Diploma. He suggested that the challenges and limitations of ‘popular history’, which was until then the dominant trend in democratising history, was its ‘unwillingness to engage or question the issues of academic power involved in the production of historical past’.⁹⁷ According to him ‘[T]his was a question of the politics of historical production in the public domain and it was noticeable that social historians, who over the past decade have striven to make their work popular, seem unwilling to enter the tainting atmosphere of policy formation and the world of lived history’.⁹⁸ This was reasserting the argument in the ‘Dog, the Rabbit and the Reluctant Historians’ paper, co-authored with Ciraj Rassool, co-convenor of the programme, warning historians who ‘have chosen to regard ‘Heritage’ as an inferior domain [as having] not understood the changed nature of their field’.⁹⁹ They suggested that ‘it was high time the concern for popularising the past be shifted into the institution and medium of Public History’.¹⁰⁰



Therefore, according to Witz, constituent elements of the field of Public History which went into the Diploma were firstly ‘that history is taken beyond the academy into the world of museums, monuments, memorials, television, tourism, heritage sites, government commissions, comic books, festivals and so on. Secondly, it was no longer adequate to understand these presentations in the public domain as being prior to history. These are historical practices within different genres characterised by different sociologies and modalities’.¹⁰¹ The implication of this approach

⁹⁷ Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 2. - Popular history is ‘based on a notion of discovery, recovery and revelation of a hidden history, a past that has been subordinated by oppression and exclusion during the days of colonialism and apartheid from historical record’.

⁹⁸ Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 3.

⁹⁹ Rassool, ‘The Rise of Heritage’, 23.

¹⁰⁰ Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 4.

¹⁰¹ Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 4.

was, according to Witz, ‘that the neat hierarchies of knowledge formation in which the academic has entered the public domain as research experts, the bases of popular history are being subverted, and most importantly it allows us to understand and interrogate how these different sites are constituted. How they articulate with each other and the relations of power in the production of public historical practices’.¹⁰²

Reacting to Jane Carruthers’ attack characterising the involvement of historians in heritage studies, as tainted with lapses into inaccuracies, exaggeration, myth-making, omission and error, a forced move necessitated by the decline in numbers of students studying history in South African universities.¹⁰³ Witz argued that ‘[I]n such a framework heritage, and other ways of producing pastness, are located at the periphery, while ‘basic history’ is at the core’.¹⁰⁴ Witz therefore insisted that the Public History orientation in the Diploma challenges this approach to heritage, by ‘suggesting that not only are there other methods [of producing history], but that these [other] methods [like heritage] can open up possibilities for critical engagement of how histories are constituted and provide the underpinning to historicize history itself’.¹⁰⁵

As showed in the curriculum of the RITP discussed earlier, and as noted here by Witz, ‘this approach to heritage studies was not at the forefront of the RITP submission when they approached the Universities of the Western Cape and University of Cape Town in 1997 with the plan to establish a programme in heritage studies’.¹⁰⁶ As stated by him, ‘[T]he content of their proposal was primarily based upon the definition of heritage in the government Arts and Culture

¹⁰² Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 4.

¹⁰³ See J Carruthers, "Heritage and History", H-Africa, Africa Forum 2, (20 October 1998).

¹⁰⁴ Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 10.

¹⁰⁵ Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 11.

¹⁰⁶ Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 4.

Task Group (ACTAG), where heritage training revolved around the discovery of what is supposedly already there and acquiring professional and technical expertise to present and impart those findings'.¹⁰⁷ He stated that the concern with the need for 'museum critical theory' in the ACTAG report was the point of convergence around which the Diploma took off.

This convergence, according to Witz, ensured that a central tenet of the Diploma is that 'heritage education would not involve the mere technical process of simply training people for job categories in the sector. Rather it will focus on a critical engagement with the dominant modes of constructing a new heritage and a search for imaginative means that can begin to push the boundaries of these powerful visual and textual narrations'.¹⁰⁸ It is this engagement with the power dynamics inherent in the politics of historical knowledge production in the public sphere, in critical intersection with disciplinary expertise, which defines Public History as a critical edge in the programme. As stated by Witz:

The experience of the Diploma suggests that if heritage studies is to be conceptualised in a manner that consistently, critically and practically challenges the dominant ways in which pastness is presented (in the academy and public sphere) then there are several matters that need to be addressed. Firstly, there have been requests by role-players within the heritage sphere to widen the domain that the Diploma covers. In particular, there have been calls to design courses or modules which will look at built environment, heritage management, the archives, and internet-based exhibitions (the virtual museum). Another matter that needs urgent attention is the relationship between different modules on the programme. At the moment there appear to be contradictions between some modules and the core course. Arguments and issues that are discussed in the core course are sometimes at odds with ideas presented (or taken as given) in some of the modules.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Witz, 'Interim Position', 4.

¹⁰⁸ Witz, 'Interim Position', 6.

¹⁰⁹ Witz, 'Interim Position', 11.

Witz suggested a way out of these seeming contradictions in the programme curriculum and structures by suggesting that ‘rather than seeing heritage studies as an interim position, a more fruitful engagement would be to develop a graduate programme that could provide different exit levels’.¹¹⁰ This, he advised, should ‘build on the Diploma, evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and see where improvements can be made, elements added or discarded, and where it might fit into a flexible degree.’¹¹¹ However, he cautioned that this must be done without relinquishing the ‘emphasis on questioning and contesting heritage, which is at the core of the Diploma’¹¹². He warned that without such an approach, there is a danger that heritage studies will become ‘a form of technical training and the new breed of heritage workers will continue to be the manual functionaries they were relegated to under apartheid’.¹¹³

As showed here and as argued by Finnegan, it was the nexus of Public History at the UWC History Department, Mayibuye Centre and the IHR, which pioneered research in critical politics of historical production in the public domain as the appropriate approach to heritage studies.¹¹⁴ Significantly, while it was through Public History as a driving paradigm that the programme came of its own, there continued to be latent tension between the ICTOP model approach of the RITP in the programme and the public history approach.

These inherent tensions between pedagogical approaches to heritage studies continued to be evident beyond the branding of the Diploma as ‘African’ in 2003. This rebranding (which, as discussed in the introduction, was Rockefeller-funded) produced an evaluative report of the

¹¹⁰ Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 11.

¹¹¹ Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 11.

¹¹² Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 11.

¹¹³ Witz, ‘Interim Position’, 11.

¹¹⁴ Finnegan, ‘The African Postgraduate Diploma Programme’, 3.

programme in 2006.¹¹⁵ According to Witz, one of the major recommendations of the Rockefeller-funded external evaluation ‘was that notwithstanding its palpable achievements, the programme needs to choose between an academic-intellectual and more practical-vocational direction. In addition the evaluation recommended the need for a firm physical location of the programme’.¹¹⁶ The response to these recommendations, according to Witz, was that the Convening Committee of the APMHS decided:

- that the appropriate location for the institutional home of the programme is the University of the Western Cape, because of its expertise, capacity and long-term commitment;
- to move towards extending the programme to embrace a Master’s in Heritage Studies; and
- to secure greater, more formal buy-in from museums and heritage institutions, especially those of national status in South Africa.¹¹⁷

UCT opted out of the programme in 2009, leaving it to be convened only by UWC and RIM. The APMHS has apparently taken an academic-intellectual orientation by developing a Master’s degree programme, the administration was moved to the Centre for Humanities Research (CHR), the RIM-appointed academic coordinator was based in the History Department, and RIM continue to provide four electives in technologies of heritage. The History Department is responsible for teaching and standardisation of the evaluation of student assessments, including the RITP modules.

While its present structure fits (inadvertently) with the original proposals debated in 1998, one great challenge to the programme – apart from funding – is institutional amnesia at RIM, because

¹¹⁵ Rockefeller Report of the APMHS, 2006. This report remained confidential and only the summary and commentaries are accessible.

¹¹⁶ Witz, Graduate Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies, 6.

¹¹⁷ Witz, Graduate Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies, 6.

of structural changes in its management. RIM as an institution has changed significantly from its initial focus on public scholarship and research to a more tourist-management orientation.

While this structural challenge has not affected RIM's overall support for the programme, the shift to a more 'tourist destination' orientation of the museum has hampered both the critical intellectual contribution of RIM to the APMHS and the advantage accrued to it through its participation. The centrality of the Mayibuye Centre, the CHR and Public History in the History and APMHS nexus, as a fundamental consistency of RIM as a museum of public scholarship and research, is forgotten in its strategic management – apart from reflection on its financial balance sheet, which is usually questioned as un-mandated expenditure.

This state of affairs is defeating of the vision and rationale for the programme which, according to Witz and Rassool, hopes to build on these initiatives of the nexus of Mayibuye Centre and Public History that 'enabled us to think about training in museum and heritage studies as linked to new possibilities of developing public scholarship'. Such education, they argued 'would emphasise an understanding of the conceptual challenges of transformation'. This is because, according to them, 'if museums are going to take forward their objectives of transformation beyond limited frameworks, this will depend on the extent they are able to develop as sites of research, not only by academics, but also by their own staff'. Crucially, they argued, 'this research needs to be rooted in their own collections'.¹¹⁸

The decline of the Mayibuye Centre as a public historical research hub at the nexus of CHR and Public History has had an impact on the programme in relation to its objectives as a terrain of

¹¹⁸ Rassool and Witz, 'Transforming Heritage education in South Africa', 2.

critical public scholarship. Apart from classes for the RIM electives at the Mayibuye Centre and internship placements, the decline of its public historical production means the Mayibuye Centre has robbed the programme of one of its critical edges of resistance historiography.

As described by Rassool, ‘the Mayibuye Centre was not merely a conduit for the reversal of amnesia. Instead, it was a ‘theatre of memory’, with its own pattern of construction and forgetting through which history was revised and re-envisioned’.¹¹⁹ Prior to its incorporation into RIM, it was a major centre for public historical production. As noted by Rassool, it was already a heritage institution dedicated to the production of resistance historiography in the interface between the public and the academy. Its objective was to recover and make accessible neglected aspects of South African history. According to Rassool, Mayibuye was ‘one of the central institutions that mediated the production of Public History in the new South Africa’. Invoking its description as ‘a birthplace of culture’ and a ‘resting place for history’, he identified its critical public historical importance by arguing that ‘despite being based at a university, its focus was on the dissemination of the public past’.¹²⁰

According to him, apart from its publications, ‘the Mayibuye Centre was visited by tourists and pupils in search of biographic history lessons ... seeking fresh accounts of the South African past’.¹²¹ It was on this ‘seeking of fresh accounts of South African past’ that the APMHS wished to capitalise, and which the Mayibuye Centre hoped to amplify through incorporation into RIM. However, this amplification was muffled by the museum conservation technical imperative of RIM, which transformed the Mayibuye Centre into the archive of the RIM and incorporated its

¹¹⁹ Rassool, ‘The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa’, 202.

¹²⁰ Rassool, ‘The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa’, 201.

¹²¹ Rassool, ‘The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa’, 202.

more significant public historical activities into specialised departments of RIM. As evident in the RITP curriculum modelled on ICTOP, the museum process of RIM, though having its origin in resistance public historical knowledge production in the Mayibuye Centre, was realised through the perspective of the cultural conservation resources management model of the UNESCO paradigm of World Heritage Sites, which dictated a different dynamic from its organic motives.

While it is agreed that a museum is a dynamic institution subject to constant change, the change from a museum of public historical scholarship and research to a tourist destination museum appears to be defeating the ideals of transformation on which the vision of the APMHS was built, which is both a challenge to and an indictment of the programme. This unique fusion of the academy and a national museum of public historical scholarship as an initiative transforming the terrain of museum and heritage studies in Africa is central to the vision of RIM as a museum of the liberation struggle. The confluence of critical Public History in the Mayibuye nexus, and the intellectual resistance tradition symbolised by RIM, offers immense potential for socio-cultural-political transformation through the cultivation of new space for public scholarship in the APMHS.

I have in the preceding pages attempted to trace the intellectual history and sociology of knowledge of the Diploma from scattered sources, and have briefly summarised the central role of Public History in the origin and development of not only the programme, but of RIM as a museum. I have argued that the APMHS has consolidated itself as a space for critical public historical production. However, the shift in focus of RIM from a museum of public historical

scholarship and research to a tourist destination museum has robbed both the programme and RIM of the immense potential for public scholarship that collaboration on the programme represents. After describing the intellectual history and sociology of knowledge of the APMHS, it is now possible to ask what is African in the programme rebranding, and what approach does this notion of ‘African’ imply for the approach to museum and heritage studies.



Chapter Three

Notions of ‘African’ in the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS)

The ‘Africa’ that fascinated me was not a place but an idea, not so much a subject for geo-historical and ethnographic investigation, but as the site and product of myth and discourse.¹

African

In 2003, the Diploma Programme in Museum and Heritage studies changed its designation to the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS). This rebranding of the diploma as ‘African’ raises serious conceptual and disciplinary questions. This is because the conjunction of the concepts ‘African’ and ‘heritage studies’ not only raises questions on the configuration of museum and heritage studies as an academic discipline in the interdisciplinary study of Africa in the humanities, but also on the debate concerning the changing meanings of ‘African’ in relation to heritage studies in African studies. This chapter begins the exploration of the notions of ‘African’ encapsulated in the APMHS, through locating the APMHS rebranding in the debate of the changing meanings of ‘African’ and in the debate concerning the disciplinary location of heritage studies in African studies.

The brandings of academic institutions and disciplines as ‘African’ betrays an enduring preoccupation of post-independence scholarship in Africa, especially in the humanities, where aspiration and the search for distinctively ‘African’ features – that will designate its literature, arts, history and, generally, its paradigm of knowledge production – continue to be serious

¹ V. W. S. Malvern, *The First Ethiopian: The Image of Africa and Africans in the Early Mediterranean World*, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009), 3.

concerns. Given the implicit ideological and political character of the notions of ‘African’,² these concerns continue to radically challenge and rupture the very idea of the disciplines as constructed in the Western tradition.³

The designation ‘African’, seemingly simple is itself a never-ending inquisition centring on deep ideological and epistemological contestations, which cannot be divorced from its history of the notion, nor from the geo-political epistemological locus, or the political, ideological objective of the designation.⁴ As recognised by Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, ‘the idea of ‘Africa’ is a complex one with multiple genealogies and meanings, so that extrapolations of ‘African’ culture, identity or nationality, in the singular or plural, any explorations of what makes ‘African’ African are often quite slippery as these notions tend to swing unsteadily between poles of essentialism or contingency’.⁵ Notwithstanding this problem of the elusiveness of a settled notion of ‘African’, the interrogation of the diverse and changing notions of ‘African’ raises questions such as – what is ‘African’. How do we know ‘African’? What can we know of ‘African’? These questions are intrinsically tied to the history/ies of our knowledge of Africa. In addition, these question are also tied to the assumptions of essential signifying quality[ies] of what designates ‘African’, and

² See J. O’Barr , V.Y Mudimbe et al (eds.), *African and the Disciplines*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993). See also the UCT African Studies current closure controversy 2011 and the ‘Location African’ Seminar series in Stellenbosch University and Rhodes University ‘Thinking African’ series 2011 for examples of the ongoing debates on the meaning of African in scholarship in Africa.

³ See L. T Outlaw (Jr), ‘African ‘Philosophy’’: Deconstructive and Reconstructive Challenges’ in G. Floistad, *Contemporary Philosophy: A New Survey, vo. 5, African Philosophy*, (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987).

⁴See A. Mazrui, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, (London, BBC Publication, 1987), 99. See also Wole Soyinka misgiving on the name Africa and its discursive association in the context of self-definition and suggestion of Abibirm and Abibiman from the Akan language of Ghana as names for Africa and African – in W. Soyinka, “The Scholar in African Society”, in A.U. Iwara and E. Mveng, eds, *Second World Black and Festival of the Arts and Culture: Colloquium on Black Civilization and Education, Colloquium Proceedings*, Volume 1, (Lagos: Federal Government of Nigeria, 1977), 44-53.

⁵ P. T. Zeleza, ‘The Inventions of African Identities and Languages: The Discursive and Developmental Implications’ *Selected Proceedings of the 36th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, ed. O. F. Arasanyin and M. A. Pemberton, (2006), Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceeding project, 14 – 26.

the search for whether there are there multiple and varying signifying qualities changing to suit contingent existential complexities?

V. Y. Mudimbe's seminal books, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (1988) and its sequel *The Idea of Africa* (1994),⁶ and other writings, critically engage these epistemological problems of notions of 'African'. While he asserted that 'there are natural features, cultural characteristics, and probably values that constitute the reality of Africa as a continent and its civilisations as constituting a totality different from those of Asia and Europe', he also pointed to the unending problem of the epistemology of our notions of Africa.⁷ Zeleza aptly summarised Mudimbe when he wrote:

The Invention of Africa ... interrogates the construction of Africa through Eurocentric categories and conceptual systems, from anthropology and missionary discourses to philosophy, an order of knowledge constituted in the socio-historical context of colonialism, which produced enduring dichotomies between Europe and Africa, investing the latter's societies, cultures and bodies with the representation marginalities or even pathologies of alterity. He is sharply critical of the subservience of African intellectuals to western ideologies and epistemologies, and he urges them to commit epistemic patricide of the impostor European father in order to rupture African blockage. In *The idea of Africa*, Mudimbe seeks to demonstrate that conquering Western narratives, beginning with Greek stories about Africa, through the colonial library, to contemporary postmodernist discourses, have radically silenced or converted African discourses. African intellectuals, he argues, have been reacting to this ethnocentric epistemological order, itself subject to mutation of Western material, methodological, and moral grid, with varying degree of epistemic domestication and defiance, in the process of which Africa's identity and difference have been affirmed, denied, inverted and reconstituted.⁸

Mudimbe, as summarised here by Zeleza, laid bare the epistemological problems of our knowledge of Africa, and the need for epistemic disobedience in our search for notions of Africa.

⁶ V. Y. Mudimbe's seminal books are *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (1988) and its sequel *The Idea of Africa* (1994).

⁷ Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, xv.

⁸ Zeleza, 'The Inventions of African Identities and Languages', 16.

This action, he argued, was because the source of our notion of Africa is a colonial invention which ‘speak[s] about neither Africa nor Africans’; rather, it is a justification for ‘the process of inventing and conquering a continent and naming its ‘primitiveness’ and ‘disorder’, as well as the subsequent means of its exploitation and methods for its ‘regeneration’’.⁹ In the introduction to *The Invention of Africa* Mudimbe provided conceptual distinctions between gnosis, Doxa and episteme that are pertinent to understanding the problem of our epistemology of ‘African’.¹⁰

According to him:

Gnosis means seeking to know, inquiry, and methods of knowing, investigation and even acquaintance with someone. Often the word is used in a more specialised sense, that of higher and esoteric knowledge, and thus it refers to a structured, common and conventional knowledge, but one strictly under the control of specific procedures for its use as well as transmission. Gnosis is consequently different from Doxa or opinion, and on the other hand cannot be confused with episteme, understood as both science and general intellectual configuration.¹¹

Although simplistic, it is worthwhile correlating the ‘gnosis’ of Mudimbe to Martin & West’s ‘the old tradition of black scholarship’, and ‘science and general intellectual configuration’ to the ‘Africanist enterprise’,¹² with Doxa representing heritage as the context of contentious subjectivities produced by both. This allows a critical theoretical prism to understand the matrix of the epistemological violence and its recurring ghost that continue to bedevil our knowledge of our notions of ‘African’. Epistemological violence in the context of knowledge of African is the negation of the African gnosis by Eurocentric episteme through paradigmatic silencing and ideological delusion, resulting in distorted subjectivities of knowledge of African by both

⁹ Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, 20.

¹⁰ I use ‘epistemology of ‘African’’ here to refer to the problem of what we can know and how we know Africa, in essence the ontology of our knowledge of Africa, not to be confused with Kwame Gyekye’s ‘African epistemology’, whose ‘important feature that makes it distinct from Western epistemology’ is the acceptance of paranormal cognition of spirit mediumship, divination and witchcraft - *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 202.

¹¹ Mudimbe, *Invention of Africa*, ix.

¹² W. G. Martin & M. West, ed., *Out of one, Many Africa: Restructuring the Study and Meaning of Africa*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 85.

Africans and Europeans. For, as Mudimbe rightly pointed out, this ghost of epistemological violence is so intrinsically pervasive that ‘even in the most explicitly ‘Afrocentric’ descriptions, models of analysis explicitly or implicitly, knowingly or unknowingly refer to the same order’. According to him, it was always ‘the older version turned upside down, with many of the faults intact’.¹³

The central problem of the epistemology of notions of ‘African’, according to Mudimbe, is therefore whether ‘African *Weltanschauung* and African traditional systems of thought are unthinkable and cannot be made explicit within the framework of their own rationality?’¹⁴ This question, which is premised on ‘theories and methods the constraints, rules, and systems of operation of which suppose a non-African epistemological locus’,¹⁵ according to Mudimbe, is the paradox of African scholarship. This paradox is the search ‘for criteria on how to attain truth about ‘African’ and express it in scientifically credible discourses’¹⁶ within a paradigm designed to obstruct and silence this truth.

The fact that notions of ‘African’ continue to be dictated by the vagaries of the colonial encounter is the epistemological paradox of African scholarship. What is ‘African’, and the criterion of what it is that is heritage studies in African scholarship, continue to be defined and determined through reference to Europe as an epistemological locus, as seen in the focus of approach to heritage studies discussed in Chapter One. The challenge of the knowledge of ‘African’ by Africans is therefore ‘how to adequately represent and apprehend African through

¹³ Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, x.

¹⁴ Caroline Writing ‘Independent’ History’, x.

¹⁵ Caroline Writing ‘Independent’ History’, x.

¹⁶ Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa*, 39.

the eyes of a Western epistemological and hegemonic tradition that itself has been deployed as an active agent of the colonial and Western imagination'¹⁷ without falling into the 'false consciousness'¹⁸ of knowledge of 'African'.

As argued by Chidi Amuta, writing in the context of African literature, 'African literature, as we know it, is bedevilled by such ailments as a false idealist, static and un-dialectical conception of African',¹⁹ because

This conjunction of theoretical contradiction which has unfortunately been consecrated into dominant intellectual tradition of Africa (in the field of culture at least) betokens an ambiguous sense of nostalgia which looks in two principal directions for inspiration. African cultural scholarship has looked insistently either back at traditional pre-colonial Africa or to the dominant cultural tradition of the West for theoretical mooring. In either direction, a certain preoccupation with tradition in its idealist (static) sense seems central to contemporary discourse on African literature and culture. Whether our point of reference is literature or the figurative arts, dance or fashion, architecture or cuisine, the pendulum of discourse and controversy swings either to pre-colonial 'Africa' or the West'...²⁰

According to him, these notions of 'African' gave rise to two tendencies in the critical orientation of African anthropology. One tendency 'either laments the rupture of traditional African culture as evidenced in the increasing Westernisation while another tries to establish the presence and continuities of varying traditionalia – folklore, tribal customs, through a 'FESTAC'²¹ consciousness' featuring revivalisms of calabash-and-raffia traditionalia'.²² The

¹⁷ E. Skinner 'In Defence of Africanity' in Martin & West, *Out of one, Many Africa*, 64.

¹⁸ G. Raymond, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas & the Frankfurt School*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

¹⁹ C. Amuta, *The theory of African Literature: Implications for Practical Criticism*, (London: Zed Books, 1989), 2. Other variants of the conceptualisation of 'African' mentioned by Amuta include (b) a faulty notion of the nature and essence of literature, (c) a near absence of clear theoretical mooring and (d) a preponderance of subjective (often intuitive) exegeses of isolated text.

²⁰ Amuta, *The theory of African Literature*, 34.

²¹ FESTAC 77 – Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture 15 January to 12 February 1977 followed upon the first, which was staged in Dakar, Senegal, in 1966. 'The principle objectives of the Festival were to provide a forum for the focusing of attention on the enormous richness and diversity of African contributions to

challenge, as he pointed out, is that these notions of ‘African’ encapsulated in colonialist, anthropological and what he called ‘bourgeois sociological criticism’ in African literature and culture have been taken up, re-interpreted and put to different use by ‘traditionalist aesthetics’ of various genres, from the liberal assimilationist and the moderate integrationist to the radical separatist.²³

Critical engagement with these questions, and contestation of what constitutes the context, forms and content that can be described as African in a Programme of Museum and Heritage Studies that is designated African, is imperative, given the problems of notions of ‘African’ not only in explicitly Eurocentric scholarship on Africa but also in supposedly post-colonial, Afrocentric studies of Africa. As pointed out by Amuta, notwithstanding the radical objectives and the ‘desirability as an intellectual fashion of the decolonisation rhetoric’ of what he termed ‘traditionalist aesthetics’.²⁴ Its use as ‘the exclusive and decisive point of departure for a rhetoric of decolonisation of African literature, or for the definition of an immutable aesthetics value system for that literature, is not only reactionary and diversionary, but in itself a colonial attitude’.²⁵ What Amuta described as the colonial attitude that continues to plague the notion of

world culture and the opportunity for recounting the achievements of [their] ancestors. It consisted of Colloquium (17-30 January), where more than 200 of the leading black scholars of the world gathered each day to read papers, engage in debate, and prepare reports on the following themes: (1) Arts and Pedagogy, (2) Languages and Literature, (3) Philosophy and Religion, (4) Historical Awareness, and (5) Science and Technology. It was commended as an essential thing that brought Black people together to think seriously about important questions. ‘This cultural festival has made us aware, and given us the opportunity to design a functional agenda for finishing up the century’. ‘In Retrospect, FESTAC ’77, *The Black Perspective in Music*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring, 1977), 104-117, Accessed: 04/11/2011 .

²² Amuta, *The theory of African Literature* , 22.

²³ Amuta, *The theory of African Literature* , 22.

²⁴ Defined as ‘a complex of theoretical standpoints and critical statement which seeks to define the authenticity, standards of creative performances and critical evaluation of African literature in terms of values and models freely selected and adapted from the so-called “traditional” pre-colonial African cultural matrix’. Amuta, *The theory of African Literature*, 33.

²⁵ Amuta, *The theory of African Literature*, 33.

‘African’ in African literature, which is reflected in the prevalent notion of ‘African’ in museum and heritage studies, is the notion of ‘African’ as a:

... pristine, unspoilt world of migrant herdsmen, naked tribesmen, dancing damsels; the highest indices of its achievements in terms of material culture are the ever-present Ife and Benin bronze heads, the Dogon Masks, the terracotta relics, Nok culture, the great walls of Zimbabwe.²⁶

According to Amuta, the problem of this notion of ‘African’ as a point of departure in the criticism of African literature, and as reflected in museum and heritage studies in Africa, is that the racist-inspired paradigm of Africa finds confirmation of its evolutionary perspective in it.

The problem with this perspective, according to Amuta, is that it continues to project the notion that ‘the African is evolving towards a state of completion and perfection whose ultimate point of reference is ‘the great tradition’ of some European culture’.²⁷ Moreover, this evolutionary perspective allowed the cultural anthropologist to discover ‘African’ through a ‘static aspect of its material and spiritual development and characteristics at a particular stage of its development, which is conceived as museum pieces and survival of animistic social existence to be recovered in long abandoned caves and ruins of great walls and moats’.²⁸

This challenge of defining ‘African’ through reference to the pre-colonial ‘non-scientific characteristic of African traditional thought’ typical of Westerners, according to Kwesi Wiredu, was its appropriation by Africans themselves. According to him, ‘partly through the influence of Western anthropology and partly through insufficient critical reflections on the contemporary African situation, many Africans are apt to identify African thought with traditional African

²⁶ Amuta, *The theory of African Literature* , 33.

²⁷ Amuta, *The theory of African Literature* , 19.

²⁸ Amuta, *The theory of African Literature* , 23.

thought'.²⁹ The implication of this notion of 'African' is particularly problematic for African Heritage studies, given the prevalent views of what is African in African heritage discourses as traditional ethnic pre-colonial, as seen in the ACTAG Report and the notion of 'African in the intangible living heritage discourse'.³⁰

Writing in the context of heritage transformation initiatives in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, Minkley pointed out the paradox of post-colonial transformation was premised on the inverted colonial apartheid notion of 'African', where 'effectively real heritage designated African was defined as indigenous, essentially narrated as tribal culture'.³¹ Minkley criticised the dominant post-apartheid heritage complex representation and practices encompassed by the idea that African – or, at least, *real* African – culture is rural, and in some sense pre-modern, as a discourse of heritage transformation.³² He pointed out that:

the paradox ... is that the connections between defined indigenous/African spaces of 'African-ness' and the transmission of culture and tradition and those of apartheid differences and 'separate development' are conjoined as the way of constituting heritage ... they do not mark the transcendence of the basis of apartheid separate development, but rather reproduce them in new ways. Heritage, then, delineates a powerful public point where the 'complicities' between royal 'pastoral powers' and apartheid 'separate development' intersect and where the notions of separate and bounded 'culture' clash and 'our culture, our heritage' reproduces the 'natural order' of tribes and the customary as celebratory indigenous tradition.³³

Therefore, according to Minkley, the notion of the African as authentic, indigenous pre-colonial, untainted by modernity, whose return and retrieval was projected as the crucible of

²⁹ K. Wiredu, 'How not to Compare African Traditional Thought with western Thought', *Transition*, Issue 75/76, Duke Publishers, 320.

³⁰ See the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage ICHC. www.UNESCO.org

³¹ G. Minkley, 'A Fragile inheritor': The Post-Apartheid Memorial Complex, A.C Jordan and the re-imagining of Cultural Heritage in the Eastern Cape, *Kronos*, Vol. 32, No. 1, (2008), 26.

³² Minkley, 'A Fragile inheritor', 26.

³³ Minkley, 'A Fragile inheritor', 34.

transformation of ‘living heritage’ is ‘one actually constituted by and infected with the colonial and apartheid modern’.³⁴ An appreciation of the intellectual pedagogical dangers of these enduring colonial notions of ‘African’ in African heritage studies, especially for the emerging programme in museum and heritage studies, was the rationale for this study. This concern came to the fore from an unexpected quarter in relation to the question of this study, in a crucial debate of the notion of ‘African’ in scholarship and public representation in South Africa, in 1998.

The UCT- Mamdani Controversy, UWC History Department and African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies

Unconnected as what is now dubbed the ‘UCT-Mamdani controversy’ might seem to this study, surprisingly, it brings us closer to answering its central question. The question of whether the rebranding of the programme in Museum and Heritage Studies as ‘African’ signified a major epistemological positioning in the study of Africa was answered by one aspect of the controversy that has often been overlooked in the UCT-Mamdani controversy. This aspect was the allusion by Mamdani, in the debate, to ‘UWC, whose History department has invested resources precisely in that field and why I call on my colleagues to tap the rich intellectual resources at UWC’.³⁵ The intellectual resources that the UWC History Department had invested in and the influences of these intellectual investments on the rebranding of the programme in Museum and Heritage studies as African, though not direct, were nonetheless significant. This was because the debates on the study and meaning of African in scholarship that it generated were reflected in other courses in the History Department. This is crucial given that since its inception, the UWC

³⁴ Minkley, ‘A Fragile inheritor’, 34.

³⁵ M. Mamdani ‘Is African studies to be turned into a new home for Bantu education at UCT? *Social Dynamics*, 22.2(1998), 63-75, 69. <http://www.informaworld.com>. Accessed 20/02/2010.

History Department, through its Public History research project, has been the main pilot of the APMHS.³⁶

The intellectual resources that the UWC History Department had invested in were revealed in Leslie Witz and Carohn Cornell's article 'Africa, Race and Empire in the Nineteenth Century at a South African University in 1998'. In the article, they reflected on the course introduced in 1998 at the UWC history department titled 'Africa, Race and Empire'. They traced its genealogy to an earlier course, 'The Making of the Modern World (Debates in the Making of the Atlantic World)'.³⁷ The key objective of the course was to move beyond the Eurocentric, Afrocentric binaries, and the area studies approach, through engagement with the periods of intersection of Africa, European and American history marked by the Atlantic slave trade.³⁸

The focus of the article was how in 1998 the History Department, with the objective of going beyond the Eurocentric/Afrocentric polarisations, 'specifically designed a course in the History department to ensure South African history was treated as an integral part of African history'.³⁹

The article suggested that the course challenged 'the widely shared prejudice that while South Africa is part of Africa geographically, it is not quite culturally and politically, and certainly not economically'.⁴⁰

³⁶ In private conversation Leslie Witz pointed out that it was Dr. Ibrahim Abdullah who was collaborating with Mamdani that was referred to, and neither he (Witz) nor Ciraj Rassool, co-conveners of the programme, were involved; nonetheless, as all are faculty members in the history department, it can be assumed that they will be conversant with Abdullah's research and his collaboration with Mamdani.

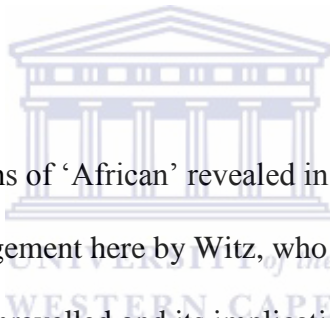
³⁷ Witz, L and C. Cornell, 'Africa, Race and Empire in the Nineteenth Century at a South Africa University in 1998', *Radical History Review*, 76, (2000), 223-231, 231.

³⁸ Witz and Cornell, 'Africa, Race and Empire', 231.

³⁹ Witz and Cornell, 'Africa, Race and Empire', 231.

⁴⁰ M. Mamdani, 'Is African studies to be Turned into a New Home for Bantu Education at UCT', *Social Dynamics* 24, no. 2, (Summer 1998), 64, quoted in Witz and Cornell, 'Africa, Race and Empire', 224.

As stated by Witz and Cornell, rather than focus on economic and political ties in the relationship between Europe and Africa, the course focused instead on ‘the development and transmission of stereotypical ideas people had about each other at a time when the slave trade and slavery were coming to an end’.⁴¹ This approach, they argued, escaped South African exceptionalism by using ‘the stereotyping and representation in different regions of Africa as the central, unifying theme in the course in order to draw out thematic comparisons between the Southern African experience and the broader African experience’.⁴² An approach, they argued, that ensured that ‘South African history was not treated as special, but viewed as part of the broader colonial narrative, especially in terms of development of ideas of empire, such as the notion of racial hierarchies.’⁴³



Given the significance of the notions of ‘African’ revealed in the debate generated by the Mamdani controversy and its engagement here by Witz, who pilots the APMHS, it is necessary to explore briefly how the debate unravelled and its implications in the conceptualisation of the notion of ‘African’ in the APMHS.

The UCT-Mamdani Controversy

The debate now dubbed the UCT-Mamdani controversy started simply with a routine request in October 1997 by the Deputy Dean of UCT’s Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Associate Professor Charles Wanamaker, to Professor Mahmood Mamdani, then A.C. Jordan Professor of African Studies and Director of the Centre for Africa Studies. The request was to design a syllabus for the Africa core of the foundation semester course the faculty intended to

⁴¹ Witz and Cornell, ‘Africa, Race and Empire’, 224.

⁴² Witz and Cornell, ‘Africa, Race and Empire’, 224.

⁴³ Witz and Cornell, ‘Africa, Race and Empire’, 225.

run in the 1998 academic year, for first-year undergraduate students. In the process of submitting the requested syllabus, the controversy that ensued on the meaning of 'African' in the study of Africa was one for which, according to Mamdani, he 'was totally unprepared'.⁴⁴ Mamdani was suspended from participation in the teaching of the foundation core on Africa which he had been asked to provide a syllabus for, and a new syllabus was substituted, replacing the one he had prepared.

Jonathan Jansen states that the UCT-Mamdani Controversy question of - 'How should Africa be taught in the post-apartheid academy?' 'takes us to the underlying and untouched concerns in higher education transformation; issues of curriculum knowledge and institutional power'⁴⁵ in post-apartheid South Africa. According to him, Mamdani's thesis that the substituted syllabus 'represents a racist, colonial conception of African which is projected and reinforced through its particular selection of political geography, research methodology, pedagogical expertise, acknowledged authorities and political periodisation'⁴⁶ rested on five main arguments:

1. The Introductory Africa Course (IAC) represented 'a colonial view of Africa: that is, Africa is Equatorial Africa (Spatially) and Bantu Africa (socially), lying between the Limpopo and Sahara; that is, which Africa is taught?
2. The introductory Africa Course (IAC), while focusing on Equatorial Africa, does not have the expertise (or the ability to recognise such expertise) in teaching this section of Africa; that is, who teaches Africa?
3. The Introductory Africa Course (IAC) drew on a limited set of disciplinary perspectives that do not allow a dynamic social history of Africa, simply a static material history of artefacts and objects; that is, what are more appropriate methodologies for studying Africa?
4. The Introductory Africa Course (IAC) reinforced a racial reading of Africa by not incorporating 'African intelligentsia' in the core reading, relying

⁴⁴ M. Mamdani, 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University in Cape Town, The Debate', *Social Dynamics*, 24.2, (1998), 1-32, 3.

⁴⁵ J. D Jansen, 'But Our Natives Are Different!' Race, Knowledge and Power in the Academy', *Social Dynamics*, 24.2, (1998), 108.

⁴⁶ Jansen, 'But Our Natives Are Different!', 106.

- rather on texts, which represent the American academy's perspective on Africa studies; that is, which authorities are invoked in the study of Africa?
5. The Introductory Africa Course (IAC) presented a racial periodisation of Africa history (pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial), leading to the concluding logic: 'disintegration following the departure of the White Man'.⁴⁷

Jansen's simplification of the key issues in the debate allows us to link Mamdani's theses to the wider debates on the notions of 'African' in African Studies and the notion of heritage studies in African Studies. This framework allows for understanding of the wider context of the debate of notions of 'African' in heritage studies, as it relates to crises and ruptures in African studies and their connection to the wider debate on the meaning of heritage studies in African studies.

Mamdani protested what he called a violation of his academic rights and integrity as a Professor of African Studies, and subsequently received an apology from both the Dean and the Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. Predictably, this was not to be the end of the matter. In his response letter to the Deans' apologies, Mamdani – not taking the issue lying down – argued that apart from the injury to his academic integrity, 'the second more grievous injury was not to him personally, but to the students'.⁴⁸ According to him, 'the substitute syllabus was not only sub-standard but also its content is a poisonous introduction to students entering a post-apartheid university and wrestling with the legacy of racism'.⁴⁹ What Mamdani found poisonous in the syllabus that replaced the one he had prepared was the concern that 'the syllabus reproduces the discredited colonial apartheid notion that 'African' lies between the

⁴⁷ Jansen, 'But Our Natives Are Different!', 106.

⁴⁸ Mamdani, 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University', 3.

⁴⁹ Mamdani 'Statement to the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, held on 13 March 1998, University of Cape Town, Appendix C in 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University in Cape Town, The Debate', 20.

Sahara and the Limpopo, spatially synonymous with equatorial Africa, and socially with Bantu Africa, and the idea that this 'African' has no intelligentsia'.⁵⁰

Mamdani's detailed response, presented in a seminar at the Centre for African Studies, UCT, on 22 April 1998, started polemically, by attacking the UCT authorities for jumping to conclusions by 'giving a verdict on an intellectual debate even before the debate has been joined'.⁵¹ He stated that the key issue of the debate, which was then (and, I will argue, remains) unresolved, is the question of 'how to teach Africa in a post-apartheid academy?'.⁵² Tracing the history of African studies in order to contextualise the question, he argued that:

Historically, African studies developed outside Africa, not within it. It was a study of Africa, but not by Africans. The context of this development was colonialism, the cold war and apartheid. This period shaped the organisation of social science studies in the Western academy. The key distinction was the disciplines and area studies. The discipline studied the White experience as a universal, human experience; area studies studied the experience of people of colour as an ethnic experience.⁵³

Mamdani criticised the implicit racism in the notion of 'Africa' in the historiography of the dominant, three-tier divisions of courses in African studies into pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial, and the implicit moral of the story that colonialism had saved Africa and 'things fell apart once the white man departed'.⁵⁴ According to him:

The meaning of African would change with the beginning of White control. Africa would cease to be an entire continent. North Africa would become part of the Middle East, considered civilised, even if just barely. White controlled Africa in the south would be an exception, an island of civilization, studied separately. Africa popularly known as 'darkest Africa' would refer

⁵⁰ Mamdani 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University', 21.

⁵¹ Mamdani, 'Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?', 63.

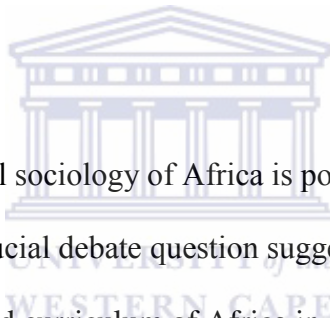
⁵² Mamdani, 'Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?', 63.

⁵³ Mamdani, 'Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?', 64.

⁵⁴ Mamdani, 'Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?', 64.

geographically to equatorial Africa, and socially to Black Africa or Bantu Africa, or Negro Africa, variously so called.⁵⁵

He suggested that these notions of South African exceptionalism, and ‘African’ as black, Bantu and equatorial, are so pervasive in South Africa intelligentsia that it epistemologically marked even anti-apartheid struggle politics.⁵⁶ To correct this racism implicit in the notion of ‘Africa’ in the South African academy, Mamdani offered four debates that are crucial as a starting point for a decolonised curriculum of the study of Africa. I will briefly engage with these debates, awareness of which Mamdani insisted would transform the notions of ‘African’ in the study of Africa in the curriculum, and by implication in South African academy, because of its centrality to this study.⁵⁷



The question of whether a historical sociology of Africa is possible, ‘sparked by the work of Chiekh Anta Diop’ was the first crucial debate question suggested by Mamdani for engagement as the starting point of a decolonised curriculum of Africa in South African academy. The significance of Diop’s work for theorising notions of African and heritage studies, which will be engaged with in detail in Chapter Six is (according to Mamdani) in his innovative methodological engagement with the problem of our source of knowledge of African history – what it means for scholarship to be African. Mamdani showed how Diop circumvented the limitations of ‘archaeology sources which illuminate the distant past, from a million years ago, and oral history, which cannot go any further than a hundred years’⁵⁸ and linked these two perspectives together, through Arabic sources and linguistics evidence, to construct a middle

⁵⁵ Mamdani, ‘Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?’, 64.

⁵⁶ Mamdani, ‘Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?’, 64.

⁵⁷ Mamdani, ‘Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?’, 65.

⁵⁸ Mamdani, ‘Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?’, 66.

ground which gives historical depth to the African experience. He therefore argued that Diop's work 'represented a landmark in the construction of knowledge about Africa, and it is indispensable to debates in decolonising the study of Africa'.⁵⁹

The second debate suggested by Mamdani focused on the work of Ifi Amadiume, who he described (along with Wamba-dia-Wamba, Mamadou Diouf and Mohamed Mbodji) as illuminating the specific research trajectories of the African experience pioneered by Diop.⁶⁰ The significance of the debate generated by the work of Amadiume, according to Mamdani, was 'in making a distinction between biological and social gender to argue that the history of gender in Africa and Europe are different'.⁶¹ She pointed, said Mamdani, to a larger question of African historicity that allowed us to move beyond the narrow confines of both Eurocentric and nationalist discourses informed by them and explore an uncharted epistemological terrain in our knowledge of Africa. As argued by Mamdani, these two debates taken together make African studies 'truly interdisciplinary and undercut the essentialist notion of an unchanging African economy and society'.⁶²

The third debate Mamdani suggested for consideration in the approach to the study of Africa was one that challenged the notion of 'African' as sub-Saharan. He saw the work of Samir Amin as important; according to Mamdani, Amin's thesis is that Africa (particularly its equatorial and southern parts) constitutes an undifferentiated unity based on the economic history of the Indian

⁵⁹ Mamdani, 'Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?', 66.

⁶⁰ Mamdani, 'Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?', 66.

⁶¹ Mamdani, 'Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?', 66.

⁶² Mamdani, 'Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?', 66.

Ocean and the trans-Saharan trade that was disrupted by the trans-Atlantic slave trade.⁶³ This again echoed Diop's thesis of African cultural unity.⁶⁴ In the fourth debate he focused on the political debate of the Dar-es-Salaam school, pioneered in the 1970s by Issa Shivji, as crucial to a de-racialised curriculum of the study of Africa that challenged the notion of South African exceptionalism, of 'colonialism of a special kind'. He argued that 'apartheid is a generic form of colonialism in Africa rather than being an exception and that we should understand the political identities that colonialism tried to institutionalise as neither positivist (that they exist), nor ideological (that they are invented) but historized as institutionally reproduced'.⁶⁵

Responses to Mamdani, which spilled into the public domain, ignited vitriolic polemical debate, mainly between Mamdani, Martin Hall,⁶⁶ Nadia Hartman⁶⁷ and George Ellis,⁶⁸ Johann Graaff⁶⁹ and Jonathan D. Jansen.⁷⁰ In order to unpack the critical issues of notions of 'African' in the debate, the response by Martin Hall, one of the group who authored and taught part of the course that replaced the one Mamdani's is crucial.

In his responses, Martin Hall claimed to 'want to advance the debate by extending Mamdani's ideas about the key question – how should Africa be taught in the postcolonial academy – by

⁶³ Mamdani, 'Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?', 66.

⁶⁴ See Chiekh Anta Diop, *The Cultural Unity of Black African: the domain of patriarchy and matriarchy in classical antiquity*, (Chicago: Third World Press, 1987).

⁶⁵ Mamdani, 'Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?', 68.

⁶⁶ M. Hall, 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University in Cape Town; A Response (1998), Bantu Education: A reply to Mamdani (1998)', *Social Dynamics*, 24.2 (1998), 86-92.

⁶⁷ N.Hartman, 'Discussion of Certain Aspect of Mamdani's Paper: 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University in Cape Town'', *Social Dynamics*, 24.2 (1998), 33-39.

⁶⁸ G. Ellis, 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University in Cape Town; Mathematics Department, UCT (1998), *Social Dynamics*, 24.2 (1998).

⁶⁹ J. Graaff, 'Pandering to Pedagogy or Consumed by Content: Brief thoughts on Mahmood Mamdani's "Teaching Africa at the Post-Apartheid University of Cape Town"', *Social Dynamics* 24.2 (1998): 76-85.

⁷⁰ J. D Jansen, 'But Our Natives Are Different!'

looking at post-colonial intellectual discourse'.⁷¹ He took exception to Mamdani's attack on UCT as institutionally racist. Relying on the discredited thesis of 'a white past and multicultural future', based on the liberal illusion of the seamless progress of modernity. Hall argued that while the UCT Centre for African studies cannot wish away its racist legacy, 'it was not the same Centre for African Studies that Mamdani found on his arrival in Cape Town in 1996'.⁷² Blaming the reality of South African exceptionalism in Africa on the political and cultural isolation of the apartheid state by the rest of Africa, Hall argued, through the examples of a series of initiatives, how there had been conscious and deliberate efforts at the re-insertion of South Africa into the intellectual orbits of the continent.⁷³

Crucially, Hall criticised Mamdani's four central debates for a decolonised curriculum as having 'a sparse on economy', because there are surely others issues around evolution, African Diaspora, literature and Culture central to the study of Africa.⁷⁴ Hall importantly stated that 'African Studies is not a discipline, in the sense that it commands a specific tradition of scholarship and methodology, but more of a meta-narrative that can incorporate any field that has a connection with the continent. ... He maintained 'inside Africa, African Studies can virtually be anything – environmental studies, public health, and poetry as much as historical sociology and political economy'.⁷⁵

Reacting to Hall's response, Mamdani argued that Hall had missed the key issue in his argument 'which is about particular debates, those debates in the African academy that established the

⁷¹ Hall, 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University in Cape Town; A Response', 86.

⁷² Hall, 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University in Cape Town; A Response', 87.

⁷³ Hall, 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University in Cape Town; A Response', 87.

⁷⁴ Hall, 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University in Cape Town; A Response', 89.

⁷⁵ Hall, 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University in Cape Town; A Response', 89.

possibility of decolonising and de-racialising the study of Africa'.⁷⁶ He maintained that the question was not – as Hall argued – a multiplicity of debates on the transformation of African studies, but the indispensable centrality of his identified key debates in decolonising and de-racialising African Studies. As argued by Mamdani, central to what he called indispensable debates is the work of Cheikh Anta Diop. According to him,

While the debate around Diop in North American academy has revolved around his claim that ancient Egypt is the core civilizational archive of African history. Diop's larger significance lay in the more general question he raised; whether history before the arrival of the White Man could be understood as social history (a historical sociology), or whether the limits of our understanding were limits of archaeology, however unconstructed.⁷⁷

This centrality of Cheikh Anta Diop Mamdani has identified critical debates as a foundation for an approach to African heritage studies is engaged with in detail in Chapter Six. Nonetheless, Mamdani's sympathetic reading of Diop allows a framework for linking the debate generated by the UCT-Mamdani controversy to the broader debate of the meaning of 'African' in heritage studies in African Studies 'made in the USA',⁷⁸ especially in the context of heritage studies in relation to African Studies, as articulated by John Henrik Clarke.

African Studies Association (ASA) and the African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)

As seen in the writings of John Henrik Clarke (1915–1998) on the history of the African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA),⁷⁹ the focus on Cheikh Anta Diop that is pivotal to Mamdani's position in the debate on the study of Africa is relevant in understanding the

⁷⁶ Mamdani, 'Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?', 70.

⁷⁷ Mamdani, 'Is African Studies to be turned into a new Home for Bantu Education at UCT?', 71.

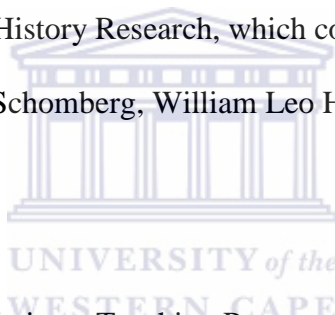
⁷⁸ M. Mamdani, 'A Glimpse of African Studies made in the USA', Dakar, Senegal, CODESRIA Bulletin 2, (1990).

⁷⁹ J. H. Clarke, 'The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA): Some notes on the conflict with the African Studies Association (ASA) and the fight to reclaim African history': *Issue: A Journal of Africanist Opinion*, Vol. 6, no. 2-3 (Summer/Fall 1975), 5.

discomfort generated in Africanist circles by the conjunction of heritage studies with African studies.

John Henrik Clarke, who was the first elected President of the African Heritage Studies Association (AHSAs), has been described variously as the ‘foremost architect of the emerging discipline of Africana Studies/Africalogy, and as one of the leading theorists of African liberation and the uses of African history as a foundation and grounding for African liberation.’⁸⁰

According to Ahati Toure, Clarke belongs to the intellectual tradition of African scholarship located outside mainstream academy, such as the Schomburg Collection, the Harlem History Club, and the Ethiopian School of History Research, which congregated around leading Harlem intellectual luminaries like Arthur Schomburg, William Leo Hansberry, and William Huggins, among others.⁸¹



Clarke as Director of the African Heritage Teaching Programme in 1964, with HARYOU-ACT, a community programme in Harlem, New York, defined Heritage studies:

As the means by which people have used their talent to create a history that gives them memories they respect and that they can use to command the respect of other people. The ultimate purpose of heritage and heritage teaching is to use people’s talents to develop awareness and pride in themselves so that they can achieve good relationships with other people.⁸²

The relevance of Clarke’s writings is that they are the first clear articulation of an ideological, epistemological and pedagogical distinction between the notions of heritage studies in African

⁸⁰ A. N, N Toure, *John Henrik Clark and the Power of African History: Africological Quest for Decolonization and Sovereignty*, (Asmara, Eritrea: African World Press, 2009), 3.

⁸¹ Toure, 3 - Evoking the intellectual legacy of people like Edward Wilmot Blyden, Alexandra Crummell, W.E.B Dubois, Carter G. Wilson, Arthur A. Schomburg. In addition, to contemporaries like J.A Roger, Leo Hansberry, Cheikh Anta Diop and *Presence Africaine*, among others.

⁸² J. H. Clarke ‘A Search for Identity’ in *The Cavalcade: African American Writing from 1760 to the Present, Vol. II*, edited by A. P. Davis, J. Saunders-Redding and J. A. Joyce, (Washington: Howard University Press, 1992), 45 – 55. Clarke, ‘The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSAs).

Studies. Clarke asserted that ‘the one word ‘Heritage’, in relation to African studies, makes a world of difference’⁸³ because of the significance of the ideological rupture it projected.

According to Clarke, the idea of ‘heritage studies’ in African Studies signified an ideological epistemic positioning to the study of Africa in Afrocentric terms by Africans – whom he defined in racial essentialist terms, as opposed to mainly white Africanists in the ASA, who are concerned with the ‘objective’ isolated area study of sub-Saharan Africa.⁸⁴

The inherent ideological problem of the notion of ‘African’ of the Africanists of the ASA, which ‘took as its objects of analysis nation-states or tribes and was grounded in intensive language training and field research in Africa’,⁸⁵ was the point of disagreement between the Africanists and the members of the ‘Black Caucus’ of ASA. According to Martin and West, ‘this institutional and intellectual effort marked a new ‘Africa’, separated from the African diaspora and European colonial system and in practice, meant that ‘African’ encompassed only sub-Saharan Africa, as openly stated by the ASA’s founding News Release Africa’.⁸⁶

This operative notion of ‘African’ in the ASA, which invariably manifested in structures, research agendas, funding opportunities and policy formation in the study of Africa, continued to stir insurgency among the Black members of the ASA. This culminated in the open rebellion of the ‘Black Caucus’ at the ASA October 1969 conference in Montreal, Canada, as a result of the

⁸³ Clarke, ‘The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)’, 5.

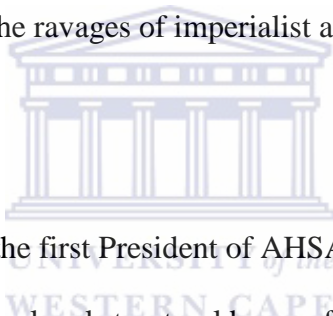
⁸⁴ Clarke, ‘The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)’, 5.

⁸⁵ Martin and West, *Out of one, Many Africa*, 22, 96.

⁸⁶ Martin and West, *Out of one, Many Africa*, 22, 96.

rejection of the demands of the Black Caucus convened by Chike Onwuachi at the preceding 10th annual ASA meeting at Los Angeles in 1968.⁸⁷

This Black Caucus called on the ASA ‘to render itself more relevant and competent to deal with the challenge of African people globally and to facilitate this objective by broadening African participation in all phases of the Association operations’.⁸⁸ Crucially, according to Zeleza, regarding intellectual concerns, ‘they called for the inclusion of a pan-Africanist perspective in research themes and the assumption of scholarly authority by Africans and African-Americans. On political matters they insisted on collective commitment to struggles for emancipation in Africa and the United States from the ravages of imperialist and racist oppression, exploitation, and marginalisation’.⁸⁹



According to Clarke, who became the first President of AHSA, the specific demand of the Black Caucus was changes to the ideological and structural bases of the ASA. They demanded that the ‘study of African life be undertaken from a pan-African perspective, which defines all black people as African people and rejects the division of African people by geographical locations based on spheres of influence’.⁹⁰ This demand was rejected in a vote by the ASA which resulted in the Black Caucus splitting from the ASA; subsequent attempts at reconciliation failed finally with Clarke’s letter to L. Gary Cowen, in response to the Phillip Curtin reconciliation proposal. While Clarke stated later that ‘it was not their intention to leave the association, but to demand

⁸⁷ Clarke, ‘The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)’, 8.

⁸⁸ Toure ‘John Henrik Clark, 231.

⁸⁹ Zeleza, ‘The Perpetual Solitude’, 196.

⁹⁰ Clarke, ‘The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)’, 10.

decision-making positions within the structures of the ASA',⁹¹ this was not to be, as revealed in his letter to Cowen, which stated that 'put in black and white the whole thing is staked. White overwhelmingly votes Black vote zero. It is a beautiful scheme but blatantly arrogant and insulting! I reject it. For the present, this letter ends all official relationship between our respective organisations'.⁹²

As noted by Zeleza, 'the Montreal confrontation marked a crucial moment for what it revealed of the institutional and intellectual solitudes in African Studies and the legacies it left behind'.⁹³

The formal inauguration of the African Heritage Studies Association at the Federal City College in Washington D.C on 27 June 1969 was claimed to represent a major resurgence of the pan-Africanist intellectual tradition of the study of Africa negated by the epistemological violence of the Africanist enterprise. According to Herchelle Sullivan Challenor, a participant at the convention,

Montreal may go down in history as the harbinger of a new era of pan-Africanism that surpasses in scope and inclusiveness earlier pan-Africanist movements. Unlike the limited scope of cultural pan-Africanism of the 1900s led by Sylvester Williams and W. E. B. Dubois and the geographically restricted post-war pan-Africanism which galvanised incipient nationalist movements in Africa for the purpose of liberating the continent from colonial rule, the Montreal Black Caucus affirmed the cultural political interdependence of all African people, regardless of national origin.⁹⁴

One of the significant ideological shifts AHSA represented was the notion of African and heritage studies it projected. Clark defined the notion of 'African' underpinning AHSA in

⁹¹ Clarke, 'The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)'.

⁹² "Exchange of Letters between L. Gray Cowan and John Henrik Clarke". *1970 African Studies Newsletter*, 3, nos. 3-4 (May-June):1-5, 2-5 in Martin and West, 103.

⁹³ P. T. Zeleza, 'The Perpetual Solitude and Crisis of African Studies in the United States', *Africa Today*, Vol. 44, No 2 (Apr-June, 1997), 196.

⁹⁴ H Sullivan Challenor, 'No longer at Ease: Confrontation at the 12th Annual African Studies Association Meeting at Montreal', *Africa Today*, Vol. 16, No. 5/6, *The Crisis in African Studies* (Oct-Dec., 1969), 4.

relation to land, history and culture. The notion of ‘African’ of AHSA, according to Clark, ‘makes no distinction between the Africans in Africa and the people of African descent in other parts of the world in the study of Africa’.⁹⁵ He rejected the notion of ‘black Africa’ because it presupposes that there is a legitimate ‘white Africa’ and argued that the term ‘Negro Africa’ is offensive because ‘there is no such thing as a Negro because this word fails to relate the people of African descent to land, history, and culture’.⁹⁶

On the crucial question of privilege of an epistemological perspective of knowledge of Africa in heritage studies by ‘Africans’ or whether heritage studies is result of a process of methodological inquiry that adheres to a set intellectual disciplinary paradigm, Clarke argued for a privileged epistemological perspective of knowledge of Africa by Africans based on a historical and ideological position. According to him, mainly white people are gaining a quick reputation as authorities on African people, which he described as ‘a new academic colonialism, and that it is not unrelated to the neo-colonialism that is attempting to re-enslave Africans by controlling the minds of Africans’.⁹⁷

The pedagogical, ideological objective of African heritage studies, which distinguishes it from African studies, was that the aim of African heritage studies is ‘to define the method and importance of putting a fragmented African people back together again, and finding a way to heal the deep psychological wounds that are the legacy of the slave trade and the colonial

⁹⁵ Clarke, ‘The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)’ 8.

⁹⁶ Clarke, ‘The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)’ 9.

⁹⁷ Clarke, ‘The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)’ 6.

system'.⁹⁸ What thus distinguished AHSA from ASA is the notion of African it espoused and the idea of heritage studies it introduced in African Studies. According to Clarke,

The intent of the AHSA is to use African history to affect a world union of African people. This association of scholars of African descent is committed to the preservation, interpretation, and creative presentation of the historical and cultural heritage of African people, both on the ancestral soil of Africa and in diaspora in the Americas and throughout the world. We interpret African history from a Pan-Africanist perspective that defines all black people as an African people. We do not accept the arbitrary lines of geographical demarcations that were created to reflect colonialist sphere of influence. As scholar-activist, our programme has as its objective the restoration of the cultural, economic and political life of African people everywhere. In our ideological perspective, we are committed to taking the concept of Pan-Africanism into another dimension beyond its present meaning. We recognise the need for cultural unity of the black people of the world, and we are committed to all sincere effort that we make this unity a reality; but this is only the beginning. We know there is no way to move a people from slavery to self-awareness without engaging in political expedience and revolutionary coalitions. As scholar-activist, our primary role is to define the historical currents relating to this action in such a manner that when this inevitable action occurs, it can proceed with a minimum of confusion.⁹⁹

In articulating the ideological reasons for the 1969 break of the Black Caucus from the African Studies Association (ASA), John Henrik Clarke signposted a path in the study of 'Africa' that has survived as an alternate episteme with its own coherent process of knowledge production outside the mainstream academy. This alternative episteme revealed a deeper origin of the notion of heritage and heritage studies. According to Clarke, the idea and practice of heritage studies as a study of recovery of self began among Africans 'who came to the United States as slaves who started their attempt to reclaim their lost African heritage'.¹⁰⁰ He therefore argued that 'any honest approach to African Studies must begin with a brief history of the interest that black

⁹⁸ Clarke, 'The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)', 11.

⁹⁹ Clarke, 'The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)', 11.

¹⁰⁰ Clarke, 'The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)', 5.

Americans have shown in this subject and the desire to reclaim their African heritage'.¹⁰¹ As William G. Martin argued, the politics and policies of ASA at its inception were designed not only to deny participation of this alternate episteme in its proceedings but also to incarcerate it ideologically by the negation and destruction of its process of knowledge production through co-option, subversion and outright hostilities.¹⁰²

As claimed by Martin and West, 'contrary to the silence fostered by various accounts of the history of African studies, however, the Africanist pioneers were highly cognisant of the earlier tradition of black scholarship. Indeed, to study Africa prior to 1950 required participation in a nexus consisting of black scholars, journals, professional associations, and institutions such as Howard and Fisk, where courses on continental Africa, if not actual programmes, had been established.'¹⁰³ However, according to Zeleza, 'paternity of the field of African Studies was wrested from W. E. B. Dubois and given to Melville Herskovits'.¹⁰⁴

According to Martin and West, the gloating of the founding president of ASA, the great Africanist Melville Herskovits, that he had been the 'hatchet man' of W.E.B. Dubois' effort at the compilation of the 'Encyclopaedia Africana, one of the most ambitious black scholarly projects to date'¹⁰⁵ was episodic of this history of epistemological violence. Martin quoted

¹⁰¹ Clarke, 'The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSAs), 5.

¹⁰² See for example statements like 'Professor Frazier declared firmly that Howard should eschew undertaking a flamboyant, highly publicised programme under which it would loudly advertise itself as a great centre of learning and research concerning Africa.' – quoted in W. G. Martin to show the extent of hostilities to this tradition of the study of Africa – 'The Rise of African Studies (USA) and the transnational study of Africa', *African Studies Review*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (April 2011), 59 -83.

¹⁰³ Martin & West, *Out of one, Many Africa*, 87.

¹⁰⁴ P. T. Zeleza, The Perpetual Solitude and Crisis of African Studies in the United States, *Africa Today*, Vol. 44, No 2 (Apr-June, 1997), 195.

¹⁰⁵ Martin & West, *Out of one, Many Africa*, 88.

Herskovits' statement that 'Dr Dubois was not a scholar; he was a 'radical' and a Negrophile'¹⁰⁶ to show the extent of the hostility to this alternate episteme in the ASA at inception. It was against this ideological background that one of the first tasks undertaken by the ASA as an organisation was to delineate a 'college of fellows' within the ASA to exclude the scholars from this tradition of the study of Africa they regarded as 'unscientific and eclectic interdisciplinary methods of academic faddism'.¹⁰⁷

Victor C. Uchendu, who despite being part of 'the large numbers of Africans and Afro-Americans who have joined ASA',¹⁰⁸ according to Clark, agreed with him on the problems of the colonial legacy of African studies. Uchendu criticised African studies as suffering from 'a terminal colonial order' in which Africanists were implicated, whether by choice or circumstance, in the asymmetrical relations of dependence and domination between Africa and the West.¹⁰⁹ Importantly, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza referred to Uchendu as having listed a number of crucial professional questions that needed to be asked of African Studies in relation to Africans, African heritage studies and the geo-political context of the study of Africa. The question Uchendu asked quoted by Zeleza was,

What role should the non-African scholar continue to play in African Studies; who should decide priority areas of research in African studies; what are the practical interests of foreign governments and private foundations that provide funds for Africanist research? and how much 'intelligence mining' results from research activities done by foreigners in Africa; in addition to what kind of commitments must Africanists make to Africa's problems; how different is the 'insider's' view of Africa from the 'outsider's' view of Africa by non-Africans?¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Martin & West, *Out of one, Many Africa*, 88.

¹⁰⁷ Martin & West, *Out of one, Many Africa*, 93.

¹⁰⁸ Clarke 'The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA), 5.

¹⁰⁹ Zeleza, 'The Perpetual Solitude', 197.

¹¹⁰ Zeleza, 'The Perpetual Solitude', 198.

Zeleza pointed out that Uchendu had concluded that African Studies ‘is nothing if it provides no service to Africa. It served the interests of colonial governments; it has a responsibility to serve independent Africa, a major consumer and audience of its studies’.¹¹¹ Uchendu described the colonial heritage of African Studies in its modern institutional form as follows:

The founding and early direction of the International African institute (IAI)¹¹² was in the hands of a triumvirate consisting of missionaries, government administrators, and scholars – and probably in that order. Each member of this triumvirate had its own vision of Africa and of African Studies and also its unique idealism and its distinct self-interest. The scholar saw Africa as a laboratory for advancing his knowledge of how societies work or do not work; the missionaries wanted assistance in evangelisation; and the administrator wanted field guidance on how to control and rule the African subject population without encountering an intolerable opposition. All, however, operated with a limited vision of the possibilities of African political development, and few could foresee Africans as active and leading participants in the field of African Studies.¹¹³

This ideological history of African Studies spelt out by Victor Uchendu is at the root of what Paul Tiyambe Zeleza described as the perpetual crisis of African Studies since its institutional inception in the 1950s. According to him, ‘the crisis is rooted in the unyielding intellectual, institutional, and ideological solitude and bitter contestations among producers and consumers of Africanist knowledge, who are divided by hierarchies of race and nationality, location and spatial affiliations, epistemological orientations and ambition’.¹¹⁴ African Studies was thus, according to him ‘dogged by the crisis of legitimacy from the very beginning, by the unresolved questions of

¹¹¹Zeleza, ‘The Perpetual Solitude’, 198.

¹¹² The International African Institute was founded in 1926 in London as the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures. Over the years, the IAI has played a pioneering role in promoting African studies through facilitating research, scholarly publishing about Africa, and a variety of other programmes including hosting seminars and lectures.

¹¹³ V.C Uchendu, ‘Africa and the Africanist: The Challenge of a Terminal Colonial Order’, *A Journal of Opinion*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Spring 1977, 6.

¹¹⁴ Zeleza, ‘The Perpetual Solitude’, 198.

its audience, mission, and relevance and by the perennial contestations and cravings for scholarly authority and respectability'.¹¹⁵

This latent crisis of legitimacy in African Studies, argues Zeleza, continues to be reflected in the conflicting orientations in African Studies in the recent past and the present:

Unanchored from its intellectual and cultural moorings in the African American communities, scholarly and popular, and detached by distance and disposition from African societies and social thought, African Studies in the United States drifted unsteadily between the treacherous anchors of competing and sometimes complementary 'formulas'. ... The Washingtonian formula demanded that African Studies contribute to the definition, defence, and deployment of U.S. interests and intentions in Africa. The cultural brokerage formula called upon Africanists to act as impartial cultural diplomats, interpreting and mediating representations and encounters between Africa and the United States. The disciplinary formula promoted Africa as a tropical laboratory to test and refine the methodological and theoretical frameworks of the disciplines. The developmental formula championed the cause of developmental policy formulation and intervention. Finally, the solidarity formula implored Africanists to show commitment to African social movements and struggles.¹¹⁶

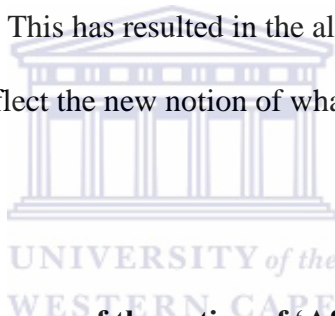
The impact of the challenge to the colonial notion of 'African' through heritage studies and its implications for the study of Africa resulted in a rethinking of the notion of 'African' and the disciplinary approach in African Studies. According to Edwards Alpers and Allen Roberts, the current trend in African studies is that 'the study of Africa must focus on Africa and the people of Africa. It should also include the study of Africans in the African Diasporas and the place of Africa in its global context, both historically and contemporaneously. African studies are about

¹¹⁵ Zeleza, 'The Perpetual Solitude', 194.

¹¹⁶ Zeleza, 'The Perpetual Solitude', 195.

African peoples, both on the continent of Africa and abroad, rather than about a continent called Africa'.¹¹⁷

The implications of this notion of 'African' in African Studies is that it not only 'acknowledged the significance contributions of several generations of African diaspora studies and how they relate to the study of Africa', but also opened up an 'African-centric' perspective in the study of Africa by a new generation of Africanists.¹¹⁸ As noted by Zeleza, through African heritage studies, 'African Studies may be going back to the future, reconnecting to and reclaiming its repudiated pan-Africanist intellectual past where questions of racial memory, civilizational order, and cultural identity are central.'¹¹⁹ This has resulted in the aligning of many centres, departments and programmes to reflect the new notion of what constitutes the study of Africa, as in the AHSA.¹²⁰



Mamdani – Clarke and the confluence of the notion of 'African' and African Heritage Studies

I have attempted to engage with both Clarke and Mamdani by quoting them extensively, to be able to show the ideological and theoretical conceptual similarities and differences between their projected notions of 'African', and of African studies, and the implications for the notion of 'African' in African heritage studies, as it relates to the APMHS. This is to provide a context to interrogate underlying assumptions of the notions of 'African' and its implications for the approach to heritage studies encapsulated in the APMHS.

¹¹⁷ E. A. Alpers and F. R. Allen; 'What is African Studies? Some Reflections', *African Issues*, Vol. 30, No. 2, (Identifying New Directions for African Studies), (2002), 11-18.

¹¹⁸ Alpers and Allen, 'What is African Studies?', 13.

¹¹⁹ Zeleza, 'The Perpetual Solitude', 206.

¹²⁰ Alpers and Allen, 'What is African Studies?', 13.

Mamdani did not use the words ‘heritage studies’, but by suggesting the ‘study of Africa as the study of ourselves’ he seems to be echoing Clarke’s definition of heritage studies as the ‘study of Africa in Afrocentric terms by Africans’.¹²¹ Both Mamdani and Clarke rejected the Africanist notion of ‘African’ as ‘Equatorial Africa (spatially) and Bantu Africa (socially), lying between the Limpopo and Sahara’.¹²² However, they differed in the notions of which ‘African’ should be the object of the study of Africa in a decolonising, transformative context. While Mamdani seems to project a notion of ‘African’ that encompasses the geographical, continental Africa, with special emphasis on rejection of the exceptionalism of South Africa in relation to the rest of the continent,¹²³ Clarke on the other hand projected a pan-Africanist notion of ‘African’ defined by race, land, history and culture, encompassing continental and diaspora Africans.¹²⁴

The problem with both Mamdani’s notion of ‘African’ as continental and Clarke’s notion of global diaspora pan-Africanism is that they invariably resort to a notion of ‘African’ in geographical terms, which risks regressing to an ethnic notion, in the context of continental ‘Africans’, defining them as Yoruba, Luo etc..¹²⁵ Or a racial definition, in the context of a pan-Africanist notion of ‘African’, defined as ‘black’. Thus, given the conceptual dissimilarity between Clarke and Mamdani’s notions of ‘African’, the question it poses for this study is: how does the notion of ‘African’ that the APMHS espouses escape the paradox of geography, ethnicity and race in the notion of ‘African’ encapsulated in its rebranding as ‘an African programme’?

¹²¹ Clarke, ‘The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)’, 5.

¹²² Mamdani, ‘Africa and African Studies’, 150.

¹²³ Mamdani, ‘Is African Studies to be turned into a New Home for Bantu Education at UCT?’.

¹²⁴ Clarke, ‘The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)’, 9.

¹²⁵ See M. Mamdani, *Citizen and subject: contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*, (Princeton: N.J., Princeton University Press, 1996). Mamdani criticised this notion of ‘African’ defined by ethnic affiliations.

Again, both Mamdani and Clarke insisted not only on the epistemological privilege of the knowledge of Africa by Africans, but of the strategic, geo-cultural, political, pedagogical significance of knowledge production for Africa by Africans. Clarke advocated a racialised argument that 'white' scholars are not only ideologically compromised by virtue of their geo-cultural history and epistemic position, but are in fact propagandists for white intellectual hegemony, and he therefore advocated the knowledge production of Africa by Africans, who he defined essentially in racial terms.¹²⁶ Mamdani, while not shying away from the question of race, challenged the reality that African Studies was a study of Africa, but not by Africans.¹²⁷ He insisted that 'the challenge is to recast African studies as the study of Self – indeed of Selves, as a source of self-knowledge. To do African Studies today, is to redefine the study of Africa as the study of ourselves in a post-apartheid world ... the ontological question of what is African is tied to the epistemological question of what is the historical process that makes us Africans?'.¹²⁸

Given, of heritage as exclusive to legacies and the debates of African heritage as intrinsically a geo-cultural political process of identity formation does being an African thus privilege an epistemological perspective of African Heritage studies, as the emphasis on the inclusion of students from African countries as an impetus for the rebranding of the programme 'African' implies? On the other hand, is African heritage studies a process of methodological inquiry that adheres to set epistemic positioning and intellectual paradigms not limited by racial or continental Africanity, as both Clarke and Mamdani seem to suggest?

¹²⁶ Clarke, 'The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)', 9.

¹²⁷ Mamdani, 'Is African Studies to be turned into a New Home for Bantu Education at UCT?', 70.

¹²⁸ Mamdani, 'Africa and African Studies', 150.

What are the most appropriate methodologies for studying Africa? Although Mamdani does not declare adherence to an Afrocentric methodological paradigm in the study of Africa, he seems to agree with Clarke's insistence on the significance of Cheikh Anta Diop in 'the reconstruction of African history and culture along Afrocentric lines that goes beyond strict disciplinary demarcations in the academy'.¹²⁹ Crucially, in arguing that the methodological perspective pioneered by Cheikh Anta Diop 'illuminates a specific trajectory of the African experience that goes beyond the methodology of archaeology and anthropology in constructing a historical sociology of Africa',¹³⁰ Mamdani agreed with Clarke that Diop's work is the point of departure for the reconstruction and a basis for the construction of African humanities.¹³¹ Clarke, maintained that Cheikh Anta Diop 'forged new theoretical pathways and revealed new evidence in the quest to uncover the ancient origins and unifying principles of classical African Civilization' that should form the ideological, epistemic foundation of the study of Africa.¹³²

As with Clarke, Mamdani acclaimed Diop as the first African scholar to recognise the limitations of reliance on a methodology of mainly archaeology and oral history, due to the lack of written records in African languages, for our knowledge of Africa. Mamdani also acknowledged Diop's 'claim that ancient Egypt is the core archive of African history',¹³³ but argued that greater significance lay in the more general questions he raised. As will be shown in the last chapter, the implications of Diop's thesis represent a methodological relevance, as an approach to African

¹²⁹ Clarke, 'The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)', 7.

¹³⁰ Mamdani, 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University', 8.

¹³¹ Mamdani, 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University', 11.

¹³² J. H. Clarke, 'Forward' in C.A. Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology*, (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1981), xiv.

¹³³ Mamdani, 'Teaching at the Post-Apartheid University', 8.

Heritage and Museum Studies that is critical by its methodology and African by its ideological, epistemic positioning.

This agreement between Clarke and Mamdani on the importance and indispensability of the research pioneered by Diop to the study of Africa allows for a critical interrogation of how radical the critical approach to heritage studies as African in the APMHS is, which neglects the work of Diop in its approach to African heritage studies. According to Clarke, ‘correcting the insulting neglect of his thesis in the study of Africa is an ideological and pedagogical objective of African Heritage Studies as a decolonising project’.¹³⁴ Engagement with the relevance of the incorporation of the Diopian perspective of heritage studies as African to the pedagogy curriculum of the APMHS is the focus of Chapter Six of this dissertation.

The fifth point that Jansen identified as the pillar of Mamdani’s thesis relevant to this study was the argument that the substituted syllabus ‘presents a racial periodisation of African history (pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial)’, leading to the concluding logic: ‘disintegration following the departure of the White Man’.¹³⁵ Again, Mamdani echoed Clarke’s contention that ‘most western historians write about Africa as if this continent and its people waited in darkness for Europeans to bring the light’.¹³⁶ This concordance between the positions of Mamdani and Clarke on the racist legacy of African Studies led to their agreement on the need for an ‘entire new approach to African history, a new approach that must begin with a new frame of reference’.¹³⁷

¹³⁴ Clarke, ‘The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA), 9.

¹³⁵ Jansen, ‘But Our Natives Are Different!’ ,106.

¹³⁶ Clarke, ‘The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA), 1.

¹³⁷ Clarke, ‘The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA), 9.

Clark's question of what and who the African people are¹³⁸ was echoed by Mamdani's almost 20 years later, in 1997, when he argued that 'the liberation of South Africa presents us with a unique opportunity to redefine two related issues: Who is an African, and what is the study of Africa?'¹³⁹ According to Mamdani, 'the ontological question is tied to the question of epistemology; thus, the need to redefine the study of Africa as the study of ourselves in a post-apartheid world'. He argued:

If African Studies is to have the potential of triggering the process of self-examination that can unleash the energies necessary for this emancipatory process, then African Studies will have to be an institutional home for the study of ourselves. I suggest that this endeavour be defined by a double epistemological focus: on the one hand, a comparative method that explores themes on all sides of the borders, but without denying regional and local specificities; and on the other a query that problematises knowledge specialisation (whether between or within disciplines) through a historical understanding of the study of Africa.

The point is that African Studies should be neither a remote nor just a patronising (or matronising) confidence-building exercise. It should rather be a way of understanding the world we live in from different, multiple and simultaneous vantage points. It should be a way of asking questions like: What does it mean to be African in the contemporary world?¹⁴⁰

Asking Mamdani's question of the APMHS, the next chapter will engage with what it means for the APMHS to be an African programme in museum and heritage studies in the contemporary world, through a critical exploration of the unfolding notions of 'African' in the core course of the programme.

¹³⁸ Clarke, 'The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA)', 10.

¹³⁹ Mamdani, 'Africa and African Studies', 8.

¹⁴⁰ Mamdani 'Centre for African Studies: Some Preliminary Thoughts', *Social dynamics*, 22.2(1996), 6.

Chapter Four

Slavery and the Notions of ‘African’

Is it possible for cultural villages to move beyond stereotypical notions of culture as frozen in a timeless past before colonialism?¹

This chapter focuses on the exploration of unfolding notions of ‘African’ in museum and heritage studies projected by the APMHS, through a critical analysis of the curriculum of the core course of the programme. This entails an examination of the course outlines from the beginning of the programme in 1998 until 2009, focusing on selected topics and prescribed readings from the course. Specifically, this chapter focuses on slavery and the representation of slavery as topics in the curriculum of the programme. I focus specifically on the topics concerning slavery because this offers a framework to unpack how the different notions of ‘African’ unfolding in the curriculum of the APMHS disrupt settled essentialist notions of ‘African’ in the construction of ‘African’ in museum and heritage studies.

The pedagogical objectives of the core course of the APMHS articulated by Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz, its convenors from its inception in 1998, stated that:

The course, especially the Core module, seeks to begin an examination of the cultural workings of heritage, public history and identity formation under conditions of political transition in South Africa. It is concerned to understand the dominant discursive ways in which South Africans are being encouraged to consider, narrate and visualise their society and its past, as well as their own identities as individuals within it. The domain of heritage and public history requires serious examination, for it is here that attempts are being made to

¹ Core Course outline: ‘Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies’, Second semester, 2001 Session 7 – Tourism and the presentation of culture and history: Cultural villages, Preparatory essay question for written submission for the session.

fashion the categories and images of the post-apartheid nation. It is also in this domain of historical production that important contests are unfolding over the South African past. The course is concerned to understand the unfolding of these discourses in the institutions of public culture. Far from taking a conspiratorial view of individuals and institutions, the course tries to understand the discursive processes at work in the construction of heritage.²

While this pedagogical structure of the core course curriculum has not changed drastically, there have been significant changes in its content; especially in the theoretical orientation, case studies and prescribed readings used in the curriculum, which have moved it away from the exclusive South African emphasis displayed in the quote above. As revealed in the analysis of the curriculum, interrogating the question of what specifically is African in a programme of museum and heritage studies – and in the cultural politics of designating heritage as ‘African’ – remains an unarticulated concern underlying the curriculum.

Rassool and Witz, both convenors of the programme, have located the ‘origins and the discursive terrain into which the programme was inserted, and the educational challenges which it sought to engage’.³ They argued that the critical question in deciding the orientation of the programme was how a museum education programme in the post-apartheid/post-colonial present should approach the legacies of colonial ethnography in many African museums.⁴

This question informed a further reflection on the first year of the programme by Leslie Witz and Carohn Cornell, which concluded that there was a need to move beyond an exclusively South African focus and broaden the scope of the programme to include heritage discourses on the rest

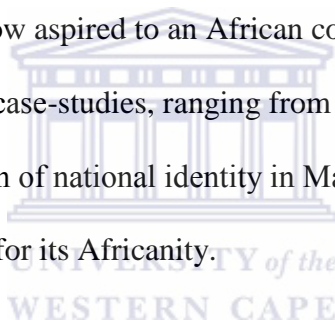
² C. Rassool and L. Witz, ‘Transforming Heritage education in South Africa: A Partnership between the Academy and the Museum’, SAMP 2001: Strengthening the Network: A meeting of African Museums of the Swedish African Museum Programme, (22-27 August 1999), 6.

³ Rassool and Witz, ‘Transforming Heritage education in South Africa’, 1.

⁴ Rassool and Witz, ‘Transforming Heritage education in South Africa’, 4.

of the continent.⁵ The article did not address the impetus for this concern to move beyond the South African discourse of heritage, apart from alluding to increasing interest in participation by students from other African countries. Nonetheless, as shown in another article by Leslie Witz and Carohn Cornell, this interest in broader heritage discourses on the rest of the continent was influenced by the raging debate generated by the UCT-Mamdani controversy.⁶

The effect of this concern with the notion of ‘African’ depicted in ethnographic museums (and the assumption that African students would have a strong view on the Atlantic Slave Trade) on the curriculum of the programme is crucial in understanding the notions of ‘African’ unfolding in the curriculum.⁷ It also indicates how aspired to an African continental orientation, from its inception, by drawing on ‘African case-studies, ranging from debates about slaving heritage in Senegal’s Goree Island, the creation of national identity in Malawi and the neglect of Swahili heritage in Kenya’,⁸ as credentials for its Africanity.



What is interesting and critical in these ‘African case studies’ is their connection to the history of slavery in Africa. The Goree Island story is explicit in its focus on transatlantic slavery; and both

⁵ See Witz and Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s Cave’, 21.

⁶ According to Witz and Cornell, although this first-year course moved away from the discredited area studies approach, the second-year course remained glued to it. In order to correct the area study approach which remained enmeshed in ‘the geographic separation of Africa and South Africa in the study of Africa which had come under fire for promoting the idea of South African exceptionalism’, in 1988, the History department ‘specifically designed a course at undergraduate level in the department. This course, titled ‘Africa, Race and Empire in the 19th Century’ designed to ensure that South African history is studied as an integral part of African history, is instructive again, for the question of this chapter is the focus on slavery. As stated by Witz and Cornell, rather than focusing on economic and political ties in the relationship between Europe and Africa, the course instead focused on ‘the development and transmission of stereotypical ideas people had about each other at a time when the slave trade and slavery were coming to an end’ – L. Witz and C. Cornell, ‘Africa, Race and Empire in the Nineteenth Century at a South African University in 1998’, *Radical History Review*, 76, (2000), 223-231.

⁷ Witz and Cornell argued that the topic of slavery is one on which students are presumed to have strong views because of the debate about the participation of Africans in the slave trade – L. Witz and C. Cornell, ‘Africa, Race and Empire in the Nineteenth Century at a South African University in 1998’, *Radical History Review*, 76, (2000), 223-231.

⁸ Witz, ‘An Interim Position’, 8.

the problems of construction of national identity in Malawi and the alleged neglect of the Swahili heritage in Kenya, after deeper analysis, cannot be divorced from the wider history of the Indian Ocean slave trade,⁹ as shown in Gates' 'Wonder of the African World' documentary. It is worth noting that these African case studies seem on the surface to imply that the notion of 'African' as ethnic pre-colonial inheritance was unsettled by the history of the transatlantic slave trade, since it introduced a notion of 'African' that goes beyond continental ethnic definition. However, a critical analysis of how the APMHS challenges the underlying assumption of this essentialised notion of 'African' in the sessions on the topic of slavery in the core course curriculum reveals otherwise, as will be demonstrated.

To understand the paradox I intend to focus not only on slavery as a topic on its own, but more generally on how the curriculum engaged with slavery and the representation of slavery in selected sessions of the core course. This approach hinges on the theoretical potentials the treatment of this topic exhibits for unpacking the multifaceted notions of 'African' unfolding in the core course curriculum of the APMHS. A further advantage of examining slavery is that it allows us to understand how the course has changed, in both focus and content, from its initial configuration in 1998 as an exclusively South Africa-focused programme, to its broadening to encompass discourses of heritage on the entire African continent. The crucial focus will be on the unfolding of different notions of 'African' revealed in these changes. Understanding why, when and how, and interrogating the implications of these changes, is crucial in appreciating how the different notions of 'African' and African heritage studies projected in the core course

⁹ See H L. Gates Jr., *Wonders of the African World*, *A Companion Volume to the PBS Television Series* (USA: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2001).

unfold to offer avenues that challenge and unsettle the essentialized notion of ‘African’ prevalent in discourses of African heritage studies within and beyond formal academic settings.

First Curriculum of the Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies: 1998¹⁰

The first curriculum of the programme in Museum and Heritage Studies clearly reflected its origin in the post-apartheid discourse of heritage transformation in South Africa. A crucial part of this transformation of the heritage sector to reflect the new democratic realities was the training of personnel to effect the transformation in the sector. Therefore, central to the curriculum (according to Leslie Witz) was ‘an attempt to develop heritage practitioners who constantly challenge the underlying assumptions of heritage practice ... through exposure to the tensions of creating a heritage that reflects the nation and one that seeks to question the nation’.¹¹ Understandably, the curriculum focused on a critical analysis of South African heritage and museum transformation imperatives, moving from the apartheid representation of the nation into one that reflects the new, democratic, multicultural, rainbow nation, in the context of race and ethnicity.

The title of the first semester sessions was ‘Issues of Heritage in the Historical and Political Context’, while the second semester focused on ‘The Politics of Public Representation’.¹² According to Rassool and Witz, the central question of the first semester sessions was the debate on whether heritage can be seen as an ‘inheritance from the past, or whether it should be seen as a product’.¹³ The focus of the first semester curriculum was to understand debates about different

¹⁰ Appendix 1 – 1998 Core course outline.

¹¹ Witz and Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s Cave’, 2.

¹² Core Course outline: “Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies”, 1998, Leslie Witz private collections.

¹³ Rassool and Witz, ‘Transforming Heritage education in South Africa’, Leslie Witz private Collections.

forms of heritage, ranging from national heritage to living heritage, natural heritage and urban heritage.

The introductory abstract for the very first session of the core course, held on Friday 13 March 1998, and titled 'History and Heritage: Rivals or Partners? In the Company's Garden', stated:

The main aim of this session is to question the meanings of heritage and to open discussions about its relationship to history. Kevin Walsh (1992:114), for instance, argues that heritage emphasises uncritical, static depictions of the past. History, he sees, in contrast, as being based upon a critical understanding of change over time. Raphael Samuel (1994:270) disagrees with Walsh, referring to Walsh's type of argument as 'heritage baiting'. Samuel instead sees fundamental similarities between history and heritage: 'Each ... claims to be representing the past 'as it was'. Each one too could be said to be obsessed with the notion of 'period'... [They] also share ... the belief that scrupulous attention to detail will bring the dead to life'. Much of this depends upon how history and heritage are conceptualised and defined. In order to try and make this discussion more concrete we have decided to use the Company Gardens as an example of what some people might consider to be a heritage site. Indeed, it is at present officially a National Monument.

Reading preparation

Three types of readings are required for the session.

(A) The first is the package of documents that relate to the Company Gardens. These documents are about perceptions of the Gardens and some of its different uses at different times. It is suggested that you read the documents in the order provided below. The first one gives a brief history of the Gardens. The documents which follow are mainly in chronological order.

1. 'The Company's Gardens: Public Participation Process: Invitation.' (This will give you a brief history of the Gardens)
2. Extracts from Mia Karsten, *The Old Company's Garden*, Maskew Millar, Cape Town (1951)
 - * Foreword by R H Compton
 - * Francois Valentijn's description of the Garden (1726)
 - * Otto Mentzel's description of the Garden (1730s)
3. 'Statue of a Contentious Statesman', 1908
4. 'Conditions 'Stick in Afrikaner's Throat'', *Cape Argus*, 25 April 1940
5. Letter from P H Ross (?), 15 June 1946
6. 'Cape Town's Hobo Lane', *Cape Times*, 7 September 1967

(B) To find out more about the Gardens, read:

- * 'Company's Gardens: Information Package'

* J J Oberholster, *The Historical Monuments of South Africa*, Rembrandt Foundation, Cape Town (1972), pages 12-16. (Both of these are available on short loan at the UCT, UWC, and Robben Island libraries)

When you do these readings on the Gardens, see if you can discern:

(a) Different ways that the Gardens have been perceived?

(b) How perceptions of the gardens may have changed over time?

(c) It is also essential that you read about the politics of heritage conservation.

These readings below deal with defining heritage and history and the relationship between them. As you do the readings, consider the relationship between a history of the Gardens and its heritage. All these readings are available on short loan at the UCT, UWC and Robben Island Libraries.

K Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and heritage in the post-modern world*, Routledge, London (1992), especially chapters 4 and 5.

R Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, Verso, London (1994), especially pp 259-73 and 288-312.

'History / Heritage', Mailbase United Kingdom, Internet discussion list, June 1997- October 1997 (<http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/history-heritage>)

Written preparation

Write 3-4 pages (in total) in response to all the following questions:

1 How do you understand the concepts of history and heritage? (Samuel, Walsh and the Internet discussions are important for this)

2 What ideas of the nation does heritage promote?

3 From your reading what do you consider to be (a) the history of the Company's Garden? and (b) the heritage of the Garden?

4 From your readings what suggestions would you make in the Public Participation Process about the future of the Garden?¹⁴

I have quoted the whole study package for this first session, because changes to both the pedagogical example and case studies used in the introduction briefs, readings and questions of the session, together with its structural sequencing, represented major pedagogical turning points of the curriculum of the programme.

As showed in the abstract, readings and essay questions, the session focused exclusively on South Africa. It used the Company Gardens in Cape Town as its pedagogical object of analysis, to question its conceptualisation as national heritage given the 'historical record' of its past and

¹⁴ Core Course Outline: 'Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies', 1998.

its memory in public discourse, in the context of the distinctions between history and heritage in the formation of identity in post-apartheid South Africa:

The stated aim of the second session, themed ‘From natural environments to constructed landscapes: The views of Table Mountain’ began questioning of the meaning of natural heritage. The session dealt with the various depictions of nature in the context of the symmetric relations of natural and cultural landscapes in the conceptualisation of heritage, with Table Mountain in Cape Town as a focus of analysis. The third session, themed ‘Living heritage – considering public memories, oral histories, lifestyles and the making of tradition’, with another heritage site, the District Six Museum in Cape Town, as a focus of analysis, dealt with the question of the vitality of living heritage. Changes to both sessions as will be shown later in the subsequent sections of the chapter are crucial in understanding not only the shift from an exclusively South African focus, but how the notions of ‘African’ encapsulated in the programme begin to unfold. As will be discussed in detail later, not only had Table Mountain ceased to be the focus of analysis in engaging the issue of natural and cultural heritage but, interestingly, District Six was dropped as an example of living heritage and replaced with a focus on ‘African Oral Tradition’.¹⁵

All three initial sessions clearly reflected an historical, philosophical and political orientation, with recourse to anthropology, archaeology, cultural and physical geography, and environmental studies. The fourth session detoured, however, to engage with the built environment as heritage, which obviously reflected the influence of architecture and the notion of heritage as conservation of the built environment as a strand of heritage studies at the beginning of the programme. This session was themed to focus on the built environment, monument sites and city planning, and included a walking tour of Cape Town from the Company Gardens, which entailed visits to various heritage landmarks in the city.¹⁶

¹⁵ A. Hampâtè Bâ, “The living tradition”, in J. Ki-Zerbo (ed), *General History of Africa*, Abridged Edition, Vol. 1, (London, James Curry 1990), 62-72.

¹⁶ From this focus on the built environment as an example of heritage following a historical and philosophical engagement with the concept of heritage, the next session, ‘Designating and Proclaiming Heritage Sites’ engaged with the cultural, political question of ‘how and who decides on what is/are designated as heritage sites?’ The next session focused on museums as repositories of heritage and as heritage, and on the emergence and ethics of collecting and the ‘western’ museum concept and its colonial impact. Moving from conceptual, historical and philosophical questions, the core course in the first year focused on the cultural politics and ethics of visual history

The first semester sessions clearly reflect the focus of the core course on South Africa – and specifically Cape Town as a focus of analysis. However, the next and subsequent sessions in the second semester reflected a broader orientation of the curriculum. The last session of the first semester, titled ‘New Paradigms, New Heritage, New Museum’, with ‘Heritage and Museum and the New Paradigm in the Post-colonial World’ as the theme of the session, marked a return to historical, philosophical and political approaches which began the consideration of the concept of heritage in its cultural, political context.

The first session of the second semester of the 1998 programme focused on the issue of heritage as a social construct and the political issues of heritage representation; followed by the second session, which focused on ‘Power, Politics and Representation in the Colonial World’. Viewed together, these sessions (by virtue of their engagement with the post-colonial discourse of heritage) locate the programme in the broader African geo-cultural political context. The course concluded with a focus on heritage transformation through ‘policy development and the restructuring of heritage in the historical context’.¹⁷ As will be seen later in the chapter, the topics dealt with in the second semester have since made up an introduction to the core course.

As can be seen from this brief description of the first curriculum of the core course of the programme of museum and heritage studies, this first course was experimental, the parameters of what constitutes the core of heritage studies were still ambiguous in the curriculum of the

and strategies of museum representation, which reflected the influence of visual and public histories as a seedbed of heritage studies in the curriculum of the course core of the programme at its inception. Again, as in the previous session, the example and focus of analysis is limited to South Africa, specifically Cape Town, with a focus on the South African Museum and Gallery in the Company Gardens and a visit to a museum along the east coast. - Core Course: ‘Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies’, 1998, Leslie Witz private collections.

¹⁷ Core Course: “Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies”, 1998, Leslie Witz private collections.

programme. There was clearly ambivalence on what should or should not be included in the core course of the programme of museum and heritage studies, and on the challenge of incorporating the RITP modules discussed in Chapter Two. This ambivalence reflected the diverse notions of heritage and strands of heritage studies incorporated in the core course, ranging from the historical and philosophical discourse of heritage to the influence of architecture and urban planning as heritage, to the visual history and politics of heritage designation and the technical conservation management of heritage. It is also instructive to note the emphasis on South Africa and the city of Cape Town, specifically the Company Gardens as an object of analysis in the 1998 curriculum, taught at the Michaelis building on UCT's Hiddingh campus – located in the Company Gardens in Cape Town.



This initial 1998 core course focused mainly on South African heritage and museum discourse, with minimal engagement with perspectives in a broader African context. However, there was an exception. In the session on ‘New Paradigm, New Heritage and New Museums’ in the second semester, the discourse on South African heritage was located as part of the development of heritage in a post-colonial world.¹⁸ However, the whole curriculum – contents, structure and sequencing of the topic – changed drastically in the next year of the programme, because of a marked engagement with the discourse of heritage on the African continent.

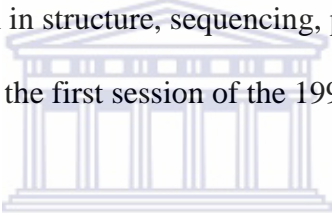
Traditional Pre-colonial Notions of ‘African’ in Heritage Studies

If 1998 was experimental, in the configuration of the curriculum of the core course of the programme, the 1999 core course reflected with clear focus the approach to heritage studies the

¹⁸ Core Course: ‘Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies’, 1998.

programme chose to chart. By dispensing with the influence of architecture, cultural resources management studies and detailed engagement with visual history,¹⁹ the course focused on a structured historical and philosophical orientation in the context of the cultural politics of heritage, with a clear focus on African heritage discourses. The second year of the programme thus witnessed the first major changes in the core course curriculum. These changes, which reflected a clear engagement with the discourse of heritage in an African context, represented what can be termed the incipient African stage of the programme.

The analysis below reveals that fundamentally the 1999 core course content was a clear departure from the 1998 curriculum in structure, sequencing, prescribed readings and content. As stated in the abstract/study brief for the first session of the 1999 Core Course: ‘Heritage as a Product’:



The main aim of this session is to question the meaning of heritage and discuss how heritage is produced. In the Report of the Arts and Culture Task Group presented to the South African Ministry of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology in 1995 (p55), heritage is defined as ‘that which we inherit’. George Abungu, of the National Museums of Kenya, in a similar vein refers to heritage as ‘a nation's or people's resources’ (p1). Graeme Davison, who relies mainly on Australian examples, presents a somewhat different approach. He looks at heritage primarily as a political concept, which is created in the present. Ashworth and Tunbridge carry this argument further and assert that heritage is ‘a created phenomenon continuously created anew according to changing attitudes and demands’ (p10). In this session, we need to try to understand these different meanings attached to heritage and discuss which might be most appropriate in terms of an approach to heritage studies.²⁰

The readings prescribed for the session were:

Report of the Arts and Culture Task Group, presented to the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Pretoria, June 1995, pp 53-59.

¹⁹ All had since constituted part of the elective of the programme offered by the History Dept, UWC, titled ‘Public History and Tourism’.

²⁰ Heritage as a Product, Core Outline, Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies, 1999.

G. Abungu, 'Heritage, Community and the State in the 90s: Experiences from Africa', paper presented at 'The Future of the Past' Conference, UWC, 10-12 July 1996, pp1-3.

G. Davison, 'The meanings of 'heritage'' in G. Davison and C. McConville (eds.), *A Heritage Handbook*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards (1991).

J. E. Tunbridge and G. J. Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, John Wiley and Sons, Chichester (1996), pp1-11.

K Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and heritage in the post-modern world*, Routledge, London (1992), especially chapters 4 and 5.

R Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, Verso, London (1994), especially pp259-73 and 288-312.

'History/Heritage', Mailbase United Kingdom, Internet discussion list, June 1997- October 1997 (<http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/history-heritage>).

The written preparation for the session required students to write a 2- to 3-page essay in response to the following questions:

1. Explain, in your own words, the different ways that ACTAG, Abungu, Davison and Tunbridge and Ashworth define the meaning of heritage?
2. Which approach do you find most appropriate for an approach to heritage studies and why?²¹

A notable change in the 1999 curriculum was in the notions of 'African' that begin to unfold in the session. The session started with an engagement with a debate on the meanings and production of heritage from the perspective of heritage transformation discourse in South Africa. This debate was then located within the broader, African and international theoretical discourses of heritage.²² This was the first time this topic – 'Heritage as a Product' – had been introduced in the core course, which shows a change in theoretical orientation of the programme, from an engagement with the discourse of heritage in a purely South African context, to encompassing a broader discourse of heritage in the African context. In the introductory abstract, the stated key

²¹ Heritage as a Product. , Core Outline, Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies, 1999.

²² Core Course Outline, Second Semester, Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies, 1999.

question of the session ‘is to understand the debates over whether heritage can be seen as an ‘inheritance’ from the past or whether it should be seen as a product’.²³

The abstract for the session began with an introduction to different notions of heritage in heritage practice and policy formations, in the context of heritage transformation in South Africa. It started with the notion of heritage in the Report of the Arts and Culture Task Group, a think-tank set up in immediate post-apartheid South Africa to address the democratisation and transformation of the heritage sector to reflect the new South Africa, which defined ‘heritage’ as ‘inheritance’. The introduction noted that this notion correlates to the notion of heritage in the discourse of heritage on the continent, where George Abungu defined heritage as ‘a nation’s or people’s resources’.²⁴ Both these notions of heritage were juxtaposed against the global discourse of heritage, where heritage (according to Tunbridge and Ashworth) is a political resource continually produced in contemporary societies to satisfy changing attitudes and cultural political expediencies.²⁵

One problem of the notions of heritage outlined in the ACTAG report was the notion of living culture as ‘hidden’ heritage, described in the report as encompassing ‘living traditions, customs, beliefs, rituals and oral history that carries valuable messages from the past ... known in the Nguni language as *Amasiko* and in Sotho and Tswana as *ditso*’.²⁶ This ethnic notion of hidden

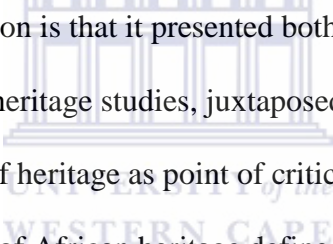
²³ Proposal to Rockefeller Foundation, 9.

²⁴ Part of G. Abungu’s article *Heritage, Community and the State in the 90s: Experiences from Africa* extracted, as a prescribed reading for the session, was a paper presented at “The Future of the Past” Conference, (UWC, 10-12 July 1996). The conference, organised by the Mayibuye Centre, Institute for Historical Research and the History Department, all of UWC, was part of the immediate post-apartheid efforts to connect South Africa socio-culturally to the rest of the continent through critical intellectual encounters. George Abungu’s contribution was significant because of the different notion of African heritage it projects.

²⁵ Heritage as a Product, 1999 Core Outline, Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies.

²⁶ Report of the Arts and Culture Task Group, presented to the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology,

heritage, marginalised under apartheid as definitive of heritage as being African, is the notion of heritage most challenged and criticised. The notion of heritage as a living tradition encoded in oral tradition and pre-colonial essence, definitive of arguments of/for specificity of heritage as African, constitutes the core of the challenge to the notion of heritage projected in the ACTAG report, because of its colonial anthropological pretensions. As argued by Ciraj Rassool, this notion of heritage, which is framed as the 'hidden-living-heritage' of Africa revealed by post-apartheid acceptability, was characterised by notions of 'ancient rituals and traditions of 'Olde' Africa, replete with the wonders of its wildlife, natural beauty and a culture as fascinating as it is diverse'.²⁷

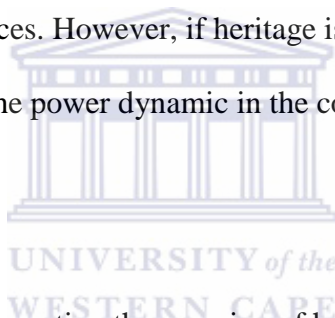


The critical importance of this session is that it presented both the ACTAG and Abungu notions of African heritage and of African heritage studies, juxtaposed with both the Davidson and Tunbridge and Ashworth theories of heritage as point of critical debate. Students were encouraged to question the notions of African heritage defined in the ACTAG report and in Abungu's article as an automatic inheritance, in the context of the notions of heritage as a constructed cultural product serving a pre-programmed political purpose. The session thus entailed a critical engagement with the problem of the notion of 'African' as pre-modern, ethnic and traditional, through critical engagement with the definition of heritage as inheritance from the past, a cultural resource for socio-economic development; to the concept of heritage as a cultural, political, created product.

(Pretoria, June 1995), 56-57.

²⁷ Rassool, 'The Rise of heritage', 7.

The critical pedagogical significance of these changes was in the preparatory essay for the session, which required students to discuss the different notions of heritage presented in the readings, choose a preferred notion of heritage, and argue for its appropriateness as the object of heritage studies. This question is crucial to the understanding of the notion of African heritage that the programme challenges; for it is here that the question of what should be the object and parameters of heritage studies designated ‘African’ began to come into focus as a critical question in the curriculum. If the notion of heritage of ACTAG and Abungu as people’s or nation-inherited resources is subscribed to, then heritage studies will be nothing more than technical skills acquisition for the documentation, conservation, preservation, interpretation and exhibition of these inherited resources. However, if heritage is a socio-cultural, political construct, then an appreciation of the power dynamic in the concept and practices of heritage will be the focus of heritage studies.



This first session, which aimed ‘to question the meaning of heritage and discuss how heritage is produced’,²⁸ through a critical analysis of different competing meanings of heritage and the process of heritage production, is significant for the notions of ‘African’ it unfolds. According to Abungu:

Cultural heritage in Africa includes sites, architecture, and any remains of cultural, historical, religious, archaeological, or aesthetic value – tangible evidence of a people’s or a nation’s shared past. ... With the advent of colonialism, much of African heritage was deemed ‘savage’ and pagan, and was suppressed ... African cultural heritage is dynamic and forms part of everyday life ... was in many cases seen to be in conflict with Christianity and was not only suppressed but destroyed...²⁹

²⁸ ‘The Production of Heritage’, Introduction abstract for the session, APMHS Course reader, 2009.

²⁹ Abungu, ‘Heritage, Community and the State in the 90s: Prescribed reading for Heritage as a Product, 1999.

Thus the notion of African heritage, as construed by Abungu, is of a traditional, pre-colonial, inherited, dynamic culture, suppressed and destroyed by the advent of colonialism. This notion of African heritage is echoed in the ACTAG report, which equates African heritage with this definition.

The problems of this notion of 'African' in African heritage – as marked by a frozen, timeless past before colonialism – was the focus of a later session on 'Living Heritage', which explicitly referred students directly back to the notion of living heritage discussed in the ACTAG report.

According to the short introductory abstract for a session titled: 'Is there a living heritage?'

A great deal of the discussion in the transformation of the heritage sector in South Africa has been around the concept of living heritage (*amasiko*) and how this can be introduced at heritage sites and museums. In this session, the meanings of living heritage are discussed and questioned. A particular concern is how what is constituted as living tradition is produced and the various contexts of its production.

Reading preparation

There are two types of readings that you are required to do for this session.

(A) Firstly re-read the extract from the Report of the Arts and Culture Task Group (ACTAG) that was part of your reading for the session on 12 March (Heritage as Product).

(B) The package of documents that relate to living heritage. When reading the package take note that the first reading accepts the notion of a living tradition without hesitation, while the following three readings raised problems with the notion of an authentic living tradition or heritage.

1. A. Hampâtè Bâ, 'The living tradition', in J. Ki-Zerbo (ed), *General History of Africa*, Abridged Edition, Vol. 1, James Curry, London (1990), pp 62-72.
2. S Makoni, 'African languages as European scripts: the shaping of communal memory', in S Nuttall and C Coetzee (eds), *Negotiating the Past*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town (1998), pp 242-248.
3. I Hofmeyr, 'Reading Oral Texts: New Methodological Directions', paper presented at the South African and Contemporary History Seminar, UWC, 3 October 1995.
4. T Ranger, 'The invention of tradition in colonial Africa', in E Hobsbawn and T Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Canto, Cambridge (1992), pp 247-247

Written preparation

Write 2-3 pages (in total) in response to the following question:

1 How does the work of (a) Makoni, on the 'invention and use of standardised African languages' (b) Hofmeyr, on the relation between literate and oral transmission, and (c) Ranger, on the invention of 'tribal' traditions in colonial Africa, challenge and question the notions of living heritage and living tradition contained in the ACTAG report and the article by Hampâtè Bâ?³⁰

The significance of understanding the unfolding of the changing notions of 'African' represented in this session is crucial, as evidenced in the replacement of the pedagogical case study examples for the 1999 session. While the 1998 session used the 'memory, nostalgia and meaning of the past'³¹ in the District Six Museum project to engage with the topic of 'Living Heritage', this 1999 session engaged with an interrogation of African Oral Tradition as an embodiment of African living heritage. This engagement with the notion of African heritage defined by a living pre-colonial tradition is significant, evidenced by the notions of African heritage it revealed and challenged. As seen in the session outline, students were required to refer to the notion of African heritage as living tradition presented in the ACTAG report and compare it to the notion of African Heritage projected by Hampâtè Bâ's theory of African living tradition. They were then encouraged to interrogate this notion of African heritage as living tradition from the perspectives of various theorists, namely S. Makoni,³² Isabel Hofmeyer³³ and Terence Ranger,³⁴ who have not only questioned the 'authenticity' of these supposedly pre-colonial 'traditional' heritages, but in fact have argued for its colonial creation.

³⁰ 1999 Core Course Outline First Semester, Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies [Leslie Witz private collections] session 7.

³¹ 1999 Core Course Outline First Semester, Session 6.

³² S Makoni, "African languages as European scripts: the shaping of communal memory", in S Nuttall and C Coetzee (eds), *Negotiating the Past*, (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998), 242-248.

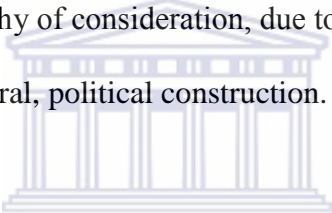
³³ I Hofmeyr, "Reading Oral Texts: New Methodological Directions", paper presented at the South African and Contemporary History Seminar, UWC, 3 October 1995.

³⁴ T Ranger, "The invention of tradition in colonial Africa", in E Hobsbawn and T Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge: Canto, 1992), 247-247.

The significance of this session as marking a major change in the orientation of the programme was thus in the notions of ‘African’ it unfolded, which are reflected in the prescribed reading and preparatory essay questions for the sessions. Moreover, these sessions reveal how the questioning of the specificity of African heritage, and the criteria for what heritage in Africa is, was already present as an underlying, unstated pedagogical objective of the curriculum four years before its rebranding as an ‘African’ programme.

The African Nation

Another session of the core course, titled ‘National Heritage: India, Kenya and Malawi’ also unfolded a notion of ‘African’ worthy of consideration, due to its political implications for the understanding of heritage as a cultural, political construction. As stated in the introductory abstract for the session:



Often an assertion is made is that ‘we must preserve our national heritage’. Yet very little discussion goes into determining what constitutes ‘national heritage’. Indeed, what is ‘the nation?’ Is it defined as everyone living inside a particular country's borders? Or is it only people who have citizenship? Or is the nation something of an invention that does not exist as a given and that constantly changes? Indeed, even the territorial borders of a nation change as does its name. Some historians argue that the idea of a nation despite its claims to be inclusive will always exclude some people or groups of people. And what is the role of heritage in this process of inclusion and exclusion from the nation? Who determines what ‘national heritage’ is? These are some of the questions that need to be discussed in this session. We are going to look at these questions in relation to (a) the preservation of Swahili heritage sites in Kenya; (b) the promotion of specific types of Malawian heritage after independence in 1964, when Kamuzu Banda was president; and (c) the use of the figure of Mahatma Gandhi as the ‘Father of the Nation’ in India.³⁵

This session is crucial in understanding how the core course began to challenge and unsettle essentialised notions of ‘African’. If the introductory abstract to this session is inverted, the

³⁵ 1999 Core Course Outline First Semester, Session 7.

critical pedagogical ingenuity of the curriculum³⁶ and its focus on interrogating the notion of ‘African’ and the specificity of African heritage begins to reveal itself. Inverting the introduction through the insertion of ‘African’ as an additional adjective to ‘national’, as done below, allows an appreciation of the notion of ‘African’ it unfolds:

An assertion that is often made is that ‘we must preserve **African** national heritage’. Yet very little discussion goes into determining what constitutes ‘**African** national heritage’. Indeed, what is the ‘**African** nation?’ Is it defined as everyone living inside **Africa**'s continental geographic borders? Or is it only people who are citizens of **African** countries? Or is the **African** nation something of an invention that does not exist as a given but constantly changes? Indeed, even the territorial borders of a nation change, as does its name. Some historians argue that the idea of an **African** nation despite its claims to be inclusive will always exclude some people or groups of people. And what is the role of heritage in this process of inclusion and exclusion from the **African** nation? Who determines what ‘**African** national heritage’ is?

The importance of this session is the notion of ‘African’ as a nation it revealed, not only in the novelty of its introduction but also in the questions it posed in the introductory abstract, and in the theoretical insights of the prescribed readings for the session. The session did not didactically introduce the students to an essential idea of a nation; rather, it problematized the ‘nation’, through engagement with the dominant ideological assumption underlining the concept of a nation. If this is modified as described above, the interrogation of the notion of ‘African’ as a nation is salient to the curriculum. While the problematization of the notion of the nation focused on post-colonial independent nation-states in Africa, given the history of nation-states in Africa and the discourse of Nationalism and pan-Africanism, it is not difficult to transpose this to the idea of the African Nation.³⁷ Moreover, the readings not only draw on examples of the

³⁶ See P. McLaren & P. Leonard eds., *Paulo Freire: A Critical encounter*, (London: Routledge, 1993).

³⁷ It is not going too far to imagine Africa as a nation. – See the example of the African National Congress, - Kwasi Prah, *The African Nation: State of the Nation*, (Cape Town: Institute of Advanced African Civilization, 2009) – These examples further reveal the notions of the nation which students are encouraged to question. For by questioning the artificiality of the nation-states in post-colonial Africa, we invariably arrive at questioning the idea of Africa as a nation as expressed in African nationalism and by the African National Congress. – Tunbridge and Ashworth made this point in the prescribed reading for the session, when they argued that ‘National heritage need

challenges of nation-building in post-colonial Africa, in Malawi and Kenya, but also engaged with a comparison with India (as another post-colonial nation), to show the intrinsic, autobiographical, political nature of heritage in relation to the idea of the nation.

Slavery, the Atlantic Slave Trade and Racial Notions of ‘African’

The first session, with deeper analysis, begins the unsettling of notions of African heritage articulated in the previous session. While slavery was not a focus of concern in the first session of the 1999 curriculum, right at the very beginning students encountered the issue of slavery in relation to African heritage in a very subtle and circumspect (albeit critical) manner. In the Tunbridge and Ashworth reading for the first session in 1999 the ‘Heritage of slavery’ as an example of ‘how any non-physical aspects of the past when viewed from the present’³⁸ can be understood as heritage introduced the idea that ‘of ‘Heritage of slavery’’.³⁹ Although a one-line sentence in the text, the notion of ‘African’ that begins to unfold is pedagogically instructive, because the problem of African heritage as tradition, ethnic and continental, and its relationship to African identity and the heritage of slavery, was signposted as a terrain of critical encounter right at the beginning of the course.

The 1999 curriculum not only confirmed a paradigmatic shift in the orientation of the curriculum from an exclusively South African discourse of heritage to a broader African orientation, but also critically challenged the notions of African heritage dominant in this discourse. The sessions on

not contradict the heritage of sub-national groups but it must subsume the micro-heritage of localities, social and racial minorities within an over-arching macro-heritage of the nation’. - J. E Tunbridge and G J Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1996), 47.

³⁸ Tunbridge, J.E and Ashworth, G.J, *Dissonant Heritage* - (APMHS Course Reader 2009).

³⁹ Tunbridge and Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, 1.

the slave trade offer, a point of departure for exploring the process of interrogation of the notions of 'African' encapsulated in the APMHS. This is because engagement with the Atlantic slave trade in the curriculum revealed how different and contending notions of 'African' unsettle the notions of 'African' in African heritage defined by tradition, ethnicity and pre-colonial or diaspora subjectivities. I therefore intend starting with a detailed analysis of the session on Goree Island to explore the unfolding of notions of 'African' in the APMHS through a detailed engagement with the topic of slavery in the curriculum.

The 2007 abstract for the session titled 'History and Heritage: Rivals or Partners? Goree Island and the Atlantic Slave Trade' stated:

The main aim of this session is to question the meanings of heritage and to open discussions about its relationship to history. Kevin Walsh (1992: 114), for instance, argues that heritage emphasises uncritical, static depictions of the past. History, he sees, in contrast, as based upon a critical understanding of change over time. Similarly, Lowenthal (1996: 132) argues 'heritage ... not only tolerates but thrives on and even requires historical error'. In a South African context, Jane Carruthers has raised the question: 'Heritage has a purpose, certainly, but is it the domain of historians?' Raphael Samuel (1994:270) disagrees with the approach of Walsh, Lowenthal and Carruthers, referring to their type of argument as 'heritage baiting'. Samuel instead sees fundamental similarities between history and heritage: 'Each ... claims to be representing the past 'as it was'. Each one too could be said to be obsessed with the notion of 'period' ... [They] also share ... the belief that scrupulous attention to detail will bring the dead to life'. Much of this depends upon how history and heritage are conceptualised and defined. In order to try and make this discussion more concrete we have decided to use Goree Island as an example of what some people might consider being a heritage site. Indeed, it is officially designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

Reading preparation

There are two types of readings that you are required to do for this session.

(A) The first is the package of documents that relate to the Heritage and History and the discussion on Goree and the Atlantic Slave Trade.

1. The World Heritage List: Island of Goree (www.unesco.org/whc/sites/26.htm).

2. Goree and the Atlantic Slave Trade, H-Africa discussion, 31 July - 30 August 1995 (h-net2.msu.edu-africa.threads.goree.html).
3. J Carruthers, 'Heritage and History', H-Africa, Africa Forum 2, 20 October 1998.
4. D Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, 127-137.
5. R Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, Verso, London (1994), especially pp 259-73 and 288-312.

(B) It is also essential that you read further about the politics of heritage conservation. These readings below deal with defining heritage and history and the relationship between them. As you do the readings consider the relationship between a history of the Goree Island and its heritage. All these readings are available on short loan at the UCT, UWC and Robben Island Libraries

K Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and heritage in the post-modern world*, Routledge, London (1992) , especially chapters 4 and 5.

R Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, Verso, London (1994), especially pp 274-312.

'History / Heritage', Mailbase United Kingdom, Internet discussion list, June 1997- October 1997 (<http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/history-heritage>)

Written preparation

Write 2-3 pages (in total) in response to the following questions:

- 1 How do you understand the concepts of history and heritage?
- 2 Do you see history and heritage as fundamentally similar or different undertakings? Use the three examples in your reading package about the use of heritage to justify your answer: The World Heritage Site of Goree Island; Jane Carruther's report on Johan Marnitz's talk on Heritage Day, 1998; David Lowenthal's account of the 'myth' that slaves were largely bred (instead of being imported) on the West Indian island of Barbuda. You may use additional examples from your other readings as well as referring to how the heritage of Robben Island is being presented to tourists.⁴⁰

What is significant about this session is not only the change reflected in the additional reading by Jane Carruthers and David Lowenthal. The significant change was the replacement of the Company Gardens, as an example to make the discussion of the conceptual distinction between history and heritage more concrete, with Goree Island, for the same purpose, which marked a theoretical paradigmatic pedagogical shift. This raises questions, not only of the correlate significance of Goree Island and the Company Gardens in the conceptualisation of the distinction and similarities between history and heritage, but in the notion of 'African' that the Goree

⁴⁰ 1999 Core Course Outline First Semester, Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies.

example unfolds. The critical question here is: do Goree Island and the Atlantic slave trade have a correlate history and heritage conceptualisation; or does this replacement represent a pedagogical shift in the programme; or was it merely a basic curriculum development?

While the session has remained constant in the curriculum, there have been minor changes. In the 2008 curriculum, a reading by Ralph Austen, 'The slave trade as history and memory: Confrontations of slaving voyage documents and communal traditions',⁴¹ was added to the prescribed readings for the session. It is therefore this 2008 version of the session which is the focus of analysis, as it represents a comprehensive version of the session.

The Goree Island – Curtin H-Net debate



The choice of Goree Island as an example to make the discussion more concrete is crucial for a host of reasons.⁴² Although not implicitly stated, using Goree Island as a concrete example aligns the curriculum to Paulo Freire's theory of critical pedagogy, in which 'academic material is integrated into student life and thought, and problems faced from students live and societies are engaged through the practical lens offered by academic discipline'.⁴³ The reason Goree Island and the Atlantic slave trade is a concrete pedagogical example for discussing the relationship of history and heritage in a programme of critical African Museum and Heritage Studies is the continued problem of racism in society, which is the lived reality of all of the students.

⁴¹ R. Austen, 'The Slave Trade and Memory: Confrontation of Slaving Voyage Documents and Communal Traditions', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (January 2001), 229-244.

⁴² APMHS Course reader 2008. Session 3. History and Heritage: rivals or partners? Goree Island and the Atlantic Slave Trade.

⁴³ I. Shor, 'Education is Politics: Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy', in Paulo Freire: *A Critical encounter*, Peter McLaren & Peter Leonard eds., (London: Routledge, 1993), 32.

Therefore, seemingly simple as the reason given for the choice of Goree as an African case study was, the choice reveals deep theoretical assumptions on the significance of the topic of slavery in construction of notions of ‘African’ in African heritage studies that opens up possibilities for understanding the notions of ‘African’ unfolding in the curriculum. Nowhere is this more evident than in the main text given for the session: ‘Goree and the Atlantic slave trade’, an H-Africa internet discussion triggered by Phillip Curtin’s comments on the site in 1995.⁴⁴

The text consisted of different contributions to a discussion on H-Africa on the significance of Goree Island to the Atlantic slave trade. It began with the editor’s note, which stated that though it was unable to provide the context of Curtin’s contribution, it nevertheless agreed that Curtin should ‘raise important issues for historians and humanities concerned with Africa’, because ‘not only is there the issue of the creation of tradition, but also the purpose of and motives for such creation’.⁴⁵ This editor’s note is itself instructive for its emphasis on the creation, purpose and motives of ‘tradition’, which can be read as a synonym for a perspective of heritage in this context.

Phillip Curtin’s contribution started with a notion of ‘African’ rooted in an African ancestral origin, as shown in his assertion of the recognition that although Goree Island was never significant in the slave trade, it can however be used, especially by African-Americans looking for their roots. This statement presumes a notion of ‘African’ defined by genealogical roots in an African ancestral land, whose claim to African-ness is by virtue of presumed root in Africa.

Nonetheless, Curtin’s dismissal of the idea that Goree Island was a major centre of the Atlantic

⁴⁴ Goree and the Atlantic slave Trade, H-Africa discussion, 31 July – 30 August 1995 (h-net2.msu.edu-africa.thread.goree.html).

⁴⁵ Editor’s note, Goree and the Atlantic slave Trade, H-Africa discussion.

slave trade was the main point of the comment. Curtin's contention was that the claim that Goree Island (and specifically the 'House of Slaves') was a major slave-shipping point was incorrect.⁴⁶

Achille Mbembe, an Afropolitan theoretician of postcolonial Africa, posted a response to Curtin's comments and dismissed Curtin's views on Goree as unimportant because, according to Mbembe, 'the 'slave house' of Goree is not, in the first instance, a matter of historical record and the numbers of slaves Mr. N'Diaye presents to his visitors are nothing more than mere decorations'.⁴⁷ This, he argued, was because the significance of Goree for Africans is impossible to comprehend merely by recourse to statistical data. Mbembe concluded by arguing that, 'the stakes underlying the dynamics of the trade are too important for us to abandon debate with some who for more than thirty-five years have tossed out numbers – each more improbable than the last – to reach a final figure, an action which manifestly embroils them in a strategy of guilt and exoneration'.⁴⁸ Mbembe's 'us' here seems to unfold a notion of 'African' based on an epistemology derived from an exclusive racial identity memory of the slave trade by Africans, which goes beyond empirical historical data. This point is discussed further, later in the chapter.

⁴⁶ Curtin H-Africa contribution, 31 July 1995 - He therefore ridiculed the claim of Joseph N'Diaye, the curator of the 'Goree house of slaves', that 20 million slaves were transported from Goree island by relying on historical empirical evidence that 'slave export from Goree began about 1670 and continued till about 1810, at no more than 200 to 300 a year'; therefore, thirty thousand total exports would have been an outside estimate. Curtin took serious exception to the numbers of slaves N'Diaye claimed were transported from Goree Island, and concluded that because of this 'the 'house of slaves' has become an emotional shrine to the slave trade, rather than a serious museum'. Although Curtin did not spell out the distinctions between an emotional shrine and a serious museum, the underlying assumption of this statement presumes that a serious museum presents historical facts based on empirical evidence, and an emotional shrine presents a dubious, subjective narrative of the past for sectarian, cultural, political objectives. In this context, the British Museum (for example) would represent a serious museum and Goree Island an emotional shrine.

⁴⁷ Mbembe H-Africa Goree and the Atlantic slave Trade, H-Africa discussion 4 August 1995, (h-net2.msu.edu-africa.thread.goree.html).

⁴⁸ Mbembe H-Africa Goree and the Atlantic slave Trade, H-Africa discussion, 31 July – 30 August 1995 (h-net2.msu.edu-africa.thread.goree.html).

Notwithstanding the various criticisms of Phillip Curtin's contribution, his introduction (which serves as an introduction to the debate) is very significant, not only because of the sensitivity of the issue of the history of slavery in African cultural politics, but also because even Curtin's introduction is loaded with pedagogical possibilities and theoretical debates. Phillip Curtin is a doyen of African Studies, an ex-president of the African Studies Association, a pioneer and leading authority on African history, especially on the history of the Atlantic Slave Trade.⁴⁹ Biographically, Curtin's intellectual career is enough to introduce students to the history, ideological and geo-political theoretical debates in African Studies. cursory research will reveal the central role of Phillip Curtin in African Studies and the construction of academic African history. Therefore, the pedagogical significance of introducing a figure like Phillip Curtin is an opportunity to immerse students into past and current critical debates of the notions of 'African' in the study of Africa.⁵⁰



⁴⁹ Books and articles by Phillip Curtin on African history and especially the Atlantic slave trade are too numerous to single out any single publication. Seminal among these books and articles is P. D. Curtin, *Imperialism*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

P. D Curtin, *African history: from earliest times to independence*, (London & New York: Longman, 1995).

P. D Curtin, *The rise and fall of the plantation complex: essays in Atlantic history*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

P. E Lovejoy and P. D Curtin; *Africans in bondage: studies in slavery and the slave trade*, (Wisconsin Madison : African Studies program, University of Wisconsin-Madison 1986).

⁵⁰ It is also worth noting that earlier in March the same year, 1995, Curtin was the subject of another major debate in African Studies. In a piece titled 'Ghettoising African History', which appeared in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in early March 1995. Curtin raised the ire of the African Studies Association (ASA) when he linked the growing numbers of Africans and African-Americans teaching African history in U.S. universities with the consequent 'lowering' of scholarly standards in the discipline – Philip D. Curtin, 'Ghettoising African History', *Chronicle of Higher Education* (3 March 1995). This piece generated a vicious attack on Curtin as racist, and reignited the 1969 ideological confrontation in the African Studies Association exacerbated by his comments on Goree Island and the insults of Joseph N'Diaye, which some commentators in the discussion likened to Holocaust denial. H-Africa discussions. – Richard Lobban, response posted on H-Africa, 12 August 1995. Nonetheless, Curtin was not without supporters. Ali Mazrui defended him against the charge of being racist – See Gates' Wonders of the African World debate in Olufemi Taiwo – *West African Review* – John Saillant for instance argued that Curtin was not trying to undermine the importance of Goree or its role in the slave trade in the manner of the disbelievers in the Holocaust. Rather, according to him, the point that was made by Curtin was that 'to link the importance of Goree to the claim that millions of slaves passed through the island is actually to undermine that importance' - H-Africa discussion. John Saillant contribution posted on 14 August, 1995.

According to Austen, Curtin's comments raised two fundamental questions about how the slave trade is remembered, especially by Africans. These are:

- (1) To what extent should we insist upon (or forgo) 'objectives', i.e. carefully documented modes of historical discourse, in the case of such an explosive topic, one which marks much of our daily life today?
- (2) How much attention should be given to this issue in defining African identity on the continent and the Diaspora?⁵¹

These questions offer a framework for interrogating how the racial memory of slavery is confronted in the constitution of notions of 'African'. Harold Marcus, another contributor to the Curtin-Goree H-Net debate, agreed that 'the number game is both essential and yet very dangerous'.⁵² Nonetheless, he concluded that we should not allow the emotive racial pan-African collective identity generated in response to the Curtin debate to silence investigation of the role of Africans in the slave trade as an essential part of studies of the slave trade process.⁵³

Ralph Austen, in the article 'The Slave Trade as History and Memory', analysed the Curtin debate on Goree Island in the context of the 'intense debate about memory, history and racial historiography' it generated.⁵⁴ According to him, the 'salient areas of confrontation in slave trade historiography' evidenced in the Goree debate derived from the different conceptualisation of 'memory as empirical historical source, memory as consciousness and memory as racial politics'.⁵⁵ According to him, for Curtin as an academic historian, the memory of slavery is a question of empirical historical source. However, for Africans, especially in the African

⁵¹ R. Austen, comments posted 30 August, *ibid* H-Africa Goree and the Atlantic slave Trade, H-Africa discussion, 31 July – 30 August 1995 (h-net2.msu.edu-africa.thread.goree.html).

⁵² Harold Marcus, comments posted 30 August, *ibid* H-Africa Goree and the Atlantic slave Trade, H-Africa discussion, 31 July – 30 August 1995 (h-net2.msu.edu-africa.thread.goree.html).

⁵³ Harold Marcus, comments posted 30 August, *ibid* H-Africa Goree and the Atlantic slave Trade, H-Africa discussion, 31 July – 30 August 1995 (h-net2.msu.edu-africa.thread.goree.html).

⁵⁴ Austen, 'The Slave Trade and Memory', 234.

⁵⁵ Austen, 'The Slave Trade and Memory', 234.

diaspora, the memory of slavery is a source of both identity consciousness and cultural politics. Austen thus argued that while the challenge to ‘empirical historiography constitutes the immediate ground of the Goree dispute, the not implicit issues are those of history and memory (what kind of standards should be applied to presentation of lieu de memoire like the slave house?) and of racial politics (what motivates Curtin and his African opponents?)’.⁵⁶

Ralph Austen traced the history of Goree Island as a UNESCO-declared World Heritage Site in 1980 to the singular efforts of the late Joseph N’Diaye, the Curator of the ‘Goree House of Slaves’. According to Austen, coinciding with N’Diaye’s success in representing the ‘House of Slaves’ and Goree Island as a major source of slave exports in the transatlantic slave trade was ‘the development of systematic historical research on the entire slave trade’. This research, according to him, ‘indicated that Senegambia in general and Goree Island within this region played a statistically minor part in this traffic’.⁵⁷ However, as Austen noted, not until *Le Monde*⁵⁸ published a French translation of Curtin’s comments on H-Net in 1996 did his comments generate intense debate, leading to the convening of a conference on the debate at Goree Island in April 1997.

The notion of ‘African’ based on cultural politics of memory – as racial consciousness and as racial politics – underlined the conference on the Goree project, evidenced by the editorial declaration to the conference quoted by Austen, which stated that:

There are not yet classics within the historiography of the Slave Trade. In this respect, it is necessary to leave behind European and general western perspectives. An African perspective must be laid out, not only based on a

⁵⁶ Austen, ‘The Slave Trade and Memory’, 236.

⁵⁷ Austen, ‘The Slave Trade and Memory’, 238.

⁵⁸ *Le Monde* is a French daily Newspaper.

rigorous historiography, but also by becoming fully aware that the history of the Slave Trade has not yet been written. Moreover, that only Africans will do it to the highest standard, not because they are professionally superior to their western colleagues, but because they are called to it by their relationship to the history of the Slave Trade, as well as its place in African history.⁵⁹

Austen cautioned against racial identity politics of the memory of the slave trade, and rejected the paternalism of the Abolitionist narrative of the slave trade, but insisted on the appreciation of the indispensability of racial identity politics if we are to arrive at a full understanding of the history of the slave trade. This racial identity is underlined by Austen's insistence 'that the slave trade must be understood in a larger context, as an African one' and as a 'moral issue which creates a divide between white and black historians'.⁶⁰ He thus argued that 'racial politics is inseparable from any discussion of the slave trade', an institution, which, he claimed, 'lays at the very origin of the contemporary relationship between people of African and of European origin'.⁶¹ It is this assertion of memory as racial consciousness and racial politics in the memory of the slave trade, which, according to Austen, marked a shift from the empirical history of the slave trade to that of history as group memory or heritage, based on, and serving racial identity politics.⁶² This, he argued, was necessary because:

European scholarship on the slave trade has always been more closely linked to the politics of its abolition than to that of its active pursuit. Such work sustains a memory of responsibility for black suffering combined with some concept of liberation. But the dominant voices in this historiography have almost all been white, and their hegemony over the production of this knowledge, along with control over resources needed for black liberation, have created new forms of racial hierarchy.⁶³

⁵⁹ Austen, 'The Slave Trade and Memory', 240.

⁶⁰ Austen, 'The Slave Trade and Memory', 232.

⁶¹ Austen, 'The Slave Trade and Memory', 240.

⁶² Austen, 'The Slave Trade and Memory', 240.

⁶³ Austen, 'The Slave Trade and Memory', 240.

As seen in this analysis of the second session of the APMHS, the readings provided adequate theoretical avenues for students to understand the issues and debates surrounding the similarities and differences between heritage and history. More importantly, they provided a comprehensive pathway for understanding the issues of slavery in African history, since analysing the readings is impossible without engagement with the history of slavery and the racial cultural politics of its representational memory. This is because, as pointed out by Orlando Patterson:

More than any other area of contemporary history, slave studies runs a constant risk of tendentiousness, moral posturing, and absurd revisionism on the part of both black and white historians. ... Too many black scholars and their readers hope to find dis-alienation, pride, and the restoration of identity in the exploration of their past. Too many white scholars hope to prove their racial virtue to blacks or put one over on their fellow white scholars by exploding ‘the myth of the negro past’ or ‘the myth of the broken slave family’.⁶⁴

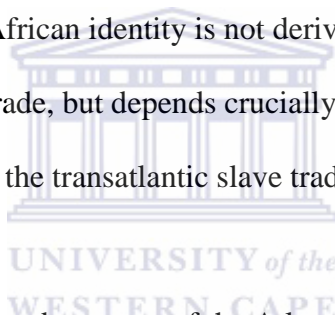
What the session thus does, more than its stated objectives, can be described as critical pedagogy in praxis. Critical pedagogy, according to Ira Shor, is ‘a process which problematises generative themes from everyday life as well as topical issues from society and academic subject matter from specific disciplines’.⁶⁵ In critical pedagogy, ‘reading goes beneath surface impressions, to an understanding of the social contexts and consequences of any subject matter through discovering the deep meaning of any text, and applying the meaning to situational context’.⁶⁶ The Curtin-Goree Island debate, as a pedagogical tool to teach the theoretical relationship between history and heritage, is an example of critical pedagogy. By introducing students to the notion of ‘African’ as a racial identity construct premised on a collective history and memory-politics of the transatlantic Slave Trade, through the readings the students are alerted to the cultural politics of heritage representation.

⁶⁴ O. Patterson ‘Recent Studies on Caribbean Slavery and the Atlantic Slave Trade’, *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1982), 251-275.

⁶⁵ Shor, ‘Education is Politics: Paulo Freire’s Critical Pedagogy’, 36.

⁶⁶ Shor, ‘Education is Politics: Paulo Freire’s Critical Pedagogy’, 33.

The racial pan-African notion of ‘African’⁶⁷ revealed in the Goree debate between its uses as heritage and history was displayed in the comments from the ‘us’ Africans ‘who are called to it by their relationship to the history of the Slave Trade’,⁶⁸ as against the ‘them’ Europeans, who are embroiled in a strategy of guilt and exoneration.⁶⁹ Austen’s question as to how much attention should be given to the issue of the slave trade in defining ‘African identity on the continent and the Diaspora’ is critical.⁷⁰ This is because it helps us to begin to understand the problems of the notions of ‘African’ premised on the assumed intrinsic and inseparable link between the history of the transatlantic slave trade and the constitution and consciousness of modern African identity.⁷¹ Austen suggested that, notwithstanding the claim that the slave trade was an exclusively African issue, African identity is not derived automatically from a shared memory of the transatlantic slave trade, but depends crucially on an epistemological positioning to the memory of the experience of the transatlantic slave trade.⁷²



Although the collective experience and memory of the Atlantic slave trade is the claimed historical-ideological genesis of the notion of ‘African’, in its pan-African configuration it is the memory and representation of this experience, more than any other issue, which on critical

⁶⁷ The origin of this notion of ‘African’ as a racialised pan-African political identity is in the crafted new world identity constructed in response to the racial transatlantic slave trade. Its root is thus laid in the construction of a common African heritage in which ethnic distinctions and ancestral memory were blurred by New World enslavement. This notion of ‘African’ hinged on the common ancestry that a black skin signified, and a shared experience and memory of the racially-defined oppression of slavery and racism. Notwithstanding the seemingly racialised pan-African notion of ‘African’ defined by the memory of the transatlantic slave trade projected through this session on history and heritage, the main session on slavery in the second semester of the programme seems to disrupt this assumption of a settled, racialised, pan-African notion of African. - See Elizabeth Rau Bethel, *The Roots of African-American Identity: Memory and History in Free Antebellum Communities*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1997).

⁶⁸ Austen, ‘The Slave Trade and Memory’, 240.

⁶⁹ Mbembe H-Africa Goree and the Atlantic slave Trade, H-Africa discussion, 31 July – 30 August 1995 (h-net2.msu.edu-africa.thread.goree.html).

⁷⁰ Austen, comments posted 30 August, H-Africa Goree and the Atlantic slave Trade, H-Africa discussion, 31 July – 30 August 1995 (h-net2.msu.edu-africa.thread.goree.html).

⁷¹ Austen, comments posted 30 August.

⁷² Austen, ‘The Slave Trade and Memory’.

analysis disrupts the unanimity of any collective ‘we’ as ‘African’. Austen’s question⁷³ seems to echo Barnor Hesse’s question on the politics of memory of the slave trade among Africans, of ‘how ‘we’ (in any sense of that collective pronoun) remember the plantation enslavement of Africans by Europeans in the Americas, during the sixteen to nineteenth centuries’.⁷⁴ It is instructive at this point in interrogating the notion of the African ‘we’ who are called to the study and representation of memory because of an exclusive relationship to it.⁷⁵

Who are the ‘we’ and ‘us’ Africans in the collective pronoun that possess a supposedly exclusive privilege to the memory of the slave trade that is alluded to in this statement? Are the ‘we’ and ‘us’ only inclusive of diaspora Africans, especially descendants of those who experienced the Middle Passage, and exclusive of continental Africans? Moreover, in what ways are continental Africans (who, historically, have no experience of the middle passage) included and/or excluded in the collective pronoun of the ‘we’ and ‘us’ projected in the cultural politics of the memory of the slave trade? The exploration of how the dilemma of delineating the ‘we’ and ‘us’ who should remember transatlantic slavery disrupts the comfortable notions of ‘African’ premise on memory of the slave trade is the concern of the next section.

Slavery in the Museums, and Notions of ‘African’

In the previous section on Goree Island and the Curtin debate, the course employed an indirect pedagogical method to expose students to the problems of the transatlantic slave trade in the construction and consciousness of racialised notions of ‘African’ in African heritage studies.

⁷³ Austen, comments posted 30 August.

⁷⁴ B. Hesse, ‘Forgotten like a Bad Dream: Atlantic Memory and the Ethics of Postcolonial Memory’, in *Relocating Postcolonialism*, David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson, eds. (United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 143.

⁷⁵ Austen, ‘The Slave Trade and Memory’, 240.

Importantly, the readings for the sections on slavery and museums are more open and direct in introducing students to the key issues of the transatlantic slave trade in the problems of the constitution of a racialised notion of 'African'. The brief for the first session on slavery in the 2007 second-semester curriculum, titled 'Slavery and Heritage in Ghana and South Africa', stated:

As slavery takes on more significance in different African contexts, the understanding of the meaning and significance of slavery has become more contested. This is very apparent in Ghana, where Ghanaians and African Americans struggle over ownership and interpretation at Cape Coast Castle. In South Africa, where slavery at the Cape had very little public acknowledgement, a number of new museum projects (Slave Lodge, Groot Constantia, Museum de Caab, Solms-Delta, Franschoek) on slavery suggest that this amnesia may indeed be on the road to being overcome.

Readings:

Edward Bruner, 'Tourism in Ghana: The Representation of Slavery and the Return of the Black Diaspora', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 98, no 2, June 1996, 290-304.

Christine Mullen Kreamer, 'Shared heritage, contested terrain: cultural negotiation and Ghana's Cape Coast Castle Museum Exhibition, 'Crossroads of People, Crossroads of Trade', in Ivan Karp, Corinne A Kratz, Lynn Szwaja and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto with Gustavo Buntinx, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Ciraj Rassool (eds), *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

Kerry Ward and Nigel Worden, 'Commemorating, suppressing and invoking Cape slavery', in S. Nuttall and C Coetzee (eds), *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Carohn Cornell, 'Whatever became of Cape Slavery in Western Cape Museums?' *Kronos*, No. 25, 1998/99.

Written Preparation

1. Explain the struggle over meaning and the nature of the contestation over the representation of slavery at Cape Coast Castle.
2. Why was a memory of slavery suppressed in Cape Town?
3. Do the new museum exhibitions at the Slave Lodge and elsewhere in the Western Cape show that this amnesia is being overcome?⁷⁶

⁷⁶ 2006 Core Course Outline First Semester, Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies – session 8, September 2006.

As this very first session in the curriculum revealed, while there was engagement with slavery in the global context of the contestation of representations of slavery at Cape Coast Castle in Ghana, the written preparation question for the session revealed its pedagogical emphasis on the issue of amnesia of memories of slavery in the Cape. Given the preoccupation of this chapter, the focus of analysis is the current updated version of the session introduced in 2009.

The focus of analysis in this session is how contestation within and between continental Africans and the African-American diaspora, on the key concepts of the Black Holocaust, Reparation and Reconciliation, revealed notions of ‘African’ that challenge and disrupt the assumption of a settled, unified, racial pan-African notion of ‘African’ projected in the Goree-Curtin debate.

While the introductory abstract for the session remained the same, with the continued inclusion of Cape slavery, the reading focusing on Cape slavery by Kerry Ward and Nigel Worden⁷⁷ and Cornell⁷⁸ was replaced by the text of Fath Davis Ruffins. The critical pedagogical import of this session of the programme in the context of the notions of ‘African’ it projects is evident in the key issues engaged with in two major prescribed readings for the session, which I will analyse in detail. The two readings are from the same book, *Museum Frictions*,⁷⁹ and they address the problems of memory and representations of the slave trade in different contexts. Therefore, a complementary reading is possible, and theoretically informative. Fath Davis Ruffins’ focus in her chapter was ‘the debate between the two representational tendencies of the Black Holocaust’. This is the contention between the reparation and the racial reconciliation paradigms, as the

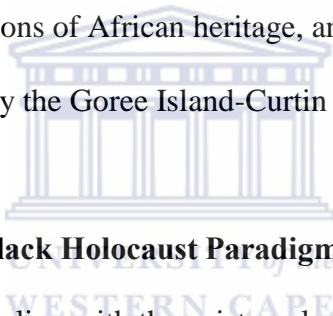
⁷⁷ K. Ward and N. Worden, ‘Commemorating, suppressing and invoking Cape slavery’, in S. Nuttall and C Coetzee (eds), *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1997)

⁷⁸ C. Cornell, ‘Whatever became of Cape Slavery in Western Cape Museums?’, *Kronos*, No. 25, (1998/99).

⁷⁹ I. Karp, C. A Kratz, C. Rassool (eds), *Museum Frictions: Public Culture/Global Transformations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

logical outcome of the appropriation of the Holocaust metaphor in the depiction of the transatlantic slave trade.

Christine Muller Kreamer's text⁸⁰ explores the implications of the contestation of ownership and interpretation between continental Africans (in this case, Ghanaians) and the African diaspora, over the Cape Coast's Crossroad of Trade exhibition project, which unfolds the limitations of the notion of 'African' defined by the collective memory of the transatlantic slave trade. As will be shown in the analysis of the readings, what is critical in both readings is how the debates highlighted different notions of 'African' that unsettle the notion of 'African' premised on traditional, ethnic, pre-colonial notions of African heritage, and the shared heritage of the transatlantic slave trade projected by the Goree Island-Curtin debate.



The Notions of 'African' in the Black Holocaust Paradigm

There is a great deal of literature dealing with the epistemology, meaning, history, process and ideological, cultural, political objectives and contestation of the appropriation of the term 'holocaust' to describe not only the transatlantic slave trade, but also the whole of modern African history.⁸¹

In 'Revisiting the Old Plantation: Reparations, Reconciliation, and the Museumising American Slavery',⁸² one of the prescribed readings for the session, Fath Davis Ruffins traced the

⁸⁰ C. M. Kreamer, 'Shared Heritage, Contested Terrain: Cultural Negotiation and Ghana Cape Coast Castle Museum Exhibition 'Crossroad of People, Crossroad of Trade'' in Ivan Karp, Corinne A Kratz, Ciraj Rassool (eds), *Museum Frictions: Public Culture/Global Transformations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁸¹ See Samuel G. Freedman, 'Laying Claim to Sorrow beyond Words', *New York Times*, 13 December 1997.

⁸² F. D. Ruffins, 'Revisiting the Old Plantation: Reparations, Reconciliation, and the Museumising of American Slavery', in Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Ciraj Rassool (eds), *Museum Frictions: Public Culture/Global Transformations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

designation 'Black Holocaust', applied to transatlantic slavery, to the success of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. According to her, the intellectual moment of appropriation of the Holocaust paradigm for thinking, talking and representing the transatlantic slave trade can be located in the 'Defining the Black Holocaust' conference, held in 1994 at Howard University, Washington D.C., a year after the opening of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. This appropriation of the Holocaust paradigm, according to Ruffins, provided a new way of talking about and new modes of presenting the African-American experience of slavery,⁸³ and was the key by which African-Americans unlocked the silence on American slavery and claimed authority over the interpretation of the memory of the transatlantic slave trade.⁸⁴ However, according to her, notwithstanding the unanimous acceptance of the Black Holocaust paradigm in enunciating the experienced slavery of Africans, there was divergence as to what element of the African experience constituted the Black Holocaust, especially as 'a specific representation or descriptor of the African-American experience in the United States'.⁸⁵

A justification of the appropriation of the Holocaust as a conceptual metaphor is that it escapes the distortion of the injury to African enslavement hidden under the term 'slave trade'; which, as Maulana Karenga argued, 'sanitises' the levels of violence and mass murder that were inflicted on African peoples and societies. Karenga stated that there are two reasons for the misrepresentation of the African Holocaust of enslavement as 'trade'. Firstly, it then becomes more of a commercial issue and problem than a moral one; and secondly, since 'trade' is the primary

⁸³ Ruffins, 'Revisiting the Old Plantation: Reparations, Reconciliation, 396.

⁸⁴ Ruffins, 'Revisiting the Old Plantation: Reparations, Reconciliation, 396.

⁸⁵ Ruffins, 'Revisiting the Old Plantation: Reparations, Reconciliation, 410.

focus, the mass murder or genocide is understood simply as collateral damage to a commercial venture that has not gone well.⁸⁶

He therefore argued that:

By Holocaust, we mean a morally monstrous act of genocide that is not only against the people themselves, but also a crime against humanity. The Holocaust of enslavement expresses itself in three basic ways: the morally monstrous destruction of human life, human culture and human possibility. In terms of the destruction of human life, estimates run as high as ten to a hundred million persons killed individually and collectively in various brutal and vicious ways. The destruction of culture includes the destruction of centres, products and producers of culture: cities, towns, villages, libraries, great literatures (written and oral), and works of art and other cultural creations as well as the creative and skilled persons who produced them. Finally, the morally monstrous destruction of human possibility involved redefining African humanity to the world, poisoning past, present and future relations with others who only know us through this stereotyping and thus damaging the truly human relations among peoples. It also involves lifting Africans out of their own history making them a footnote and forgotten casualty in European history and thus limiting and denying their ability to speak their own special cultural truth to the world and make their own unique contribution to the forward flow of human history.⁸⁷

Karenga's appropriation of the metaphor for a wider African historical context beyond the Middle Passage connects with the appropriation of the metaphor by continental African scholars and cultural political activists, thereby affirming a pan-African notion of 'African' which is defined by a common history and ancestry disrupted by the transatlantic slave trade. Ruffins traced the intellectual moment of appropriation of the Holocaust paradigm to the 'Defining the Black Holocaust' conference of 1994. However, Ali Mazrui stated that he had discussed the issue of the 'Black Holocaust' or 'African reparations' at major presentations from Ohio University in the United States to the University of Lesotho, and on radio and television shows,

⁸⁶ M. Karenga, 'The Ethics of Reparations: Engaging the Holocaust of Enslavement', delivered at The National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA) Convention, Baton Rouge, LA, 2001 June 22-23.

⁸⁷ Maulana Karenga, 'The Ethics of Reparations: Engaging the Holocaust of Enslavement,' 4.

since 1992.⁸⁸ In his ‘eve of 1993’ newsletter, on the subject of ‘Black suffering and reparation’ and the inauguration of the OAU ‘Group of Eminent Persons’, he specifically insisted on the use of the term to describe the transatlantic slave trade. According to him, ‘the word ‘Holocaust’ should not be reserved for the Jewish experience but should be applicable to such catastrophes as the genocide against Native Americans and the brutal enslavement of Africans’.⁸⁹

Mazrui’s insistence on the appropriateness of the Holocaust paradigm to depict African enslavement and colonialism thus provides a pivot of entry to two crucial moments in contemporary African geo-cultural politics. These two moments are the OAU appointment of the Group of Eminent Persons in 1992, with the mandate to pursue the goal of reparation to Africa, and the 2001 Durban United Nations-sponsored World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.



The critical pedagogical significance of the text by Ruffins, which introduced the interlocking concepts of the Black Holocaust, Reparation and Reconciliation, had its base in two seminal moments in African geo-cultural politics. These two moments, which were not discussed in the course, are the inauguration of the Group of Eminent Persons by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), in 1991,⁹⁰ and the 2001 Durban United Nations-sponsored World Conference

⁸⁸ A. Mazrui, ‘On Ancestry, Descent and Identity’, *Mazrui Annual Newsletter*, No. 17, 1993.

www.igcs.binghampton.edu/, accessed 07/08/2010

⁸⁹ Mazrui, ‘On Ancestry’, 2.

⁹⁰ Resolutions adopted by the fifty-fourth ordinary session of the council of ministers, June 1991 Abuja, Nigeria, cm/res.1333 – 1362 (liv) rev; Resolutions adopted by the fifty-fourth ordinary session of the council of ministers, June 1991 Abuja, Nigeria, cm/res.1333 – 1362 (liv) rev. The Group of Eminent Persons included Bahorun M. K. O. Abiola who was the Chairman (from Nigeria), Dr. A. M. M’bow (Senegal), Hon. Dudley Thompson (Jamaica), Professor J. F. Ade Ajayi (Nigeria), Miriam Makeba (South Africa), Professor Ali Mazrui (Kenya), Dr. Quasion-Sackey (Ghana), Congressman Ronald Dellums (USA), Dr. Samir Amin (Egypt), Madam G. Machel (Mozambique), Professor J. Kizerbo (Burkina Faso) and A. Pereira, the former president of Cape Verde Island. The mandate of the Group of Eminent Persons is contained in the ‘Resolution on the reparations of the wrong done to Africa through

against Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Xenophobia and Related Intolerance . What is pedagogically instructive in introducing the concept of the Black Holocaust is not only the notions of ‘African’ more crucially, it also engaged with critical debates that speak to socio-cultural, political, existential realities. Although the readings did not focus on Africa or the South

exploitation and slave trade’, CM/RES.1391 (Ivi), of the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity, in its Fifty-sixth Ordinary Session in Dakar, Senegal, from 22 to 28 June 1992. The resolution ‘Recalling its Resolutions CM/Res.1339 (LIV) and CM/Res.1373 (LIV) on Reparations of “The Wrong Done to Africa through Exploitation of Slaves and Slave Trade”. In Addition to “Having considered the Interim Report of the OAU Secretary-General (Doc.CM/1714 (LVI)) on the implementation of these resolutions” ‘urges the Group of Eminent Persons and Member States to lend all their assistance to the steps taken by the OAU for the reparation of the wrong done to Africa through the exploitation of slaves and slave trade’. Mazrui, mentioned the symbolism and supports to the group of Nelson Mandela, ‘a veteran liberation fighter’ as the first visitor to the group and of Jesse Jackson a ‘veteran civil rights fighter’ as its first witness. At the inaugural meeting immediately after been sworn-in, the group elected M.K.O Abiola, a Nigerian politician and advocate of African reparation’ as Chairman and Prof. Amadou Mahter M’Bow, UNESCO former Director-General as Co-Chair, with Dudley Thompson, Jamaican ambassador to Nigeria as Rapporteur-General. - Mazrui, the most prominent articulate of the group, mentioned the symbolism and supports to the group of Nelson Mandela, ‘a veteran liberation fighter’ as the first visitor to the group and of Jesse Jackson a ‘veteran civil rights fighter’ as its first witness (Faso), and A. Pereira, the former president of Cape Verde Island. According to him, it was not until the second meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, in September 1992 according to Mazrui that the ‘substantive issues of reparation for Africa’s enslavement and colonization was addressed substantively’. The apparent outcome of the second meeting of the group was the first “Pan-African Conference on Reparations” held in Abuja, Nigeria from 27 to 29 April 1993. The Conference sponsored by The Organization of African Unity and its Reparations Commission, issued the “Abuja Proclamation: A declaration of the first Abuja Pan-African Conference on Reparations for African Enslavement, Colonization and Neo-Colonization. The proclamation begins by ‘Recalling the Organization of African Unity’s establishment of machinery the Group of Eminent Persons for apprising the issue of reparations in relation to the damage done to Africa and its Diaspora by enslavement, colonization, and neo-colonialism.’ The proclamation asserted that it is ‘convinced that the issue of reparations is an important question requiring the united action of Africa and its Diaspora and worthy of the active support of the rest of the international community’⁹⁰. Based on conviction of continuous European injustice to Africa and Africans the proclamation stated that it is ‘fully persuaded that the damage sustained by the African peoples is not a “thing of the past. But it is painfully manifest in the damaged lives of contemporary Africans from Harlem to Harare, in the damaged economies of the Black World from Guinea to Guyana, from Somalia to Surinam’. Drawing on the Jewish Holocaust analogy, the proclamation stated that it is ‘respectfully aware of historic precedents in reparations, ranging from German Payment of restitution to the Jews for the enormous tragedy of the Nazi Holocaust to the question of compensating Japanese-Americans for injustice of internment by Roosevelt Administration in the United States during the World War II’. The proclamation therefore ‘calls upon the international community to recognize that there is a unique and unprecedented moral debt owed to the African peoples which has yet to be paid. - The debt of compensation to the Africans as the most humiliated and exploited people, of the last four centuries of modern history’.- One of the outcomes of the Abuja Proclamation was the African World Reparations and Repatriation Truth Commission held in Accra, Ghana in 1999. It comprised private individuals and activist from nine African countries, the United States, the United Kingdom and three Caribbean countries. The commission produced the “Accra Declaration on Reparations and Repatriation’ which declared that ‘as we enter the 21st century, Reparations & Repatriation are paramount issues and concerns of the African World because the root causes of Africa’s problems today are the enslavement and colonization of the African people over a 400-years period.’⁹⁰ This declaration, the conference insisted was consistent with the established principles during the First Reparations Conference 1993 in Abuja, Nigeria. There were other Reparations Conference held April 1999 in Ouidah, Benin and the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N’COBRA) held June 1999 in St. Louis, Missouri. – see Ali Mazrui, Mazrui Annual Newsletter, No. 17, ‘On Ancestry, Descent and Identity’, 1993.

African discourse concerning reparation and reconciliation, nonetheless, the connection between the theoretical concepts and the present socio-political context of Africa and South Africa is latent in the pedagogy, as seen in both the OAU Group of Eminent Persons and the Durban Conference.

Shared Heritage, Contested Terrain and the Fractured Notion of ‘African’

A crucial point in Christine Muller Kreamer’s text is that any unity between the notion of ‘African’ (defined by ancestral roots in Africa) and the pan-African notion (defined by the shared memory of the slave trade) begins to crumble when ‘we’ who are called to the memory of slavery by our special relation to it begin to remember slavery. Her recognition of the deeply contentious sensitivity of the topic of slavery, particularly over the ownership, use and interpretation of historic sites associated with the slave trade among people of African descent is crucial. This is because it is useful in understanding how the contentions with which she engages exposed fault-lines in both the ethnic and the racial pan-African notions of Africa revealed in Fath Ruffins’ text.

Kreamer begins her essay with an analysis of an epigraph on the plaque at the entrance to the Cape Coast Castle dungeon, which, she suggested, was a symbolic ‘way to begin a process of reconciliation’ between Ghanaians and African-Americans, after acrimonious debate over the use, conservation and interpretation of the site. Kreamer’s task in the essay was to provide ‘a detailed analysis of the globalising process that influenced the work of preserving and interpreting this site, and the debates this work engendered, from its early phases of the project

through and beyond the project's conclusion'.⁹¹ Significantly, she focused on 'the multiple perspectives and expectations (at times conflicting) of the many constituents who, to varying degrees, claimed ownership of the use and interpretation of Ghana's historic forts and castles'.⁹² The Cape Coast and Elmina Castles were – by virtue of their being on Ghanaian soil – the responsibility of the Ghanaian Government, and World Heritage sites through their designation by UNESCO. However, Kreamer argued that 'because communities often look to museums and historic sites as places where identity is articulated, a subsection of international interest in Ghana's heritage sites resides mostly with African-Americans, many of whom see these sites as places of pilgrimage and memory where they may pay homage to their enslaved ancestors'.⁹³

What Kreamer referred to as the geography of contestation between African-Americans, represented by Nana Ben and Imakhus Vienna Robinson, and the Ghanaian officials responsible for the Crossroads exhibition project, was the epicentre of the shattered notion of 'African', premised on the shared memory of slavery. The Robinsons, whose attachment to 'African' is mediated by the memory of the slave trade, suggested that the Crossroads exhibition, because of the significance of being located within a historic structure that is an artefact of the slave trade, should place more emphasis on the transatlantic slave trade as definitive of the 'African' in the exhibition.⁹⁴ The Ghanaian ethnic Africans rejected this suggestion in favour of a broader history of ethnic Ghana beyond the slave trade as definitive of 'African' in the exhibition, which led (according to Kreamer) to the African-Americans feeling excluded from meaningful input.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Kreamer, 'Shared Heritage, Contested Terrain', 436.

⁹² Kreamer, 'Shared Heritage, Contested Terrain', 437.

⁹³ Kreamer, 'Shared Heritage, Contested Terrain', 439.

⁹⁴ Kreamer, 'Shared Heritage, Contested Terrain', 450.

⁹⁵ Kreamer, 'Shared Heritage, Contested Terrain', 450 - The contention over the emphasis of the Crossroads exhibition was exacerbated in the debates over technical conservation work at the Cape Coast and Elmina castles. The basic conservation procedure undertaken at the castles evoked mainly emotive protestation of the whitewashing

This notion of ‘African’, seen through the eyes of Ghanaians, underscores the view held among Ghanaians that the slave trade is an episode in a longer trajectory of African history, rather than being definitive of the notion of ‘African’ espoused by continental Africans.⁹⁶ However, to diaspora Africans and other claimants of the use and interpretation of slave trade artefacts such as the Cape Coast Castle, the memory of the slave trade (rather than being just an episode) is in fact definitive of their identity, and of their notion of ‘African’ in this identity.

Skipping the Gates of Notions of ‘African’

The call for reparation as a prelude to reconciliation, as a logical consequence of the appropriation of the Black Holocaust paradigm, seems to unify continental Africans and African-American descendants of survivors of the Middle Passage. However, the debate over reparations for the transatlantic slave trade unsettles this notion of ‘African’ as the debates generated by Henry Louis Gates’ *Wonders of the African World* reveals.⁹⁷

On April 2010, Henry Louis Gates, a renowned affirmative-action African-American professor at Harvard University, and an accomplished scholar of Africa and producer of the *Wonders of the African World* documentary,⁹⁸ published an article in the New York Times questioning African and African-Americans’ moral and judicial rationale for calls for reparations for American

of the heritage of slavery at the Cape Coast, especially by African-Americans. Without going through the technicalities of conservation, the issues involved touched on the problem of the authenticity of the heritage experience. The main issue of the debate (as noted by Kremer) centred on the question of ownership; whether African-Americans deserve as much say in decisions concerning artefacts of slavery in Ghana as the Ghanaian government. Who owns the artefact of the transatlantic slave trade that the castles represent? Is it the African-Americans, as descendants of slaves that were actually transported through it, or does it belong solely to Ghana, on whose territory it lies and who is the recognised custodian according to its World Heritage list designation?

⁹⁶ Kremer, ‘Shared Heritage, Contested Terrain’, 440.

⁹⁷ See H L. Gates Jr., *Wonders of the African World*, A companion volume to the PBS television series (USA: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2001). This documentary, discussed in the public history and tourism course, an elective for the programme, crucially revealed how the APMHS projects a notion of ‘African’ that unsettles a unified pan-African notion of ‘African’ projected in the reparation debate.

⁹⁸ Gates, *Wonders of the African World*.

slavery. This article generated vitriolic debate that revealed the shattered notion of ‘African’ premised on an essentialized memory of transatlantic slavery.

Gates began his article by suggesting that ‘President Barack Obama has a unique opportunity to shape debate over one of the most contentious issues of American’s racial legacy: reparations, the idea that the descendants of American slaves should receive compensation for their ancestors’ unpaid labour and bondage in the United States’.⁹⁹ The crux of Gates’ argument in the article is that the active complicity of Africans in the transatlantic slave trade negates any moral or judicial justification for the demand for reparations by African-Americans. According to Gates:

While we are familiar with the role played by the United States and the European colonial powers like Britain, France, Holland, Portugal and Spain, there is very little discussion of the roles Africans themselves played ... that role, it turns out, was a considerable one, especially for the slave-trading kingdoms of western and central Africa. These included the Akan of the Kingdom Asante in what is now Ghana, the Fon of Dahomey (now Benin), the Mbundu of Ndongo in modern Angola and the Kongo of today’s Congo, among several others.¹⁰⁰

Gates pointed out that without complex collaborations between African elites and European dealers, the Atlantic slave trade would not have been possible. This, he argued, the advocates for reparation had generally ignored in favour of the romanticised version, of capture by evil white men. Although Gates insisted that the culpability of African rulers did not absolve the American plantation owners, he did argue that ‘given this remarkably messy history, the problem with reparations may not be so much whether they are a good idea or deciding who will get them; the

⁹⁹ H L. Gates Jr., ‘Ending the Slavery Blame-Game’, *New York Times*, Editorial, 22 April 2010.

¹⁰⁰ Gates, ‘Ending the Slavery Blame-Game’.

larger question just might be from whom they would be extracted'.¹⁰¹ Gates concluded his article by arguing that reaching an understanding of the mutual complicity of Africans and Europeans in the crime of the slave trade is a 'vital precursor to any just and lasting agreement on the divisive issue of slavery reparations';¹⁰² he therefore suggested that in

President Obama, the child of an African and an American, we finally have a leader who is uniquely positioned to bridge the great reparations divide. He is uniquely placed to publicly attribute responsibility and culpability where they truly belong, to white and black people, on both sides of the Atlantic, complicit alike in one of the greatest evils in the history of civilisation.¹⁰³

The notion of 'African' in Gates' statement should not be missed; by representing Obama as 'an African-independent arbiter between African America and white America',¹⁰⁴ Gates seems to reveal a notion of 'African', which distinguishes Obama as an African that is different from the notion of 'African' in African-American. Though he defined the notion of 'African' for Obama from ethnic African ancestry,¹⁰⁵ the notion of 'African' in African-American signifies a historical connection to Africa defined by the descendants of those who experienced the Middle Passage.

The response to Gates' article was ferocious, with Barbara Ransby, for instance, accusing Gates of compromising rather than advancing the prospect of racial justice, by clouding rather than clarifying the historical persistence of the reality of racism in America.¹⁰⁶ In addition, Ron Daniels accused Gates of allowing 'himself to become an apologist for people and a nation who

¹⁰¹ Gates, 'Ending the Slavery Blame-Game'.

¹⁰² Gates, 'Ending the Slavery Blame-Game'.

¹⁰³ Gates, 'Ending the Slavery Blame-Game'.

¹⁰⁴ Gates, 'Ending the Slavery Blame-Game'.

¹⁰⁵ As ethnic Luo based on the ethnic origin of his father.

¹⁰⁶ B. Ransby, 'Response to Skip Gates' call for Slavery Absolution', <http://www.ellasdaughters.org/news/139-a-response-to-skip-gates-call-for-slavery-absolution-by-barbara-ransby>

do not want to accept responsibility for the greatest transgression against human rights in history, the holocaust of enslavement'.¹⁰⁷

However, the most scathing criticism of Gates' position was a response posted by a group of African-Americans styled the 'Committee to Advance the Movement for Reparations', which included Rick Adams, Leonard Jeffries, Molefi Kete Asante, Maulana Karenga and Conrad Worrill, among others. In 'Setting the Record Straight: A Response to Henry Louis Gates, Jr.' (which was co-signed by other prominent African-Americans, including Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Pastor Emeritus, Trinity United Church of Christ, Chicago). The signatories declared that Gates' view 'trivializes one of the most heinous crimes against humanity – the European enslavement of African people – and shifts the 'blame' in a clear attempt ... to undermine the demand for reparations'.¹⁰⁸ A very important part of their criticism of Gates is the charge that Gates' views fragmented pan-African unity, which they argued offered 'additional evidence of the global reach and relevance of Africans and African descendants in Africa and throughout the African Diaspora'.¹⁰⁹ The significant contention is that Gates' argument, which touches on the problem of how 'we' remember slavery, shattered the notion of 'African' built on appropriating the Black Holocaust paradigm.

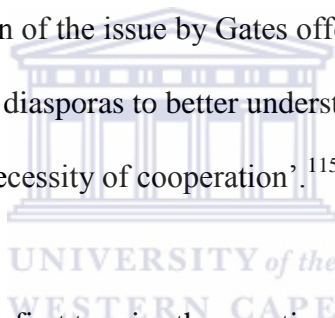
In putting Gates' view in context, it is necessary to go back to the debate generated by his documentary, *Wonders of the African World*, which raised similar questions. In an editorial of

¹⁰⁷ R. Daniels, Repudiating an Apologist: Skip Gates 'End the Slavery Blame Game' Nonsense, <http://www.blackagenda.com/content/repudiating-apologist-skip-gates%E2%80%99-end-slavery-blame-game-nonsense> – accessed 9/10/ 2010.

¹⁰⁸ 'Setting the Record Straight: A Response to Henry Louis Gates, Jr.', Molefi Asante et al, June 2010, <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/set-record-straight/> accessed 10/10/2010.

¹⁰⁹ 'Setting the Record Straight'.

the debates generated by the *Wonders of the African World*, Olufemi Taiwo argued, ‘it is false to state as Henry Louis Gates did in the *Wonders of the African World* that Africans, least of all African scholars and thinkers, have been absolutely silent about the issue of the complicity of Africans in the Atlantic slave trade’.¹¹⁰ According to him, ‘the trajectory of the Atlantic slave trade and what, if anything, it shared in common with the other forms of slavery in Africa was a staple of African history courses’, as examples in Nigeria attested.¹¹¹ He also cited the FESTAC ’77 Colloquium¹¹² and PANAFEST 1995¹¹³ as instances of engagement with the issue by continental Africans. Notwithstanding Taiwo’s protestations, he acknowledged the unique historical-ideological perspective of Gates as ‘the descendant of those who were sold’¹¹⁴ and suggested that ‘the fresh articulation of the issue by Gates offers an opportunity for Africans from the continent and those of the diasporas to better understand their divergences and appreciate the possibilities of the necessity of cooperation’.¹¹⁵



Henry Louis Gates might not be the first to raise the question of the complicity of Africans in the Atlantic slave trade, or the Trans-Saharan or the Indian Ocean slave trade. Nonetheless, his documentary film succeeded, in his own words, in ‘bringing to the open a dialogue among Africans and African-Americans, on the unanimity on the notion of African between African and African-American that has been simmering beneath the surface for centuries among African Americans’.¹¹⁶ Nataile Washington captured the extent to which Gates’ views disrupt the pan-African notion of African premised on the shared memory of the slave trade. According to her,

¹¹⁰ O. Taiwo, Editorial, *West African Review* (2000), 2

¹¹¹ Taiwo, Editorial, 2.

¹¹² See comments on FESTAC 77 in Chapter 3.

¹¹³ PANAFEST 1995.

¹¹⁴ Taiwo, Editorial, 2.

¹¹⁵ Taiwo, Editorial, 2.

¹¹⁶ H. L. Gates jr., ‘A preliminary response to Ali Mazrui preliminary critique of *Wonders of the African World*’, *West Africa Review*, (2000), 3.

‘although Gates’ *Wonders of the African World* released by PBS in October 1999 aimed to create a deeper understanding of African heritage among African-Americans, it ... ended in creating serious misunderstandings in and of the African world’.¹¹⁷

The vitriolic debate that followed the airing of the film started with some seemingly not-so-innocent comments on the film by Ali Mazrui, who had earlier produced a documentary film, *Africa: the Triple Heritage*.¹¹⁸ Mazrui criticised Gates’ *Wonders of the African World* for de-Africanising ancient Egypt, ignoring Swahili scholarly experts in the episode on the Swahili, and for its obsession with race in American terms. The strongest criticism was reserved for the film’s episodes on slavery, where Mazrui criticised as naïve Gates’ assumption that without the participation of Africans there would have been no slave trade.¹¹⁹ Gates, in a rejoinder to Mazrui’s criticism, and apparently expecting a drawn-out battle, wrote, ‘A preliminary response to Ali Mazrui’s preliminary critique of *Wonders of the African World*’. He conceded that neither the enslaved nor the collaborators in the slave trade saw each other as fellow Africans; but argued that the realisation of the extent of African complicity in the slave trade was a ‘vexed and painful issue’ for him, given the memory of the Middle Passage, slavery, Jim Crow and segregation. He therefore insisted that he could not be expected as ‘a descendant of slaves to avoid addressing this complex issue, which disturbs many of us so deeply simply because it is so confusing, so troubling, so anguishing’.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ N. Washington, ‘Many now Wonder about the African World’, *West African Review*, (2000), 1.

¹¹⁸ A Mazrui, *Africa: The Triple Heritage*, BBC Documentary, (London: BBC, 1986).

¹¹⁹ A. Mazrui, ‘A preliminary critique of the TV series by Henry Louis Gates’, *West African Review*, 1, 2 www.icaap.org accessed 01/02/2010 .

¹²⁰ Gates, ‘A preliminary response’, 3.

Up to this stage, the debate had been decorous, and devoid of personal acrimony. Meanwhile the film itself, as well as Gates and Mazrui's comments, had generated heated debate as protagonists lined up in opposing ranks: those who supported Mazrui in his criticism of Gates, and those who supported Gates. Mazrui, in his rejoinder, goes to the heart of the debate by warning Gates against the risk of sowing seeds of dissent between the African Diaspora and the people of the African continent; because by shifting the burden of guilt for slavery from white to black, race relations in America might be smoothed, but pan-African relationships could be damaged.¹²¹

Charging Gates with being a Black Orientalist, Mazrui argued that he feared Gates' approach to Africa was reminiscent of Classical Orientalism, 'which was Eurocentric and condescending to non-Western cultures'.¹²² He questioned the wisdom of Gates' insistence on an apology for slavery from continental Africans, who are equally victims. Apart from the unbecoming, ugly personal diatribes generated between Mazrui and Wole Soyinka (who wrote a rejoinder in support of Gates in response to Mazrui's attack),¹²³ the criticism of Gates centred, as expected, on his attempt at the representation of memory of African complicity in the transatlantic, trans-Saharan and Indian Ocean slave trade.¹²⁴

¹²¹ A. Mazrui, 'A Millennium Letter to Henry Louis Gates Jr.: Concluding a Dialogue', *West African Review*, (2000), 1, 2 www.icaap.org accessed 01/02/2010.

¹²² Mazrui, 'A Millennium Letter', 3.

¹²³ See W. Soyinka, 'Ali Mazrui and Skip Gates' Africa Series' and 'The Problem with you, Ali Mazrui! Response to Ali's Millennial 'Conclusion'', see also A. Mazrui, 'A Millennium Letter to Henry Louis Gates jr.: Concluding a Dialogue', 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Soyinka: The Strange Case of Nobel Schizophrenia', *West African Review*, (2000), 1, 2 www.icaap.org accessed 1/02/2010.

¹²⁴ Apart from the accusation of Jewish/Christian bias and of demonising Muslims - (Eddie D'Sa, The Gates Mazrui Clash: Why Mazrui may have a Case, *West African Review*, (2000), 1, 2 <http://www.icaap.org>, accessed 1 February 2010). - In addition to charges of Afrocentric Orientalism what characterised the opposing criticisms of Gates' representation of the complicity of Africans in the slave trade is the ideologically charged arguments to excuse African complicity in the slave trade. For example, Molefi Asante, who does not shy away from his ideological identification with African history, argued that Gates' project 'is one more example to rewrite the history of slavery'; a travesty, he argued, that 'will set the back the history of intellectual discourse on the African enslavement for fifty years'. How Asante arrived at the exact figure of fifty years for African intellectual set-back shows the emotionality of his arguments, which does not deflate his criticism that 'nowhere in the *Wonders of the African*

The importance of the debate generated by Gates' representation of the complicity of Africans in the slave trade is in its unsettling of the notion of 'African' derived from a collective experience and memory of slavery. This takes us back to Austen and Hesse's argument of how the remembrance of slavery by the 'we' who are called to this remembrance by our special relationship to it shatters any unanimous notion of 'African'. Joseph Inikori, in rejecting Gates' thesis of African complicity in the slave trade, argued:

It is a mistake to talk of Africans exporting Africans or 'African leaders' exporting Africans in the Atlantic slave trade. There were no 'African Leaders' in the 18th century. There were Asante leaders, Dahomean leaders, Oyo leaders, Kongo leaders, Benin leaders and so on. The concept of pan-Africanism is a 20th century phenomenon: people on the continent knew nothing of such in the 18th century.¹²⁵

Among the insights generated by the Gates debate was how the notions of 'African' – based on the collective experience and memory of slavery as the historical ideological basis of the pan-Africanist notion of 'African' – disintegrate when one confronts the issue of the complicity of Africans in the slave trade in the remembering and representation of the slave trade. Another crucial point, as shown in *Wonders of the African World*, is that the Gates debate destroyed the

World do we get the theme of African resistance to enslavement'. – M. Asante, 'Wonders of Africa': A Eurocentric Enterprise, West African Review, (2000), 1, 2 www.icaap.org accessed 01/02/2010. A position which was supported by Gwendon Mikell when he argued that the charge of African complicity in the slave trade must be put in historical, social, cultural and context. According to him, the Ashanti's role in the slave trade was necessitated 'given the warfare that was set in motion by foreign intrusions. The Ashanti were forced to acquire and use slaves to exchange for guns to prevent British incursion from the south and French incursions from the West, and the jihads and expansions of Samori from north and west'. - Gwendon Mikell, Deconstructing Gates' "Wonder of the African World", West African Review, (2000), 1, 2 <http://www.icaap.org> , accessed 01/02/2010¹²⁴ Oyekan Owomoyela also argued supporting this position. He argued against evidence and common sense that, 'it is disingenuous to suggest that the Africans who sold other Africans into slavery "knew what they were doing". That they knew the conditions in which slaves were held in forts, that they knew the conditions in which they were transported across the ocean, or they knew their fate in the new world'. He thus rejected as disturbing 'Ghana's current campaign to rewrite history in order to relieve European of the onus of initiating and fuelling the slave trade through transferring it to Africans'. According to Owomoyela, although the recognition and apologies for the slave trade might be satisfying to African Americans in search of mea culpas and gratifying to the white world it however 'does nothing to bridge the chasm in the African world. – O. Owomoyela, 'Monumentality, Scriptocentrism and other Mis-measure of Man', West African Review, (2000), 1, 2 <http://www.icaap.org> , accessed 01/02/2010.

¹²⁵ J. Inikori, 'The "Wonders of Africa" and the Trans-Atlantic Slaver Trade', *West African Review*, (2000), 1, 2 www.icaap.org accessed 01/02/2010.

simplistic identification of ‘African’ as black and indigenous to the continent of Africa. As the Swahili episode shows, being black and indigenous to the continent does not necessarily result in the affirmation of an African identity. Digressive as the *Gates Wonders of the African World* debate is to this chapter, it is nonetheless central to understanding the implications of the critical interrogation of essentialized notions of ‘African’ encapsulated in the APMHS.

As seen in this analysis of the notions of ‘African’ in the core course, the first session introduced the notion (often taken for granted) of ‘African’ as defined by traditional, pre-colonial, inherited culture, as the reading by Abungu and the ACTAG Report projected. Next, it introduced the debate about the notion of ‘African’ in African heritage, as defined by the oral tradition, in the readings by Hampâtè Bâ, Makoni, Hofmeyr, and Ranger’s ‘The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa’, to show the problems inherent in the notion of ‘African’ as defined by tradition in African heritage studies. The next notion of ‘African’ unfolded in the core course was the national, pan-African notion of ‘African’, in African Nationalism, which was problematised through engagement with the dominant ideological assumption underlining the concept of a nation. The next notion of ‘African’ discussed in the course was that defined by the memory of the ‘Black Holocaust’ – the transatlantic slave trade.

The Black Holocaust paradigm, on the surface, promised an encompassing notion of ‘African’ in African heritage studies; however, the two readings by Fath Davis Ruffins and Christine Muller Kreamer exposed the fault-lines in a unified notion of ‘African’ encompassing continental African and Diaspora African, premised on the appropriation of the Black Holocaust. These texts show how the pan-African notions of ‘African’ in African heritage, defined by ancestral roots in

Africa and by the shared memory of the slave trade, begin to crumble when Africans begin to remember slavery. This interrogation of the notions of ‘African’ in the core course is instructive in understanding how the APMHS notion of ‘African’ escapes an essentialised notion of ‘African’, defined by pre-colonial tradition, geography and race. For, as seen in the analysis, none of the notions of ‘African’ – whether defined by tradition, nationality or memory of slavery – was taken for granted; all, in fact, were critically engaged with and challenged, which points to an unarticulated notion of ‘African’. To try to understand this unarticulated notion of ‘African’ in the APMHS, it is necessary to engage with the approach to heritage studies it dictates.



Chapter Five

Philosophy of Heritage and the Heritage of Philosophy

A heritage practice is in itself a theory with its own epistemology, and some forms of practice ... judged as more progressive or 'advanced' than theories of heritage...¹

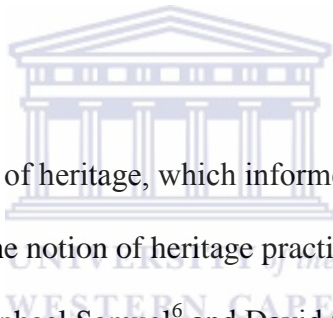
To take heritage seriously is to look at ways in which it can open up debate about representation of the past. Instead of making a distinction between history and heritage, one therefore needs to start considering the different ways that pastness is framed and claimed as history on its own right.²

Following an engagement with how the unarticulated notions of 'African' encapsulated in the APMHS unfolded to disrupt and unsettle essentialized notions of 'African' dominant in African heritage studies within and outside the academy. The concern of this chapter is an exploration and interrogation of the implications of this unarticulated notion of 'African', for the approach to museum and heritage studies projected in the APMHS core course. This chapter engages with how different theories and definitions of heritage practice dictate, determine and influence different approaches to museum and heritage studies, in the context of the argument for an approach to museum and heritage studies that is critical by its disciplinary methodology, and African by its ideological, epistemic positioning in the study of Africa.

¹ J. Littler, 'British heritage and the legacies of 'race'' in *The Politics of Heritage: The Legacies of "Race"*, J. Littler and R. Naidoo (eds.) (London: Routledge, 2006), 13.

² G. Minkley, L. Witz and C. Rassool, 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts: heritage, public histories and post anti-apartheid South Africa', Unpublished paper presented at the Heritage Disciplines Symposium, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa 8-9 October 2009.

A serious challenge to the dominant notions of heritage studies as ‘singular, compact, simple and largely defined outside the academy’³ is a claimed distinctive feature of the APMHS, according to Leslie Witz and Ciraj Rassool (the co-convenors of the programme) and their colleague, Gary Minkley. As stated in the proposal for the convening of the APMHS, ‘the study of museums and the worlds of heritage are approached in a manner that consistently, critically and practically engages with and challenges the dominant ways in which heritage is presented’ in the academy and in public discourse.⁴ As further reflected in the analysis of the curriculum of the core course, the APMHS critically challenged the notions of heritage as an automatic, naturally-occurring phenomenon, and defended heritage studies as a genre of historical production that enriches the discipline of history.⁵



This critical perspective of the idea of heritage, which informed the programme’s approach to heritage studies, relied mainly on the notion of heritage practices as public history, derived from the British debate articulated by Raphael Samuel⁶ and David Cohen’s notion of heritage as an alternative, submerged terrain of the production of history.⁷ The pedagogical, theoretical merits of this approach to heritage studies are sound – and critical; however, this chapter engages with its limitations as an approach to heritage studies as African, in the context of arguments for an ‘Africanist turn’⁸ as definitive of an approach to heritage studies that is both critical and African.

³ G. Minkley, L. Witz and C. Rassool, ‘South Africa and the Spectacle of Public Pasts’, 9.

⁴ A proposal for a joint programme to be offered by the University of the Western Cape and the Robben Island Museum – prepared by Leslie Witz, 2008, Leslie Witz private collections.

⁵ Witz and Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s Cave.

⁶ See R. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, (London: Verso, 1994).

⁷ See D. W. Cohen, *The Combing of history*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). See also, G. Minkley, L. Witz and C. Rassool, ‘South Africa and the Spectacle of Public Pasts’ and Leslie Witz and Ciraj Rassool, ‘Making histories’, *Kronos*, Vol. 34, No. 1, Cape Town, (November 2008)

⁸ See B. Butler, ‘Taking on a Tradition’: African Heritage and the Testimony of Memory’, in F. De Jong and M. Rowlands, *Reclaiming Heritage: Alternative Imaginaries of Memory in West Africa*, (California: Left Coast Press,

This chapter is concerned with exploring how an ‘Africanist turn’ in the approach to heritage studies can further ground the APMHS as a terrain critical to knowledge production in and of Africa, and which escapes any essentialized notions of ‘African’, or imposed theory of heritage, in museum and heritage studies.

In exploring these issues, a conceptual analysis of the notions of heritage as they unfold in theoretical debates in the prescribed readings of three selected sessions of the curriculum of the core course of the programme, and the underlying theoretical assumptions underpinning them, is the focus of analysis. The first three sessions of the curriculum selected – ‘What is Heritage?’, ‘The Production of Heritage’, and ‘Heritage and History’ – are crucial to this analysis, because of their focus on critical philosophical conceptual debates of the meanings of notions of heritage as a theory and practice, which have informed the approach to heritage studies operative in the programme. The focus of the analysis is the notions of heritage as they unfold in the theoretical debates of selected prescribed readings in the curriculum, and their limitations in the context of arguments for an ‘Africanist turn’⁹ as the African marker of an approach to museum and heritage studies that is both critical and African.

Philosophy of Heritage

While the relationship between heritage studies in Africa and other disciplines in the humanities has seen massive theoretical focus,¹⁰ attention to heritage as a philosophy (and a practice of philosophy) are almost absent in the debates over notions of ‘heritage’ in heritage studies. This

Inc., 2007), 20 - 40, see also B. Butler, *Return to Alexandria: An Ethnography of Cultural Heritage revival and Museum Memory*, (California: Left Coast Press, 2007), 67-71.

⁹ B. Butler, ‘Taking on a Tradition’, 40-42.

¹⁰ Notably its connections to African studies, history, anthropology, archaeology, cultural studies and arts history.

omission is problematic, not only because of the lost benefits of the intersection of the debates in African philosophy and African heritage studies. More importantly, the omission of the inherent philosophical nature of the concept and history of heritage, as an idea and as praxis in heritage studies, weakens its analytical edge as a terrain of knowledge production. A brief philosophical reflection on the discourse of heritage is therefore necessary in understanding and critically engaging with how the pedagogy of heritage studies in the APMHS is a practice of philosophy.

A crucial theoretical and methodological assumption of this chapter is the argument that the idea and practice of heritage is intrinsically philosophical, because of the very impossibility of its separation from the history of ideas. According to Jacques Derrida, the concept of heritage and the themes, methodology, objectives and intellectual history of heritage studies are all derived from definite philosophical traditions; therefore, he argued, the contemporary practice of heritage, to the extent that it relates to UNESCO's ethos, is engaged in 'philosophical acts and philosophical production and products'.¹¹ This, he argued, is not only because the idea of UNESCO that legitimates it has an assignable philosophical history, but also because 'by the same token and for that very reason such institutions imply the sharing of a culture and a philosophical language'.¹²

Here, Derrida helps us understand the intrinsic connection between the philosophy of heritage and the approach to heritage studies as an academic discipline located in formal and informal settings. Derrida's argument of the inescapable philosophical, conceptual and institutional structures and frameworks within which heritage as a terrain of cultural politics and heritage

¹¹ J. Derrida, *Ethics, Institutions, and the Right to Philosophy*, Translated, edited with commentary by Peter Pericles Trifons, Culture and Politics series, (Maryland, USA: Roman and Littlefield publishers, inc., 2002). 22.

¹² Derrida, *Ethics, Institutions, and the Right to Philosophy*, 22.

studies developed and operates as an academic discipline, offers a rationale for this study. This is because it pre-empts the question: what has philosophy to do with heritage studies, and what do heritage studies have to do with philosophy? For, as shown here by Derrida, the philosophy of heritage determines approaches to heritage studies as a practice of philosophy. More importantly, the notion of heritage is a deeply philosophical question, for in answering the question of the where of heritage,¹³ in the process we cannot but critically interrogate *how* we know heritage. This invariably questions our sources and access to knowing the object of our knowledge, which is an exploration of the ontology of our epistemology, which cannot be divorced from social, political and ethical questions.

The intrinsic epistemological nature of the concept of heritage and heritage studies as an inherently philosophical enterprise is a theoretical and methodological framework for this chapter. This is because it is in the sense of heritage as knowledge, an epistemology, and a way of knowing, predicated on a universalised Western hegemonic episteme that negates any alternative subaltern epistemology of heritage,¹⁴ that the debate concerning the imperatives for conceptual specificity of notions of African heritage studies as a critical hermeneutical endeavour can be located. Engaging the limitations in the theoretical debates which unfolded notions of heritage and the approach to heritage studies in the curriculum of the APMHS is crucial as a background for engaging the ‘Africanist turn’ as an approach to heritage studies that is African because of its ideological epistemic positioning in the study of Africa.

¹³ See questions posed in J. E Tunbridge, G. J Ashworth, & B Graham, *A Geography of Heritage*, (London: Arnold, 2000), 24, for example – ‘who decides what is heritage, and whose heritage is it ... can the past be ‘owned’ ...?’

¹⁴ L. Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 11.

David Harvey's arguments for an historical appreciation of the concept of heritage are useful as a framework for locating the underlying ideological assumptions of the unfolding notions of heritage and approach to heritage studies in the APMHS curriculum. The historical imperative of the idea and praxis of heritage studies provided by Harvey offers a critical framework for situating the notion of heritage in the APMHS, and for conceiving an alternative approach to heritage studies beyond the totalising notions of heritage studies, and for tracing its African historical and conceptual specificity. In addition, Derrida's reflection on the concept of heritage, which revealed its roots in Eurocentric Western philosophy, offers an avenue for engaging with heritage's racist and imperial agenda, which is the point of departure for the Africanist turn as an approach to heritage studies.



Heritages of Heritage

Harvey has argued that one needs 'to make space for a longer historical analysis of the development of heritage practices'.¹⁵ He pointed out that 'the teaching of heritage has sold the heritage process short by concentrating on the very recent past and producing a received wisdom of a heritage that began at a particular date in the 19th century'.¹⁶ He questioned 'whether we need a tight definition at all, let alone a comprehensive 'manifesto' of what heritage studies is all about',¹⁷ given the need for an open-ended conceptualisation of the notion of heritage as an ever-present and never-ending human process of cultural interpretation and re-interpretation. In addition, his argument is that by providing a longer historical narrative of 'heritageisation' as a process, we can 'situate the myriad of multi-connected interdisciplinary research that makes up

¹⁵ D. C. Harvey, 'Heritage pasts and heritage present: Temporality, meaning and the scope of heritage studies', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 7, no. 4, 2001, 338.

¹⁶ Harvey, 'Heritage pasts and heritage present', 338.

¹⁷ Harvey, 'Heritage pasts and heritage present', 320.

the terrain of heritage studies'.¹⁸ This allows us to locate the history of the unfolding notions of heritage studies projected in the APMHS and trace its African specificity; because, as he argued, 'the history of heritage is a history of the present or rather, a historical narrative of an endless succession of presents'.¹⁹

The dismissal of heritage studies – because of arguments that 'heritage emphasises nostalgia, which exposes heritage to appropriation in support of the status quo and as another web of illusion to enmesh an unthinking populace'²⁰ and as a 'state sanctioned nationalist rhetoric'²¹ – was challenged by David Harvey. He argued rather that 'heritage is a vehicle for both conservative and radical/progressive movements searching for an answer to the perceived evils of modern society',²² and insisted that there remains a case for a critical and evaluative approach to the study of heritage.²³ This conclusion by Harvey, which the APMHS is taking seriously by developing a critical heritage studies programme in the academy, is especially poignant.²⁴ This chapter argues that the concept and practice of heritage, in whatever configuration, is worthy of critical engagement on its own, as the curriculum of the APMHS reflected. More importantly, I argue, that worthy of more critical engagement is the debate concerning the conceptual specificity of the approach to African heritage studies, African by virtue of its ideological, epistemic positioning in the study of Africa, and critical by its methodological, self-reflective criticism of and challenge to the hegemony of the approach to heritage studies in Africa.

¹⁸ Harvey, 'Heritage pasts and heritage present', 320.

¹⁹ D. C. Harvey, 'The History of Heritage', in Brian Graham and Peter Howard (eds.) *Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, (England: Ashgate, 2008), 23.

²⁰ Harvey, 'Heritage pasts and heritage present', 327.

²¹ See D. Cohen, *The Combining of history*, see also, G. Minkley, L. Witz and C. Rassool, 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts' and L. Witz and C. Rassool, 'Making histories', *Kronos*, vol. 34, no. 1, Cape Town, (2008).

²² Harvey, 'The History of Heritage', in *Ashgate Research Companion*, 27.

²³ Harvey, 'Heritage pasts and heritage present', 320.

²⁴ Minkley, Witz and Rassool, 'South Africa and the Spectacle of Public Pasts'.

This search for ideological, epistemic specificity of heritage studies in Africa relies on the imperative for an historical perspective of the idea and practice of heritage studies charted by David Harvey. Harvey argued that the ‘use of the past to construct ideas of individual and group identities is part of the human condition, and throughout human history people have actively managed and treasured aspects of the past for this purpose’.²⁵ However, according to him, what is distinctive about the particular strand of discourse of heritage that emerged in nineteenth-century Europe that has achieved hegemony as a ‘universalising’ discourse in the twenty-first century is its origin in the specific European history of modernity and nationalism.²⁶ As Ashworth noted:

Nineteenth-century conceptualisations of heritage emerged in the ethos of a singular and totalised modernity, in which it was assumed that to be modern was to be European, and to be European or espouse European values was to be at the pinnacle of cultural achievement and social evolution. The acquisition of the adjective, ‘modern’, for itself by Europe was an integral part of imperialism and the pinnacle of heritage was to become the European metropolitan core of the imperial empire.²⁷

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The critical perspective offered by Harvey is his outline of a history of heritage in terms of ‘a history of power relations that have been formed and operate via the deployment of the heritage processes’.²⁸ He argued that notwithstanding the differing perspectives of the definitions of heritage, notably among Lowenthal, Tunbridge, Ashworth and Graham, Hewison, and Samuel, their general agreement on the dating of the origin of the practice of heritage as a ‘modern’ 19th-century invention is erroneous, because it obscures ‘a comparatively rich historical

²⁵ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 17.

²⁶ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 18.

²⁷ Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge, *A Geography of Heritage*, 17. A point also made by L. Smith when she argued that ‘The origin of the dominant heritage discourse are linked to the development of 19th Century nationalism and liberal modernity’ in *Uses of Heritage*, 17.

²⁸ Harvey, ‘The History of Heritage’, 19.

contextualisation of heritage beyond the 19th century'.²⁹ This view by Harvey of the need for 'a deeper understanding of the historically contingent and embedded nature of heritage is vital, because it allows a consideration of the possibilities of approach to heritage studies in Africa that goes beyond its 19th-century hegemonic imposition – which defines the Africanist turn, as will be shown later in the chapter. More importantly, it exposes questions of power and authority in the production of heritage and identity in society,³⁰ which inform the consideration of an alternative approach to heritage studies in Africa, as a challenge to the Eurocentric hegemony in heritage studies.

This argument for a longer historical trajectory of the practice of heritage as a 'process, a verb, related to human action and agency and as an instrument of cultural power in whatever period of time one chose to examine'³¹ is crucial for this study. It offers a framework for the exploration of the possibilities of conceptual and historical specificity of heritage studies in Africa beyond the approach to heritage studies unfolding in the APMHS curriculum. Furthermore, it allows us to ask the question of what is conceptually and historically distinctive about the approach of heritage studies in the APMHS that makes it African, beyond the critique of notions of heritage as automatic, traditional, pre-colonial inheritance. Especially instructive for the search for an approach to heritage studies that is specifically African is the implication of Harvey's emphasis on the need for historical, conceptual understanding of heritage studies. According to him:

What this implies for (*African*) heritage studies is that we should not draw any lines of temporal closure, or see the entire heritage concept as a product of later 19th and 20th century cultural change without origin. Rather, we should supply (*African*) heritage with a history of its own; not in terms of recounting the story of the development of a particular modernist strand of heritage from a 19th-

²⁹ Harvey, 'Heritage pasts and heritage present', 326.

³⁰ Harvey, 'Heritage pasts and heritage present', 321.

³¹ Harvey, 'Heritage pasts and heritage present', 327.

century icon, but in terms of examining the evolution of the heritage process over a longer term.³²

The notion of heritage as a 19th-century invention tied to European modernity is inescapably dominant, and definitive of the notion and process of heritage. However, a history of heritage, as suggested by Harvey, allows us to appreciate heritage not as a monolithic, hegemonic, cast-in-stone concept, but as a concept always subjected to contestation, appropriation and challenges to its meanings, histories and uses. More importantly, in the context of an interrogation of the approach to heritage studies in the APMHS, Harvey's theory 'allows a much greater temporal depth',³³ offering a framework for exploring a deeper history of heritage studies in Africa that can define its conceptual specificity and accommodate its critical distinction. Crucially, Harvey agrees with Dennis Hardy's contention that a 'distinction can be drawn between heritage used in a conservative sense and heritage as a radical concept'.³⁴ This dissonant notion of heritage is important because it allows the conceptualisation of an alternative discourse on heritage studies in Africa; which, according to Ferdinand de Jong, is 'committed to disrupting the 'Eurocentrism' that continues to underpin cultural heritage theory/practice through a contemporary 'politics of recognition', which is bound up in new, alternative, or 'parallel' characterisations of heritage'.³⁵

This understanding is linked to another critical relevance of Harvey's theoretical position for foregrounding an analysis of the approach to heritage studies projected in the APMHS. His arguments on the relationship between history and heritage are part of a debate that is pivotal to the approach to heritage studies projected in the APMHS – as revealed in the analysis of its theoretical assumptions.

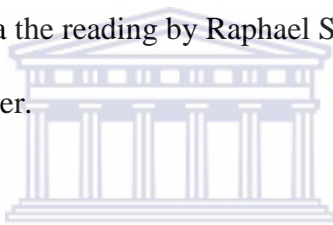
³² Harvey, 'Heritage pasts and heritage present', 326.

³³ Harvey, 'The History of Heritage', 23.

³⁴ D. Hardy, 'Historical geography and heritage studies', *Area*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Dec. 1988), 333-338.

³⁵ F. de Jong, and M. Rowlands, *Reclaiming Heritage*, 9.

According to Harvey, the attack which labelled heritage studies a ‘destruction of history’³⁶ (by Hawison,³⁷ Hardy,³⁸ and Tunbridge and Ashworth³⁹) was based on erroneous assumptions. These are ‘firstly that there is something called ‘correct’ historical narrative that heritage is busily destroying, and secondly that until very recently, all history, historical narrative and other relationships with the past were somehow more genuine and authentic than they have now become’.⁴⁰ Thus, he argued, the ‘distinction between true history and false heritage may be more illusory than actual’,⁴¹ stating that ‘traditional memory, rather than having been ended and defeated by false heritage, had in fact been transformed through visual technological and archival development’.⁴² This position is concurrent with the notion of heritage in relation to history that entered the APMHS core course via the reading by Raphael Samuel prescribed in one of the sessions analysed later in this chapter.



Notions of Heritage in the APMHS

Leslie Witz and Ciraj Rassool, co-convenors of the programme, provide a background and grounding to the debates on approaches to heritage studies encapsulated in the APMHS, which formed the basis of this analysis. In a reflection on the beginning of the programme in 1998, Witz admitted that ‘teaching of heritage studies was like entering a minefield where one is confronted by highly explosive issues of personal and group identities, and it’s not clear which direction to take’.⁴³ This challenging pedagogical indeterminacy, he argued, existed because:

³⁶ See Lowenthal ‘The heritage Crusade’, 3.

³⁷ J E Tunbridge and G J Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, 6.

³⁸ Hardy, ‘Historical Geography and heritage studies’.

³⁹ Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge, *A Geography of Heritage*; and D Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, (London: Viking, 1996).

⁴⁰ Harvey, ‘Heritage pasts and heritage present’, 325.

⁴¹ Harvey, ‘Heritage pasts and heritage present’, 325.

⁴² Harvey, ‘Heritage pasts and heritage present’, 327.

⁴³ Witz and Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s Cave’, 2.

To define heritage studies is notoriously difficult. Firstly, the notion of ‘doing’ heritage embraces a wide range of activities, from stamp collecting ... to collecting oral traditions and museum curating. Secondly, the meanings of heritage are intensely debated. As defined by the Arts and Culture task group (ACTAG), it refers to an almost naturally occurring phenomenon, ‘that which we inherit’, and ‘a powerful agent for cultural identity, reconciliation and nation building’. In contrast, within a great deal of academic historical writing, heritage refers to constructed, imagined or invented collective pasts and presents.⁴⁴

This dilemma of what notions of heritage should inform the approach to heritage studies in the programme was reconciled, argued Witz, in the ACTAG report’s⁴⁵ call for ‘museum critical theory’ as an essential part of skills development in heritage studies.⁴⁶ This reference to critical museum theory in the ACTAG report, Witz stated, allowed the convergence of a healthy tension between the prevalent notions of heritage as inheritance, and the critical perspectives of the notions of heritage in the academy.⁴⁷ Challenging the negative notions of heritage in the academy as ‘a primary source of raw data subject to evidential scrutiny, dependent upon present concerns, necessarily biased, usually condensed to the point of distortion and driven by the need for public approval’.⁴⁸ Witz argued that in the programme ‘heritage is recognised as a specific type of history with its own modes and conventions’.⁴⁹ This perspective, according to Ciraj Rassool, affirmed that heritage is ‘seen as an assemblage of arenas and activities of history-making that is as disputatious as the claims made about the character of academic history’.⁵⁰ The approach to heritage studies that thus informed the programme at its beginning, said Rassool,

⁴⁴ L. Witz and C. Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s Cave’, 3.

⁴⁵ Report of the Arts and Culture Task Group, presented to the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Pretoria, June 1995. -ACTAG is a task force created by the South African Minister of Arts and Culture to advise on policies for heritage transformation from its apartheid legacy to one that reflects the new, democratic ‘rainbow nation’.

⁴⁶ Witz and Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s Cave’, 3.

⁴⁷ Witz and Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s Cave’, 4

⁴⁸ Witz and Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s Cave’, 4

⁴⁹ Witz and Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s Cave’, 4

⁵⁰ Rassool, ‘The rise of Heritage’, 5.

was to ‘critically and practically engage and challenge the dominant ways in which heritage is presented and represented’,⁵¹ and to ‘discover different areas and modes of heritage production and to analyse the meanings which are produced’.⁵²

To appreciate the significance of these notions of heritage and its limitations in the context of exploring an approach to heritage studies that is African by its epistemic location and critical by its methodology, an analysis follows of the first three sessions of the 2007 academic year curriculum of the programme. This analysis is necessary in situating the various notions of heritage studies it engaged with and the process of the unfolding of the approach to critical heritage studies in the curriculum. In order to reflect on its limitations and examine the imperative of an Africanist turn in the APMHS as a marker of its critical distinction as an African programme in museum and heritage studies, a brief analysis of selected readings prescribed for the sessions is undertaken. This is because of the implications of the theoretical debates on the notions of heritage studies projected in them. These readings offer insight into the critical notions of heritage studies projected in the APMHS, and their limitations for the projection of notions of ‘African’ in African heritage studies.

An analysis of the 2007 core course outline for the first and second semesters⁵³ reflects the search for an appropriate approach to heritage studies (that is, both critical and African) as an

⁵¹ Witz, ‘A proposal for a joint programme’.

⁵² Witz and Cornell, ‘From Robben Island to Makapan’s Cave’, 4.

⁵³ Core course outline, 2007.

First Semester

1. What is Heritage? An introduction to the course and the internship.

2. The Production of Heritage

Some issues to be considered: The production of Heritage; Heritage as a construction.

3. Heritage and History

Some issues to be considered: Is ‘History’ the same as ‘the Past’? Is ‘Heritage’ different from ‘History’?

overarching concern of the curriculum. This is especially evident if one considers the very first session of the core course, which required students to evaluate different meanings of heritage engaged with in the session and suggest which of them would be most appropriate for an approach to heritage studies.⁵⁴ This underlying concern reflected in this question is seen throughout the first semester sessions, which focused on debates about the meanings and

4. National Heritage

Some issues to be considered: How is 'national heritage' defined? Who determines what is 'national heritage'? Understanding power, ideology and discourse.

5. Natural Heritages and cultural landscapes

Some issues to be considered: What is a 'natural environment'? Are natural environments constructed landscapes?

6. What is living heritage?

Some issues to be considered: Living heritage and intangible heritage – considering public memories, oral histories, lifestyles and the making of traditions. Are orality and literacy directly in opposition to each other or do they influence each other?

7. The museum as heritage.

Some issues to be considered: How meanings are attached to objects.

Stuart Hall has argued that 'a museum does not deal solely with objects, but more importantly, with ... ideas – notions of what the world is or should be. Museums do not simply issue objective descriptions... They generate representations and attribute value and meaning in line with certain perspectives or classificatory schemes which are historically specific. They do not so much reflect the world through objects as use them to mobilise representations of the world past and present'. What does Hall mean by this?

8. Visual strategies of museum exhibitions.

Some issues to be considered: Ways of representation and presentation of visual material through exhibitions, and imagining new exhibitions and heritage displays. Examples will be drawn from Iziko Museums of Cape Town and other museums.

Second semester 2007

1. Exhibition Analysis: 'Familieverhalen/Family Stories' and 'Memory of Congo'

'A Group Portrait from 9 South African Families', National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria, 2004 (formerly exhibited as '*Familie Verhalen uit Zuid-Afrika*': South African Exhibition at the KIT, Tropemuseum, Amsterdam) and 'Memory of Congo: the Colonial Era', Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium, 2005.

2. The bushman diorama: A history

In preparation for this class, in addition to your readings, you need to visit the South African Museum.

3. Skeletons in the cupboard: From the diorama to human remains

4. Shadowed ground: Sites, locations and memorials

5. Memorials to conflict

6. World heritage and global systems

At the turn of the 21st Century, the desire to acquire world heritage status has escalated, without sufficient attention to all the implications. In this class, we will consider of the category 'world heritage', its meanings, purposes, social constructions and cultural politics. We are interested in thinking about the categories of World Heritage Site status as well as the 'Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity'. Other global dimensions of heritage involve tourism and legacies of colonial history.

7. Slavery and heritage in Ghana and South Africa

8. Robben Island: history and national heritage

In preparation for this class, in addition to your readings, you need to visit the Nelson Mandela Gateway.

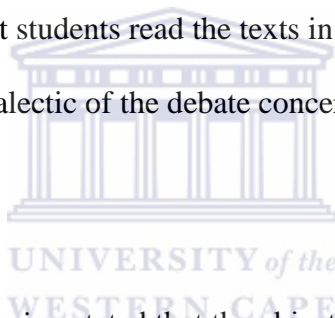
9. The District Six Museum: education in a community museum

⁵⁴ Preparatory questions, Core course, session 1, 2009, Course reader, APMHS collections, CHR archives.

histories of different notions of heritage, and the different approaches to heritage studies they dictate.

Heritage as Inheritance

While the first session of the core course curriculum was titled ‘What is Heritage?’, the actual debating of this question started only in the second session of the course.⁵⁵ This second session, titled ‘Heritage as a Product’, has remained largely unchanged, except for the omission, from the 2001 curriculum onwards, of the suggested extra readings.⁵⁶ An important pedagogical intervention was the suggestion that students read the texts in the sequential order provided, in order for them to understand the dialectic of the debate concerning notions of heritage as they unfold in the texts.



The introductory abstract for the session stated that the objective was ‘to question the meaning of heritage and discuss how heritage is produced’.⁵⁷ This reveals a constructivist perspective of the notion of heritage as a product⁵⁸ inherent in the curriculum of the programme. This implicitly challenged the notions of heritage in the Report of the Arts and Culture Task Group (ACTAG), in which heritage was defined as ‘that which we inherit’, and George Abungu’s notion of

⁵⁵ The first sessions observed from 2007 through 2009 dealt with students’ orientation, formal introductions and general introduction to the programme and the modalities of the internship component, and administrative logistics.

⁵⁶ The readings omitted from the 2001 curriculum onwards were extra, recommended readings which dealt with defining heritage and history and the relationship between them. These were:

K Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and heritage in the post-modern world*, (London: Routledge, 1992), especially chapters 4 and 5.

R Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, (London: Verso, 1994), especially pp 259-73 and 288-312

‘History/Heritage’, Mailbase United Kingdom, Internet discussion list, June 1997- October 1997 (<http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists/history-heritage>).

⁵⁷ Introduction, Core course, session one, 2009, Course Reader, APMHS collections, CHR archives.

⁵⁸ See B. Graham and P. Howard (eds.) *Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, 2.

heritage as ‘a nation’s or people’s resources’.⁵⁹ The theoretical challenge to these notions of heritage relied on Graeme Davison, who, from an Australian perspective, traced the history of the concept and argued that ‘heritage’, both as a concept and as a practice, is essentially a constructed, cultural, political idea.⁶⁰ This debate also draws on Ashworth and Tunbridge’s notion of heritage as ‘a created phenomenon continuously created anew according to changing attitudes and demands’,⁶¹ ‘to try and understand these different meanings attached to heritage and discuss which might be most appropriate in terms of an approach to heritage studies’.⁶²

The first notion of heritage debated in the curriculum was an excerpt from the Report of the Arts and Culture Task Group, presented to the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology in June 1995. In the excerpt, which focused on ‘definition and description’, the report introduced the notion of heritage as ‘that which we inherit, which is a powerful agent for cultural identity, reconciliation and nation building’.⁶³ This assumed heritage, which ‘we inherit as agents for identity and nation-building’, which the report specifically stated refers to ‘cultural heritage, including the landscape we live in’,⁶⁴ was defined as the ‘sum total of wildlife and scenic parks, sites of scientific or historical importance, national monuments, historic buildings, works of art, literature and music, oral traditions and museum collections’.⁶⁵ The report further identified what it referred to as four major disciplines of heritage: ‘(1) living culture, which is the wealth of untapped information in our oral traditions; (2) archives which conserve and interpret

⁵⁹ Introduction, Core course, session one, 2009, Course reader, APMHS collections, CHR archives

⁶⁰ G Davison, “The meanings of ‘heritage’” in G Davison and C McConville (eds.), *A Heritage Handbook*, (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1991), 121, third Prescribed reading for Heritage as a Product, 1999 Core Outline, Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies, Leslie Witz private collections.

⁶¹ Introduction, Core course, session one, 2009, Course reader, APMHS collections, CHR archives.

⁶² Introduction, Core course, session one, 2009, Course reader, APMHS collections, CHR archives.

⁶³ ACTAG Report, 55.

⁶⁴ ACTAG Report, 55.

⁶⁵ ACTAG Report, 55.

documents; (3) museums which conserve objects; and (4) heritage resources which are the present concern of the National Monuments Council and its former homeland equivalent'.⁶⁶

While the focus on ACTAG reflected the South African debate on the meanings of heritage, the next part of the session was an attempt to locate this notion of heritage in the discourse of dominant notions of heritage on the African continent, through setting a conference paper by George Abungu as a prescribed reading for the session. This is an excerpt from 'Heritage, Community and the State in the 90s: Experiences from Africa', presented at 'The Future of the Past' Conference, held at UWC from 10 to 12 July 1996, at the height of the critical debate on the meaning of heritage in the context of calls for transformation in the heritage sector in South Africa. George Abungu is an archaeologist by training, and the ex-Director of the National Museum of Kenya; and a leading expert on conservation management training in Africa.⁶⁷ In his paper, which has remained prescribed reading for the session through the years under analysis, he defined African heritage as follows:

A nation's or people's resources – both natural and cultural – can be classified as heritage. Cultural heritage can take the form of either tangible or intangible resources ... cultural heritage in Africa includes sites, architecture, remains of cultural, historical, religious, archaeological or aesthetic value, as well as song, dance, music, language, dress, food and religion.⁶⁸

One of the criticisms of this idea of heritage is that apart from its notion of African heritage as traditional, pre-colonial essence destroyed by colonialism, it revealed little cognisance of the constructiveness of heritage as a resource. This perspective took the notion of heritage as given, and did not fully explore the cultural, political process of this construction, beyond criticism of

⁶⁶ ACTAG Report, 56.

⁶⁷ George Abungu is engaged with in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

⁶⁸ Abungu, 'Heritage, Community and the State', 1.

the generally negative colonial impact on a supposedly inherited pre-colonial traditional culture as heritage resources. The approach to heritage studies dictated by this notion of heritage implied a focus on the acquisition of conservation, preservation and presentation skills on the uses of these resources, with the objective of achieving recognition for this neglected heritage through increased representation on UNESCO's world heritage list.

Notwithstanding criticism of the notions of heritage and the approach to heritage studies it implied, engagement with both ACTAG's and Abungu's projected notions of heritage revealed not only the notions of heritage of which the APMHS is critical, but also its points of criticism. They were also instructive in revealing the notions of heritage studies that the APMHS projects, and its limitations for heritage studies from the Africanist turn perspective, discussed later in the chapter. The critical point of the session is the challenge to the approach to heritage studies implied in the notion of heritage as neutral, automatic, inherited resources projected by the Abungu and the ACTAG perspectives. This point unfolded in the next prescribed reading, which challenged and rejected the approach to heritage studies implied in the notion of heritage as a given and natural occurring phenomenon and resources. This is argued to lack a critical interrogation of either the origin or the meaning of the concept; or contestation over its practices, especially given the inherent cultural politics it entails.

Heritage as a Product

The next prescribed reading for the session – 'The Meanings of Heritage',⁶⁹ by G Davison – not only traces the intellectual history of the concept of heritage, but critically challenges the notion

⁶⁹ Davison, 'The meanings of 'heritage' - the third Prescribed reading for Heritage as a Product, 1999 Core Outline, Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies [Leslie Witz private collections]

of heritage as an automatically occurring resource or phenomenon by revealing the history of its intellectual and socio-cultural political construction as both a concept and as a set of practices. The text debunks the notion of heritage as a naturally occurring phenomenon by tracing the origin of uses of the concept, from its initial common use to depict material property. To its banal use in denoting any commodity that purports to produce nostalgic ‘past-ness’, to the use of the term as an intellectual inheritance and its use to denote the natural environment. Davison highlighted its more serious use in the notion of national heritage as ‘collections of folkways and political ideas that define national identities’.⁷⁰

In a direct challenge to the notion of heritage as automatic inherited resources, Davison suggests that heritage, rather than being something naturally occurring that we must preserve or save, is instead something that we create and build.⁷¹ While Abungu seemed to have no problem with UNESCO’s notion of heritage in Africa, as seen in his (justified) argument that ‘the non-recognition of the continent’s rich heritage is well documented’.⁷² Davison was cynical of the role of UNESCO in projecting a notion of heritage that eventually determined the notion of heritage as applied not only in the Australian context, but also globally. According to Davison, UNESCO’s adoption of the term ‘heritage’ as ‘shorthand for both built and natural remnants of the past’⁷³ was crucial for the acceptance of the concept. Davison therefore recognised the deeply contested terrain of the meaning of heritage in postcolonial societies, and the challenges to notions of heritage of UNESCO and affiliated bodies in professionalising heritage through its emphasis on objectification and systematisation of heritages. He argued that ‘though most

⁷⁰ Davison, ‘The meanings of ‘heritage’, 116.

⁷¹ Davison, ‘The meanings of ‘heritage’, 117.

⁷² See Abungu, ‘Heritage, Community and the State’, 18.

⁷³ Davison, ‘The meanings of ‘heritage’’, 113.

heritage listing invokes the language of democracy and aspires to some kind of representativeness, the elitist values of the heritage consultant show through⁷⁴ in the definition of what is and what is not heritage.

Construction of Heritage

This notion of heritage as a process of conscious, present-centred construction through the activities of agents operating in a socio-cultural political context was the focus of the debate in the next prescribed reading. The reading – the first chapter in the book *Dissonant Heritage*, by Tunbridge and Ashworth – argued for the intrinsic dissonance of heritage as both an idea and praxis. It traced the changing meanings of heritage, and argued that ‘there are intrinsic dangers in the rapidly extending and stretching use of the word which leads to loss of precision’ and ‘conceal[s] and magnifies problems intrinsic to the creation and management of heritage’.⁷⁵ Signposting the distinction between history and heritage (a topic that was the focus of the next session), the text challenges the notion of heritage as automatic inherited resources by introducing the notion of heritage as a ‘product of the present, purposefully developed in response to current needs or demands for it, and shaped by those requirements’.⁷⁶

In applying a mechanistic, industrial analogy of commodification to the notion of heritage as a process of production, the text showed how the activities of agents in selection and targeting through interpretation produced heritage resources.⁷⁷ This notion of heritage is especially important in challenging the ACTAG and Abungu notions of heritage as automatic occurring

⁷⁴ Davison, ‘The meanings of ‘heritage’, 125-126.

⁷⁵ Tunbridge and Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, 3.

⁷⁶ Tunbridge and Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, 6.

⁷⁷ Tunbridge and Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, 6.

resources, because it shows that while the resources of the past (in its varied forms) might be automatically occurring and existing, they are not in themselves heritage; rather, at best, raw materials from which to produce heritages. According to Tunbridge and Ashworth:

The resource base from which heritage is assembled is a wide and varied mixture of past events, personalities, folk memories, mythologies, literary associations, surviving physical relics; together with places, whether sites, towns, or landscapes with which they are symbolically associated. These are raw materials which form a quarry of possibilities from which the selection [of heritage] occurs.⁷⁸

The process of heritage production through interpretative selection, as articulated in the text, reveals the notion of heritage as a culturally constructed concept exclusive to a specific legatee.⁷⁹

The notion of heritage revealed in this conceptual distinction between heritage construed as automatic inherited artefacts of the past and as raw material of the process of production, and the produced resources of specific, culturally constructed legatees, is crucial for the approach to heritage studies it implied. If heritage is construed as the automatic, almost naturally occurring resources of the past, the implication for heritage studies is merely that they should take an antiquarian approach. However, for heritage as a process of production of exclusive legatees using cultural inherited resources as its raw materials, the focus of heritage studies will not only be the questioning of the criteria for identifying and selecting interpretations of these raw materials, but also the interrogation of the politics of its production processes and of the actual end-product. The critique of this approach to heritage studies, as a critical study of the process of cultural, political construction of identity to demarcate socio-political and spatial temporalities, informed the subsequent sessions of the curriculum.

⁷⁸ Tunbridge and Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, 7.

⁷⁹ Tunbridge and Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, 8.

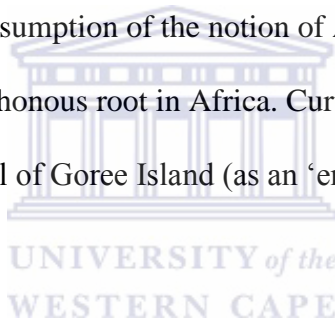
History and Heritage, Heritage as History

The importance of the location of the APMHS in the history department rather than in the departments of archaeology, anthropology or cultural studies (or even environmental studies), as is the norm in similar programmes worldwide, was reflected in the next session, titled ‘History and heritage: rivals or partners’. The session started with a discussion of the distinction between history and heritage and heritage as history, and importantly, revealed the notion of critical heritage studies encapsulated in the APMHS. The session not only identified the different connotations of the concepts and practice of heritage studies as it relates to the academic discipline of history; it also engaged and interrogated the underlying theoretical assumptions of the notion of heritage as a genre of knowledge production of the past, different from and challenging the basic assumptions of history.

The reading preparation prescribed for the session started with an internet debate prompted by Phillip Curtin’s writing on the historical significance of Goree Island to the transatlantic slave trade, given its acceptance as heritage (as discussed in Chapter Four). I will focus briefly on the debate in order to identify the notions of heritage it revealed, since it is the notion of heritage that it revealed distinct to that of history that is crucial for this analysis. More importantly, I have chosen to focus on the reading by Samuel, because as can be seen in both the Jane Carruthers and David Lowenthal texts prescribed for the session and the responses to them, Samuel remains a key referent in the debates.

The Curtin debate revealed three notions of heritage, two of which are worth mentioning for their importance in relation to the notion of heritage and the construction of identity, before focusing

on the third notion of heritage, in relation to history, which was the focus of the debate. A notion of heritage as ‘tradition’ was revealed in the editor’s introduction to the debate, which explained that Curtin ‘raise[d] important issues for historians and humanities concerned with Africa’, because ‘not only is there the issue of the creation of tradition, but also the purpose of and motives for such creation’.⁸⁰ The equating of heritage in Africa with ‘tradition’, similar to the ACTAG report and Abungu notions of heritage in Africa, revealed the prevalent, underlying assumption of the notion of heritage in Africa as traditional pre-modern. In addition, the notion of heritage as ancestral roots was also revealed in the beginning of Phillip Curtin’s contribution,⁸¹ which presumes a notion of heritage defined by genealogical roots in temporal spaces – which is the underlying assumption of the notion of African heritage as automatic inheritance, by virtue of its autochthonous root in Africa. Curtin also revealed the notion of museum as heritage in his dismissal of Goree Island (as an ‘emotional’ museum, as compared to a ‘serious’ museum).⁸²



Significantly, in relation to the question of this chapter, the approach of critical heritage studies encapsulated in the APMHS started to unfold in the main debate on the value of empirical historical methodology in the construction of heritage as knowledge and practice. In providing a clear example of what distinguishes history from heritage studies, the debate introduced the

⁸⁰ Editor’s note, Goree and the Atlantic Slave Trade, H-Africa discussion, 31 July - 30 August 1995 (h-net2.msu.edu-africa.threads.goree.html)

⁸¹ P. Curtin opening comment - Goree and the Atlantic Slave Trade, H-Africa discussion, 31 July - 30 August 1995 (h-net2.msu.edu-africa.threads.goree.html) in 2007 Core Course Outline First Semester, Issues in Museum and Heritage Studies [Leslie Witz private collections].

⁸² **The museum as heritage.**

Some issues to be considered: How meanings are attached to objects. Stuart Hall has argued that ‘a museum does not deal solely with objects, but more importantly, with ... ideas - notions of what the world is or should be. Museums do not simply issue objective descriptions... They generate representations and attribute value and meaning in line with certain perspectives or classificatory schemes which are historically specific. They do not so much reflect the world through objects as use them to mobilise representations of the world past and present’. What does Hall mean by this? – 2007 Course Outline, First Semester – Witz private Collections, CHR archives, UWC.

notion of heritage studies as a critical field of study, with its own paradigm and methodologies. This approach – of heritage studies as epistemology, with its own paradigm of knowledge construction – challenged the authority of history as relying on empirical, verifiable archival sources, while heritage is a product of ideological consciousness and cultural, political expediencies.

Rejection of this approach to heritage studies – as a critical discipline, with its own paradigm and methodologies – was apparent in the responses to Jane Carruthers' scathing criticism of the collusion of academic historians in the budding heritage fad in South Africa in the next prescribed reading for the session.⁸³ In accordance with her remarks on Johan Marnitz's distorted Afrikaner heritage presentation (as 'incorrect, biased, in fact totally ahistorical'), Carruthers argued that 'heritage is problematic and it poses a distinct theoretical challenge to the discipline of history' which should be avoided rather than embraced by academic historians because of its lack of methodological historical rigour.⁸⁴ Though not included in the readings, Carruthers' comments generated many responses; Peter Limb, for instance, a librarian, argued (in support) that while heritage is not evil, it certainly is distinct from history.⁸⁵

The defence of the notion of heritage as a terrain of knowledge production, with its own epistemology and methodological paradigm was the basis of the response by Ciraj Rassool to Carruthers' attack on academic historians' dubious engagement with heritage. While the paper in which this response was not added initially to the prescribed readings, it is essential to this analysis, because it clearly revealed the notions of heritage and critical heritage operative in the

⁸³ J Carruthers, "Heritage and History", H-Africa, Africa Forum 2, 20 October 1998.

⁸⁴ Carruthers, "Heritage and History".

⁸⁵ P. Limb, H-Africa@H-net.msu.edu, 28/10/1988, Leslie Witz private collections.

APMHS curriculum. Rassool (in response to Carruthers) argued that rather than avoiding heritage, historians should in fact embrace it; because, according to him ‘the domain of heritage and public history requires serious examination’, since it is in this domain that post-apartheid South African identities are been fashioned and contested.⁸⁶ Here, Rassool introduced the notion of heritage as public historical terrain of identity contestations, and argued that historians ‘who have chosen to regard heritage as an inferior domain’ are lagging behind fundamental changes in their field.⁸⁷ This, he argued, was because new ways of thinking about the past and history are emerging that are challenging the hegemony of academic historical methodologies and authority in the production of knowledge of the past.⁸⁸

Rassool projected a notion of heritage studies as ‘an assemblage of arena and activities of history making that is as disputatious as the claims and character of academic history’.⁸⁹ To challenge the hegemonic modernist hierarchical paradigm of historical knowledge production, Rassool argued for a radical rethink of history as a ‘higher activity of systematic research’, as opposed to heritage as ‘a type or genre of history produced by non-academics as innately subordinate to academic history in a hierarchal schema’.⁹⁰ This, he argued, was because critical heritage studies offer the potential for the ‘fundamental reconstitution of the discipline of History’. According to him, ‘professional historians, long used to a world of words – written and spoken – are being confronted with visual histories, whose code and conventions they are ill-equipped to read’.⁹¹

Rassool’s perspective here revealed how the notion of heritage studies as a critical discursive

⁸⁶ Rassool ‘The Rise of Heritage’, 1.

⁸⁷ Rassool ‘The Rise of Heritage’, 23

⁸⁸ Rassool ‘The Rise of Heritage’, 23

⁸⁹ Rassool ‘The Rise of Heritage’, 5.

⁹⁰ Rassool ‘The Rise of Heritage’, 5.

⁹¹ Rassool ‘The Rise of Heritage’, 6.

terrain of knowledge production, challenging the hegemony of academic history in the contest of knowledge production of the past, unfolds in the curriculum of the APMHS. This is traceable to the inclusion of Lowenthal – who Rassool dismissed, along with Carruthers, as a heritage sceptic.⁹²

The inclusion of Lowenthal, a declared heritage sceptic, in the prescribed texts for the session reflected the dialectical pedagogy of the curriculum. Lowenthal's text came after the text by Carruthers and was followed immediately by the text of Raphael Samuel, an advocate of heritage as a critical praxis, showing that Lowenthal's arguments were built into the debate only to be pulled down. In the reading chosen for the session, which, is a chapter from his book *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. Lowenthal used the example of the Barbuda slave-breeding myth to show, how 'heritage can endure even when exposed as historically false', and argued that 'heritage the world over not only tolerates but thrives on and even requires historical errors'.⁹³ Lowenthal, like Carruthers, therefore rejected the notion of heritage as a source of knowledge of the past as a fraud, and warned historians of its conterminous dangers – not only for academic historical methodology, but also for its socio-cultural political implications.⁹⁴

In Defence of Heritage

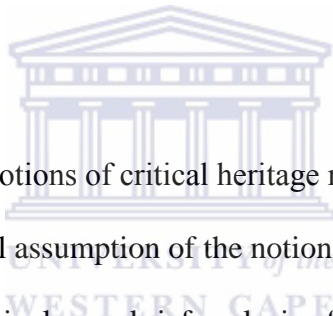
The defence against the disparaging views of heritage presented in the debate, of the relationship of the discipline of history to the proliferation of engaging meaning and a practice, being

⁹² Rassool 'The Rise of Heritage', 6.

⁹³ Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade*, 132.

⁹⁴ 'Heritage has been described as state-sanctioned nationalist rhetoric, and heritage studies as its uncritical voice', according to Minkley et al 2010; a position which echoes Patrick Wright's attack on the notion of heritage in the British debate as nationalist nostalgia of the imperial empire; see P. Wright, *On Living in an old Country again*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

designated heritage, was argued in Raphael Samuel's *Theatres of Memory* prescribed for the session. Iain J. M. Robertson provided a background to the British heritage debate contained in the reading by Samuel. According to Robertson, the heritage debate had polarised audiences into heritage believers and heritage sceptics. On the sceptic pole he positioned Robert Hawison,⁹⁵ David Lowenthal⁹⁶ and Patrick Wright⁹⁷ as representing a notion that 'sees heritage as an essentially conservative and nostalgia project' caught in an illusory 'romanticised and idealised view of the past which is deployed to reinforce old certainties at a time of significant change'.⁹⁸ On the optimist side, Raphael Samuel is positioned as champion of those who 'recognise a more democratic form of heritage, where heritage is seen to emphasise the 'little platoons' rather than 'great society''.⁹⁹



Given the crucial influence of the notions of critical heritage revealed in Samuel's text in unfolding the underlying theoretical assumption of the notion of heritage and the approach to heritage studies in the APMHS curriculum, a brief analysis of the prescribed chapters in *Theatres of Memory* is pertinent. The influence of Samuel's reading on the notion of heritage in the curriculum is especially apparent in the concordance of the notions of heritage revealed in both Witz and Rassool's¹⁰⁰ response to Jane Carruthers and in the response of Samuel to what he called 'the heritage baiter' in the British debate.

⁹⁵ See R. Hawison, *The heritage Industry*.

⁹⁶ See Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade*.

⁹⁷ See P. Wright, *On Living in an old Country*.

⁹⁸ I. J.M. Robertson, Heritage from below: Class, Social Protest and Resistance in B. Graham and P. Howard (eds.), *Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, 143.

⁹⁹ J.M. Robertson, 'Heritage from below: Class, Social Protest and Resistance', 143.

¹⁰⁰ See Rassool 'The Rise of Heritage', see also Witz and Cornell, 'From Robben Island to Makapan's Cave'

Raphael Samuel was very critical of those he saw as ‘heritage baiters’, accusing them of ‘reifying professional historical narration as an objective practice that recounted a ‘real’ past, and being hypocritical in their description of the heritage industry’.¹⁰¹ He traced the debates between history and heritage to the ‘‘legacy of Romanticism’ of the demarcation between memory and history. Where memory was regarded as ‘primitive and instinctual’ and history as conscious; where ‘memory comes naturally to the mind, while history is a product of analysis and reflection, and memory was regarded as subjective and history objective with history beginning where memory ends through the historical power of abstract reason and empirical proof’.¹⁰² He rejected the artificial dichotomy between history and memory/heritage and argued that ‘memory’, rather than being merely a passive receptacle or storage system, an image bank of the past, is rather an active, shaping force that is dynamic. What it contrives symptomatically to forget is as important as what it remembers – and that is that ‘it is dialectically related to historical thought, rather than being some kind of negative ‘other’ to it’.¹⁰³ He therefore argued that ‘memory like heritage is a way of constructing knowledge after its own fashion’.¹⁰⁴

Raphael Samuel was especially critical of the academic historical discipline, accusing it of nothing less than being an appendage of power through incestuous inbreeding sectarianism that encourages autarchic tendencies of ‘a very hierarchical view of the constitution of knowledge’.¹⁰⁵ This hierarchical view, according to Samuel, fetishises the act of archival-based research, while denigrating other methods of engagement with the past. For example, the

¹⁰¹ D. C. Harvey, ‘Heritage pasts and heritage present’, 327.

¹⁰² R. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, x.

¹⁰³ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* x.

¹⁰⁴ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* x.

¹⁰⁵ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 4.

‘Antiquarians’ – pioneers of record-based research – are denigrated by the use of a pejorative term;¹⁰⁶ local historians are denigrated as having a myopic, parochial outlook. In addition, Samuel dismisses oral history ‘as being nothing more than naïve empiricism in which facts are supposed to speak for themselves’,¹⁰⁷ and the oral tradition is ‘history’s netherworld, where memory and myth intermingle, and the imaginary rubs shoulder with the real’.¹⁰⁸ He equated oral history with the practice of memory ‘as an intellectual labour or conscious act of recollection which is historically and culturally conditioned’,¹⁰⁹ and ‘popular memory’ can be regarded as the antithesis of written history.

Samuel traced the complex semantics of heritage to its ‘lexicability’, or ability to accommodate complex (and often divergent), ever-changing meanings within and between spaces and temporalities. Its definition has evolved from the archaic ‘God, King and the Law, the altar and the throne’¹¹⁰ to its connotation as ‘the principal element in conveying tradition from generation to generation’¹¹¹ to its connotation as an ‘as an alternative to tradition’, and as ‘a vernacular, indigenous force, the natural heir to centuries of struggle’.¹¹² In addition, Samuel mentions its ‘radical-patriotic version’¹¹³ and its use as a metaphor for denoting the ‘environments and unspoilt countryside and wildlife and nature reserves and landscapes’.¹¹⁴ Aesthetically, he argued that as with history, ‘heritage is a hybrid, reflecting, or taking part in, style wars, and registering

¹⁰⁶ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 4.

¹⁰⁷ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 4.

¹⁰⁸ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 6.

¹⁰⁹ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 6.

¹¹⁰ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 205.

¹¹¹ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 205.

¹¹² Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 207.

¹¹³ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 208.

¹¹⁴ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 209.

changes in public taste’,¹¹⁵ especially in its ‘association with corporate image-making’.¹¹⁶ Other uses he mentions include its use as a propaganda tool to promote an illusory ‘Britishness’ during and after the 1939-45 European war¹¹⁷ – to ‘today by contrast, where the past is seen not as a prelude to the present but as an alternative to it’.¹¹⁸ Samuel argues, thus, that ‘a genealogy of heritage might try to connect nature conservancy with the idea of preservation in the built environment’,¹¹⁹ to the ‘birth of the oral history movement’,¹²⁰ and the ‘back to nature movements’,¹²¹ which – rather than being the preserve of a minority – is a ‘cultural capital on which all were invited to draw’.¹²²

Engaging with the intrinsic paradox of heritage as both a constraining/conservative process and a radical/progressive, emancipatory process, which processes are ‘historically symbiotic, complementary at the same time, or even two sides of the same coin, each testifying to a felt absence in the present’,¹²³ Samuel responded to:

- (1) Patrick Wright’s attack on heritage movement as ‘reactionary chic representing the triumph of aristocratic and reactionary nostalgia and part of the self-fulfilling culture of national decline’,¹²⁴
- (2) Robert Hewison’s rejection of heritage as an ‘aristocratic plot signalling the end of history’,¹²⁵
- (3) Charges of heritage being part of the grand capitalist conspiracy that opiates the society through ‘a complex and purposefully selective process of historical

¹¹⁵ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 211.

¹¹⁶ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*.214.

¹¹⁷ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 218.

¹¹⁸ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 221.

¹¹⁹ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 228.

¹²⁰ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 235.

¹²¹ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 237.

¹²² Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 238.

¹²³ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 294.

¹²⁴ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 242.

¹²⁵ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 242.

recollection' as 'a bid for hegemony, a way of using knowledge in the service of power'.¹²⁶

In addition, Samuel argued that the connotation of heritage as the 'blessed' right of specific individuals, lineages, and stock locally was linked to the racialised discourse of global British imperialism.¹²⁷ He showed how, chronologically and sociologically, 'the rise of the heritage industry, far from heralding an epoch of feudal reaction, coincides, rather, in Britain as in other European countries, with political de-alignment and a collapse of the two-camp class divide'¹²⁸ in politics. This, he argued, had the 'significant consequence of broadening what had hitherto been understood as heritage to a more pluralist and radically different version from the previous hegemonic version of heritage. Samuel defended heritage from attack from the left, who trivialise heritage as nothing more than capitalist commodification of the past for tourist consumption. And from the right, who argue that by presenting 'Disney-fields' of the past, heritage blurs the line between entertainment and education'.¹²⁹ In addition to its outright dismissal as a 'fraud'¹³⁰ by Neal Ascherson. Samuel exposed the irony that 'though the denigration of heritage is voiced in the name of radical politics, it is pedagogically quite conservative, and echoes some of the right-wing jeremiads directed against new history in the schools',¹³¹ and commented that the masses, if left to their own devices, are 'moronic; their pleasures are unthinking; their taste, cheapo and nasty'.¹³²

¹²⁶ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 243.

¹²⁷ Raphael Samuel quoted in Littler, Jo and Roshi Naidoo, eds. *The Politics of Heritage: The legacies of 'Race'* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 3.

¹²⁸ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 246.

¹²⁹ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 260.

¹³⁰ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 242.

¹³¹ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 245.

¹³² Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 247.

Therefore, for Samuel, ‘far from heritage being the medium through which conservative version of the national past becomes hegemonic. One could see its advent [not only] as part of a sea-change in attitude which has left any unified view of the national past – liberal, radical, or conservative – in tatters’,¹³³ but as a continuation of its history in preservation which ‘owes its origin as much to the Left as to the Right’.¹³⁴

Instead of disparaging heritage, said Samuel, historians should consider those areas or practices where ‘heritage has the edge on archive-based scholarship and research’.¹³⁵ He specifically mentioned visual awareness and oral history as areas of heritage that cast into question the narrow preoccupation with the written word as a form of historical knowledge construction. Samuel argued that ‘heritage, if we adopted some of its procedures, could begin to educate us in the language of looks, initiate us into the study of colour coding and force us to become our own picture researcher’.¹³⁶ And, importantly, he argued for the appreciation of heritage based on its immense contribution in the creation of the space of public history,¹³⁷ and also the history of the environment, where heritage studies seems to be uniting natural history with archaeological inquiry.¹³⁸ He also captured the contemporary, ‘next-to-nothing’ significance of heritage when he suggested that ‘heritage, in short, far from being a stationary state, is continually shedding its old character and metamorphosing into something else’,¹³⁹ and added that:

Heritage is in fact one of the few areas of national life in which it is possible to invoke an idea of the common good without provoking suspicion of party interest, and it is one of

¹³³ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 281.

¹³⁴ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 288.

¹³⁵ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 274.

¹³⁶ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 246

¹³⁷ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 278

¹³⁸ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 277

¹³⁹ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 303

the few areas where notions of ancestry and posterity can be invoked without embarrassment or bad faith.¹⁴⁰

Samuel was also to be found lurking in the background of Witz and Rassool's responses to Carruthers;¹⁴¹ he rejected the artificial dichotomy of history and memory/heritage, and argued that memory, rather than being merely a passive receptacle or storage system, an image bank of the past, is in fact an active, shaping force that is dynamic.¹⁴² This argument, the notion of heritage as a way of 'constructing knowledge after its own fashion'¹⁴³ can be seen echoed in Witz and Rassool's notions of heritage as a terrain of knowledge construction within its own distinct paradigm.¹⁴⁴

Samuel's challenge to the academic historical discipline was also echoed in Witz and Rassool's response to Carruthers' warning to historians to avoid the murky world of heritage, especially Rassool's argument on the methodological advantages of heritage over academic history in its introduction of visual text as historical narrative.¹⁴⁵ Rassool's emphasis on the recognition of visual images as historical text echoes Samuel's specific mention of visual awareness and oral history as areas of heritage that question the narrow preoccupation with the written word as a form of authority on historical knowledge construction.¹⁴⁶

Most important is the influence of Samuel's notion of heritage as public history on the APMHS, reflected in Witz and Rassool's promotion of heritage and rejection of the notion of heritage as

¹⁴⁰ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory* 292

¹⁴¹ Both of them described Carruthers views as 'heritage baiting' – see Rassool 'The Rise of Heritage and the reconstitution of History in South Africa', see also Witz and Cornell, 'From Robben Island to Makapan's Cave'.

¹⁴² Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, x.

¹⁴³ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, x.

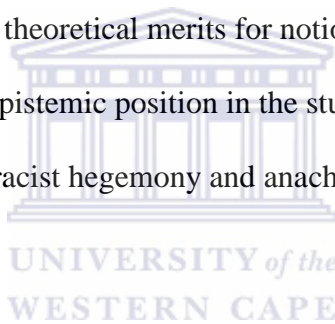
¹⁴⁴ See Rassool 'The Rise of Heritage' and Witz and Cornell, 'From Robben Island to Makapan's Cave'.

¹⁴⁵ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 274.

¹⁴⁶ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 278.

an automatic, naturally occurring phenomenon. This is especially apparent in the projection of heritage as a terrain for the contestation of hegemonic representation of the past with academic history, rather than as automatic inheritance or an illusion imposed by power on an unthinking public.

However, this perspective is argued to be critically limiting for a notion of heritage that is both African and critical, for a host of reasons. The limitation of Samuel's notion of heritage as public history is in its neglect of a critical engagement with race as a dynamic in the idea of heritage, and its non-engagement with the idea and practice of heritage as it relates specifically to Africa. These two factors, I argue, limit its theoretical merits for notions of heritage construed as African, in term of its ideological epistemic position in the study of Africa, and critical in terms of its methodological challenge to racist hegemony and anachronistic attachment to essentialised African traditions as heritage.



A scholar who has taken the British heritage debate to task by engaging with its lack of attention to racism in the British heritage debate is Jo Littler.¹⁴⁷ Given its intellectual history and sociology of knowledge, the APMHS clearly espouses anti-racist practice. Its origin in the anti-apartheid struggle and emphasis on heritage transformation in South Africa in the context of the racism of the pre-1994 notion of heritage and heritage representation is one of its distinctive ideological credentials, as can be seen for instance in its session on the Diorama. The racism implicit in colonial museum ethnographic representations was addressed extensively in this session, which

¹⁴⁷ See J. Littler, 'Heritage and Race' in *Ashgate Research Companion*, (England: Ashgate, 2008) and *The Politics of Heritage and the Legacies of Race*, (London: Routledge, 2005)

showed critical engagement with racism in heritage as central to the curriculum.¹⁴⁸ Therefore, while, Samuel's notion of heritage carried with it the legacy of the intrinsic racism of the British notion of heritage, the mere existence of the APMHS is a challenge to this legacy. Furthermore, notwithstanding the legacy of implicit racism of the notion of heritage in the British debate, as argued by Littler, the APMHS escapes this racist legacy by virtue of its organic origin in the anti-racist discourse of the anti-apartheid intellectual history and sociology of knowledge.

Critical Public History

The challenge to the notion of heritage as public history due to its racism, derived from the British heritage debate, is preaching to the converted by the APMHS, given the intellectual history and sociology of knowledge of the programme. Laurajane Smith offered a connection between the critiques of the concept of heritage as masculine and the notion of its intrinsic gendered intangibility to expose further limitations to the notion of heritage as reflected in the British debate. According to Smith, heritage studies are at 'remedial stage of feminist and/or gender awareness',¹⁴⁹ because 'heritage is 'masculine' and tells a predominantly male-centred story, promoting a masculine, and in particular, an elite-Anglo-masculine vision of the past and present'.¹⁵⁰ This, she argued, was because the 'way heritage is defined, understood and talked about reproduces and legitimises gender identities and the social value that underpinned them'.¹⁵¹

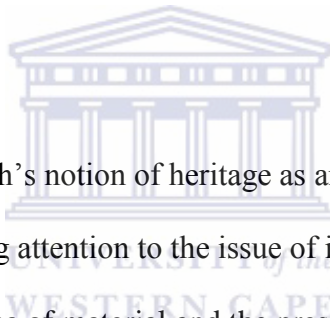
¹⁴⁸ The Bushman Diorama: A history, Second session of the Second semester, 2007.

¹⁴⁹ L. Smith and N. Natsuko (eds.), *Intangible Heritage*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2009). Smith used the example of how the commemoration of African-American women's lives in Los Angeles, and the Waanyi Women History Project of Northern Queensland, Australia, challenged not only assumptions of women's place in heritage, but also how both 'the nature and the fact of the permanence and visibility of andocentric nature of heritage show how commemorative spaces can be made and used, despite the absence of surviving built heritage'

¹⁵⁰ L. Smith, Heritage, Gender and Identity in Brian Graham and Peter Howard (eds.) *Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, 159.

¹⁵¹ Smith, 'Heritage, Gender and Identity', 161.

According to Smith, the 1972 World Heritage Convention, which embodied a ‘particular understanding and conceptualisation of the nature of cultural heritage’,¹⁵² is definitive of the notion of national and international heritage. She argued that the ‘Western Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) that defines heritage as material (tangible), monumental, grand, good, aesthetic and of universal value dominates, if not underwrites, much of UNESCO’S heritage policy’.¹⁵³ According to Smith the idea of heritage as intangible, as codified in the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention ICHC 2003, ‘challenges the AHD both at a practical and [at a] philosophical level’,¹⁵⁴ because it recognised that ‘heritage only becomes ‘heritage’ when it is recognisable within a particular set of cultural or social values, which are themselves intangible’.¹⁵⁵



The significance of Luarajane Smith’s notion of heritage as an intangible cultural process of making meaning, is that in ‘drawing attention to the issue of intangibility, and in challenging the emphasis placed on the Western idea of material and the preservationist desire to freeze the moment of heritage and to conserve’.¹⁵⁶ She exposes and calls attention to the often unstated and under-studied underlying Western ideological assumption inherent in the notion and process of heritage in all its dissonant ramifications. This notion of the inherent intangibility of all heritages as an approach to critical heritage is of fundamental importance to this chapter, because how the implications of Smith’s notion of heritage as intangible for critical heritage studies was challenged by Minkley, Rassool and Witz reveals the specific critical notion of heritage and approach to heritage studies employed by the APMHS.

¹⁵² L. Smith and N. Natsuko (eds.), *Intangible Heritage*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), 1.

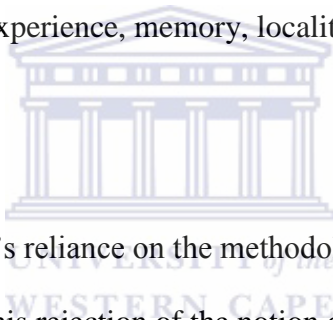
¹⁵³ Smith and Natsuko (eds.), *Intangible Heritage*, 3.

¹⁵⁴ Smith and Natsuko (eds.), *Intangible Heritage*, 3

¹⁵⁵ Smith and Natsuko (eds.), *Intangible Heritage*, 6.

¹⁵⁶ Smith, ‘Heritage, Gender and Identity’, 162.

Despite accepting the merits of Smith's 'intangibility' notions of heritage, as representing a subversive departure to the hegemonic notion of heritage, Gary Minkley, Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz¹⁵⁷ took issue with Smith in a critique of the South African heritage complex. They concluded that the critical notion of heritage as intangible, as promoted by Smith, 'reproduces the logic of what it seeks to criticise',¹⁵⁸ because Smith's over-reliance on the role of expertise in legitimising heritage limits her approach to critical heritage studies.¹⁵⁹ According to them, 'there is a profound sense' that the notion of heritage in the 'new heritage studies' articulated by Smith, 'continues to work with a sense of disciplinary hierarchies',¹⁶⁰ where the disciplinary practices and methodologies of history, anthropology, cultural studies, and anthropology and architecture can translate agency, experience, memory, locality, and performance in and of community into heritage.¹⁶¹



Minkley et al thus challenge Smith's reliance on the methodologies of social history to situate critical heritage studies.¹⁶² It is in this rejection of the notion of critical heritage studies suggested by Smith as 'social history of a particular critical type' that the distinctive notion of critical heritage studies employed by the APMHS unfolded. According to Minkley et al., the limitation of Smith and much of critical heritage studies is that they 'operate from the site of the academy or the professionals, where there is no appreciation, or even engagement of the public sphere, or of contested and constituted and re-constituting publics'.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷ Minkley, Witz and Rassool, 'South Africa and the Spectacle of Public Pasts', Paper presented at the Heritage Disciplines Symposium, UWC, 8-9 October 2009, also see Witz and Rassool, 'Making histories'.

¹⁵⁸ Minkley, Witz and Rassool, 'South Africa and the Spectacle of Public Pasts'.

¹⁵⁹ Minkley, Witz and Rassool,, 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts', 13.

¹⁶⁰ Minkley, Witz and Rassool,, 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts'

¹⁶¹ Minkley, Witz and Rassool, 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts'

¹⁶² Minkley, Witz and Rassool,, 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts', 14.

¹⁶³ Minkley, Witz and Rassool, 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts', 15.

As shown in the arguments for the rejection of Smith's notion of critical heritage studies, the relationships between the academy and the public in historical knowledge production that distinguishes the notion of heritage studies used by the APMHS from the social history notion of heritage studies projected by Smith. For Minkley et al, the notion of heritage studies, as popularisation of 'history from below', which the social history approach suggested by Smith implies, maintains rather than challenges the 'hierarchies of knowledge' in historical knowledge production.¹⁶⁴ Correlating this notion of social history with the notion of popular history in South Africa and the American perspective of public history,¹⁶⁵ in order to capture the notion of public history in the APMHS, Minkley et al stated that their specific perspective on public history:

Is to question prevailing and dominant understanding of the past, in either the academy or the public domain ... we are concerned to show how the visualisation of pastness (something academic historians attempt to do through the written narrative) generates, in different ways and on several fronts, precisely what a history is about.¹⁶⁶

This approach to heritage studies, maintains the relationship between the academy and the public in the presentation of the historical past as definitive of the practice of heritage as public historical practice. This public historical practice argued to be encapsulated 'within different genres characterised by different sociologies and modalities of historical production'¹⁶⁷ 'draw[s] on the methodologies of David William Cohen'¹⁶⁸ for its notion of critical public history. This

¹⁶⁴ Minkley, Witz and Rassool, 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts', 15.

¹⁶⁵ According to them, 'Public history in the United States provides a parallel to the attempt to do popular history in South Africa in the 1980s, and is characterised by the same tensions and separations. It appears to have a larger institutional presence outside the academy than popular history did in South Africa, but the issues remain ones of popularisation: of hierarchies of knowledge, discipline recognition and transmission'. Minkley, Witz and Rassool, 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts', 17.

¹⁶⁶ Minkley, Witz and Rassool,, 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts', 21.

¹⁶⁷ According to the Minkley, Witz and Rassool, in 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts', 'engaging in public history means engaging in practice', where 'expert knowledge gets taken up, reformed, reduced and narrowed and never taken for granted'. It is an engagement where historians are 'careful not to impose their academic rituals and methodologies', G. Minkley, L. Witz and C. Rassool, 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts', 26.

¹⁶⁸ Minkley, Witz and Rassool,, 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts', 22.

reliance on David Cohen is crucial for his argument that ‘while academic guild historians debated methods and experience of handling specific texts, and also oral tradition generally, people across Africa were producing, using and actively debating their pasts in ways virtually inaccessible to guild interest in evolving something like oral historiography’.¹⁶⁹

According to Minkley et al, the critical importance of Cohen’s theory of the production of history on their approach to heritage studies as critical public history is ‘first, an emphasis on practice, and second, that the production of history was multiple and ‘equal’ in significance and possibility’.¹⁷⁰ Thus, according to them, critical public history recognised:

That those outside the professional history fraternity are engaged in producing history, in a domain of public scholarship, where the public historian enters into collaborative research and works with institutions in the public domain. In these knowledge transactions, the expertise as a historian is challenged, shaped and re-shaped as different historical knowledges are evoked, articulated, negotiated and contested. Here the mystique of the scientific knowledge is shattered, while multiple histories are encountered, sometimes reduced, other times ignored, and at still other times emerge in critical frame over narratives of inclusion and exclusion, taxonomies and biographies of material objects, cartographies of jurisdiction, and the performance of insiders and outsiders.¹⁷¹

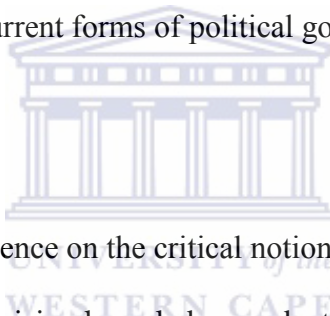
While it is not explicitly stated, Cohen’s theory of the ‘production of history’, which he referred to as ‘the processing of the past in societies and historical settings all over the world and the struggle for control of voices and texts in innumerable settings which animate this processing of

¹⁶⁹ Cohen, *The Combing of history*, xv.

¹⁷⁰ Minkley, Witz and Rassool, ‘South Africa and the Spectacle of Public Pasts’, 23. As argued by Witz and Rassool in a *Kronos* article aptly titled *Making histories*, ‘By treating sources as histories, rather than as data to be mined ... Their work has questioned boundaries between history and anthropology through opening up issues of practice, particularly around area of fieldwork. A major concern of theirs is to think through relationship between processes of historicising and the field, as it comes to be constituted in both history and anthropology. The field, for them, is sites where different histories in a range of genres are produced, circulated and contested ... The power of their work lies in its attempts to comprehend the politics of a society, such as Kenya, around the different versions of history that were generated, where do histories circulate and for whom they circulate and for whom they mattered’ Leslie Witz and Ciraj Rassool, ‘Making histories’, 9.

¹⁷¹ Minkley, Witz and Rassool, ‘South Africa and the Spectacle of Public Pasts’, 27.

the past', is African-derived. This is not only because of his collaborations with E.S. Atieno Odiambo, but (as mentioned by Minkley et al) much of Cohen's theory, which was 'framed around production of history in post-colonial' Africa, especially Kenya and Uganda, aimed towards an attempt at the reconstruction of African history.¹⁷² It is precisely engagement with the heritage dynamics of the production of history in post-colonial Africa, which informed the criticism of what the troika, following a Foucauldian reading by Tony Bennett,¹⁷³ called the South Africa heritage complex that exposes the limitations of the critical public history approach to heritage studies as 'African'. The heritage complex of post-anti-apartheid South Africa was argued by them to be framed within the discourse of 'one indigenous voice of freedom' for South Africa's past, while rationalising current forms of political governance of citizenship as 'African and liberated'.¹⁷⁴



One crucial aspect of Cohen's influence on the critical notion of public history as heritage in the APMHS is his concern with decolonising knowledge production about Africa, and his conclusion that the project of analyzing the Western power system that Edward Said pioneered is far from complete, given the continued and deplorably Eurocentric state of production of African history.¹⁷⁵ Witz and Rassool explored the important political convulsions surrounding the 1652 Jan van Riebeeck festival in 1992 as an example of an 'extraordinary moment, which has clearly

¹⁷² Minkley, Witz and Rassool, 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts', 22. Works by David Cohen and E.S. Atieno Odiambo includes: *Siya: A historical Anthropology of An African landscape*, (London: James Curry, 1989); 'Ayany, Malo and Ogot: Historians in Search of a Luo Nation', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 27, 3-4, 107-8, 1987: 269-86; *Burying SM*, (Westport: Heinemann, 1992); *The Risk of Knowledge*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004). Works independently by David Cohen focusing on Africa includes *Toward a Reconstructed Past: Historical Texts from Busoga, Uganda*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); 'A case for Basoga': Lloyd Fallars and Construction of an African legal system', in Kristin Mann and Richard Roberts, eds., *Law in Colonial Africa*, (Portsmouth: New Haven, Heinemann, 1991), 239-54.

¹⁷³ T. Bennett, *The Birth of Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, (New York: Routledge, 1995).

¹⁷⁴ Minkley, Witz and Rassool,, 'South Africa and the spectacle of public pasts', 29.

¹⁷⁵ Cohen, *The Combing of history*, 243.

engendered important debates over the meanings and constitution of Eurocentric historical knowledge' in a post-colonial society.¹⁷⁶ Invoking Said's thesis of Orientalism, they argued that 'the production of history has continued in all kinds of settings beyond the formal and quite visible institutional structure. In many of these settings, such as situations of decolonisation, the practices of liberating knowledge productions have themselves contained the impulse and grammar of the established imperial frameworks.'¹⁷⁷

As argued so far, it is a challenge to the approach to heritage studies implied in the notion of heritage defined as African projected in the ACTAG report and Abungu's paper that constitute the critical point of departure for the challenge to the dominant notion of heritage in Africa in the APMHS curriculum. However, both the British heritage debate and the criticism of Laurajane Smith, which the APMHS relied on for its projection of critical public history as the best approach to heritage studies, seems to be inadequate as an approach to heritage studies that is both critical and African. The approach to heritage studies as public historical production adequately accounts for the conceptual methodological distinction between the APMHS approach to heritage studies and any other, similar programmes.

However, this approach is limiting as an approach to heritage studies that is African by its ideological epistemic positioning in the study of Africa. The importance of notion of heritage derived from Cohen's work on the production of history in Africa as an approach to heritage studies in the APMHS is how it allows consideration of another perspective, projecting a notion

¹⁷⁶ Cohen, *The Combing of history*, xv.

¹⁷⁷ Cohen, *The Combing of history*, 243.

of heritage studies that is claimed to be not only critical, but also – more significantly – ‘African’.

This finally allows the argument for non-engagement with an Africanist turn as the limit of the critical public history approach in the APMHS. The concern with the Africanization of heritage through a narrative of ‘resistance of and liberation of the oppressed’, and indigenous culture against ‘paradoxically and problematically long-standing exclusionary and racist histories’,¹⁷⁸ further revealed the APMHS’s underlying preoccupation with the question of an approach to heritage studies that is both critical and African. More importantly, it allows an engagement with how the consideration of arguments for an Africanist turn can further contribute to this concern.



¹⁷⁸ Rassool ‘The Rise of Heritage’, 10.

Chapter Six

The 'Africanist turn' in Museum and Heritage Studies

The African historian who evades the problem of Egypt is neither modest nor objective, nor unruffled; he/she is ignorant, cowardly, and neurotic...¹

A pedagogical effort must be made to assimilate these indispensable notions of the consciousness of our community. In doing this, we will have contributed significantly to the restitution of our own cultural heritage, to bringing it alive in the consciousness of our people. It is not only a question of programs.²

In 2006, at a very early stage of this study and as part of my job as the Robben Island Museum APMHS academic coordinator, I designed a course titled 'Introduction to African Heritage Studies'. This course, which focused uncritically on the works of Cheikh Anta Diop, was rejected; apparently for being at odds with the deconstructionist notion of 'African' and the constructionist idea of heritage projected in the APMHS. The course description stated

The session aims to expose students to African heritage studies. Cheikh Anta Diop's works, especially his theory of African cultural identity, will be critically examined and analysed as an ideological and theoretical basis for identifying, understanding, conserving, managing and interpreting African cultural heritage.

Prescribed readings

- Diop, C. A, 'The Meaning of our Work', in *African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1974), xii – xvii.
 - Diop, C. A, 'How to define Cultural Identity' in *Civilization or Barbarism: an Authentic Anthropology*, (USA: Lawrence Hill, 1991), 211 - 219.
 - Diop, C. A, 'Peopling of Africa from the Nile Valley', in *African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1974), 179 - 201.
- Further suggested reading for the session includes

¹ C. A. Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, edited and translated by Mercer Cook, (New York: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1974), xiv – xvi.

² C. A. Diop, 'The Beginnings of Man and Civilization', 320.

- Clarke, E. L., 'The African Past and the coming of European' in Clarke, E. L ed., *Through African Eyes: Culture in Change*, (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger Publisher, 1970).
- R. Kuykendall, 'Hegel and Africa: an Evaluation of the Treatment of Africa in the Philosophy of history', *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (1993).
- M. Mzamane, 'Eurocentric and Afrocentric perspective on ancient African History', in W. M Makogba eds., *African Renaissance*, (Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 1999).

In this chapter I re-engage with the theses of Cheikh Anta Diop because of the paradox of how a critical engagement with the debate generated by his theses of ancient Egypt as 'African' opens a theoretical possibility for the consideration of the notion of 'African' in museum and heritage studies as an ideological epistemic positioning in the study of Africa. Advocating the consideration of Diop's work in the articulation of the notion of 'African' in the APMHS might seem contradictory at best; and at worst, absurd, given Diop's alleged scientific, racial, essentialist notion of 'African' and the disavowal of essentialism in the APMHS projection of its notion of 'African' in heritage studies. This chapter, however, argues that it is possible to construct a notion of 'African' in African heritage studies as an ideological epistemic position through Diop's work. It relies on current research of the 'Africanist turn' in heritage, advocated by Beverly Butler to argues for the relevance of the works of Cheikh Anta Diop in African heritage studies if the scientific, racial, essentialized notions of 'African' in his theses are taken into account and discounted.³

The Africanist Turn

According to Ferdinand de Jong and Michael Rowland, the 'Africanist turn' in heritage represents the post-colonial challenge to the 'so-called universal, foundational qualities of Greco-

³ See B. Butler, 'Taking on a Tradition': African Heritage and the Testimony of Memory', in F. De Jong and M. Rowlands, *Reclaiming Heritage: Alternative Imaginaries of Memory in West Africa*, (California: Left Coast Press, Inc., 2007), 20 - 40, see also B. Butler, *Return to Alexandria: An Ethnography of Cultural Heritage revival and Museum Memory*, (California: Left Coast Press, 2007).

European memory and the Western, Classical and canonical heritage genealogies'.⁴ According to Beverley Butler the 'Africanist turn' represents a 'radical break with routinised accounts and definitions of cultural heritage and with an existing or established canon of cultural heritage texts', through a process of radical reflection, and fundamental re-conceptualisation and reconstruction of the notion of heritage.⁵ This project, Butler argued, is aligned 'to a wider scholarship committed to disrupting the 'Eurocentrism' that continues to underpin cultural heritage theory/practice through a contemporary 'politics of recognition' which is bound up in articulating new, alternative or 'parallel' characterisation of heritage value'.⁶

Most importantly, for a dissertation that is primarily concerned with heritage studies rather than heritage as a discourse per se, the relevance of the consideration of the 'Africanist turn' articulated by Butler is that it 'engages with the concerns (notably the moral-ethical issues) that shape and define the possible future of cultural heritage studies'.⁷ According to her, the articulation of the 'Africanist turn' as an alternative heritage value in the presentation and representation of heritage is 'directed toward reconceptualising cultural heritage studies within these alternative intellectual, moral-ethical and grounded concerns for the preservation of human dignity, and human justice'.⁸ She therefore suggested the use of 'these alternative discourses – the 'Africanist turn' – as resources for future action in terms of creating a proactive (rather than reactive), responsive, and just future for a new, and critical, cultural heritage studies'.⁹

⁴ De Jong and Rowlands, *Reclaiming Heritage*, 21.

⁵ Butler, *Return to Alexandria*, 11.

⁶ Butler, *Return to Alexandria*, 11.

⁷ Butler, *Return to Alexandria*, 11.

⁸ Butler, *Return to Alexandria*, 11.

⁹ Butler, *Return to Alexandria*, 11.

This consideration of the ‘Africanist turn’ in heritage proposed by Butler as an approach to heritage studies is crucial to this study, because it is ‘ground-breaking in its radical reconsideration of cultural heritage value apropos the ‘post-colonial memory crises’’.¹⁰ The ‘Africanist turn’, as a challenge to the Westernisation of heritage memory through the reclaiming of ‘Egypt’s pharaonic heritage from the powerful hold of the Western imagination to be reposed for anticolonial/postcolonial imaginations’¹¹ is pivotal to this study. This undertaking, as argued by De Jong and Rowlands, is a pivot in that ‘it subverts the ‘Eurocentrism’ of an authorised heritage discourse (AHD) that historically has silenced, and in contemporary contexts continues to obstruct, attempts to reveal ‘alternative’, local heritage values and to misrepresent their complex meanings’,¹² as discussed in the preceding chapter.

Butler located the context for her articulation of the ‘Africanist turn’ in the museology/heritage discourse of the ancient ‘Temple of the Muses’ in Alexandria. According to her, the destruction of this ‘ancient universal library, philosophy academy and a planetarium which brought together texts, learned men and artefacts in an attempt to fuse ‘Greek’ heritage with universal knowledge’ has been represented as a colossal ‘loss’ to the ‘West’.¹³ Butler described how this sense of loss, which provided a rationale for a contemporary archival heritage paradigm of loss and preservation, was the basis of the West’s redemptive urge for continuing to position Alexandria in Egypt and its archive as a site for renewal and rebirth.¹⁴

¹⁰ De Jong and Rowlands, *Reclaiming Heritage*, 9.

¹¹ Butler, *Return to Alexandria*, 67.

¹² De Jong and Rowlands, *Reclaiming Heritage*, 9-10.

¹³ Butler, *Return to Alexandria*, 67.

¹⁴ De Jong and Rowlands, *Reclaiming Heritage*, 17.

However, Butler cautioned that there is a need to re-think the West's return to Egypt in order to 'restore dignity to Africa'.¹⁵ As pointed out by De Jong and Rowland, Butler's argument was that the West's 'return to origin' in Alexandria for cultural identity and foundation was a 'return to imperialism', because the Western claim to origin and foundation in Alexandria necessarily involved a disinheritance of Africans.¹⁶ The challenge to this disinheritance – which represented the Africanist turn in heritage discourse, according to Butler – is how the myth and memory of Egypt, potent in Western imagination, have re-emerged to occupy an equally powerful position within anticolonial and postcolonial discourse, through their inversion as an alternative ideology to subvert the West hegemonic paradigm of origin.¹⁷ As she stated:

Not only Alexandria and its archive have been cast as a powerful locus of homecoming and redemption; the wider 'lure of Egypt'. Egypt pharaonic heritage (that is, its Pyramids and the Sphinx), and its enduring appeal as a site of 'mythical past and imagined homelands' have similarly been opened up from the powerful hold of the Western imagination (including Orientalists and Egyptologists) to be repossessed for anticolonial/postcolonial imaginations. Moreover, this dynamics of reinvestment is symptomatic of the ongoing attraction of locating template or resources for memory-work and, more specifically, for the narration of traumas and loss and separation and the definition of alternative futures. As a resource for memory-work and alternative futures, alternative discourses of a 'Return to Egypt' are characteristically led by the desire to repossess a pre-colonial origin, Golden Age, homelands, and therefore, a heritage considered to be, first, more authentic and, second, uncontaminated by colonial contact.¹⁸

A significant aspect of Butler's position is that it echoes the Afrocentric thesis of *Stolen Legacy*,¹⁹ of the African heritage of ancient Egypt. This was revealed in her argument of how a privileged 'Western' genealogy and literary philosophical tradition has imposed itself on the city,

¹⁵ De Jong and Rowlands, *Reclaiming Heritage*, 21.

¹⁶ De Jong and Rowlands, *Reclaiming Heritage*, 21.

¹⁷ Butler, 'Taking on a Tradition', 40-42.

¹⁸ Butler, 'Taking on a Tradition', 67.

¹⁹ G. M James, *Stolen Legacy: Greek Philosophy is Stolen Egyptian Philosophy*, (Hampton: U. B and U. S. Communications System, 1954). See Mary R. Lefkowitz and Guy M. Roger, *Black Athena Revisited*, 1996, for a critique of this claim.

allowing modernity's so-called universal histories to claim possession of Alexandria's myth and memory as exclusively 'Western' concerns, and to see the city as distinct from the rest of Egypt and Africa, an extension of Greek landscape and tradition.²⁰ This, as she argued, continued to be a 'colonial discourse', which 'strove to disinherit African people of their cultural history by ascribing to immigrants all the positive achievement of Roman Africa and by portraying the Africans either as passive receptors of superior culture or as nomadic or lawless people incapable of self-government'.²¹

Of utmost significance to this chapter is Butler's invocation of Cheikh Anta Diop and Franz Fanon as the two most important post-colonial authors paradigmatic of the 'Africanist turn', who have chosen to re-inherit and empower themselves through their 'reclamation' of Egypt.²² As discussed in the third chapter, one of the points of convergence for Mahmood Mamdani and John Henrik Clarke was their recognition of the cardinal significance of Diop's thesis regarding the African-ness of ancient Egypt to the debates of decolonisation of the notion of 'African' in the study of Africa. Mamdani acknowledged Diop's thesis that 'ancient Egypt is the core civilizational archive of African history',²³ and insisted that Diop's thesis on the question of ancient Egypt as 'African' is not a debate in African history, but the central debate in the decolonising notion of 'African' in African history.²⁴ According to Clarke, making Diop's thesis of the centrality of ancient Egypt in the study of Africa an operational epistemological and

²⁰ Butler, 'Taking on a Tradition', 34.

²¹ Butler, 'Taking on a Tradition', 40.

²² De Jong, and M. Rowlands, *Reclaiming Heritage*, 21.

²³ M. Mamdani 'Is African studies to be turned into a new home for Bantu education at UCT? *Social Dynamics*, 22.2(1998), 63-75, 69. www.informaworld.com accessed 02/03/2010

²⁴ M. Mamdani 'Is African studies to be turned into a new home for Bantu education at UCT? *Social Dynamics*, 22.2(1998), 63-75, 69. www.informaworld.com accessed 02/03/2010

methodological principle is definitive of the meaning of ‘African’ in Heritage Studies as an ideological epistemic positioning in the study of Africa in African Studies.²⁵

David O’Connor and Andrew Reid argue that the debate about ancient Egypt in Africa and as ‘African’ is an exercise in the ideological definition of African.²⁶ As discussed in Chapter Three of this dissertation, neither race, nor ethnicity, nor geography nor the history of slavery adequately capture the notion of ‘African’ in heritage studies without resulting in a narrow essentialism of one form or another. ‘Ultimately’, say O’Connor and Reid, ‘in the absence of solid evidence, ideology, or more correctly, ideologies, have served to provide the mortar which holds many of these theories together’.²⁷ ‘African’ as a concept, according to them ‘has been important in Western terminology because it helps to define the opposite of ‘European’, with implicit notions of civilisation and sophistication equally important to this definition’.²⁸ Therefore, according to O’Connor and Reid, for the ‘Europeans colonising the African continent, locating ancient Egypt somewhere in the Near East ordered their relation with Africa. Equally, for Afrocentrists, locating ancient Egypt firmly within Africa cements their belief in the significance of the African continent’.²⁹

The question of Egypt in Africa as ‘African’ is definitive of the ideological notion of African, which is what this chapter engages with – it opens the paradox of how the ‘Africanist turn’ reading of Diop’s emphasis on ancient Egypt offers the potential for articulating the unarticulated notion of ‘African’ in the APMHS as an ideological epistemological position. A

²⁵ Clarke, ‘The African Heritage Studies Association (ASHA)’.

²⁶ D. O’Connor and A. Reid eds., *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, (Walnut Creek, Left Coast Press inc., 2003), 4.

²⁷ O’Connor and Reid eds., *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 3.

²⁸ O’Connor and Reid eds., *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 3.

²⁹ O’Connor and Reid eds., *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 4.

critical reading of Diop's emphasis on the African-ness of ancient Egypt, mediated by the 'Africanist turn' advocated by Butler, allows a consideration of the notion of 'African' in African heritage studies as the ideological epistemic scientific retrieval of the historical consciousness of the centrality of ancient Egypt to the study of African history and culture.

To explore the implications and limitations of Diop's theses for articulating the notion of 'African' in critical heritage studies as an ideological epistemic positioning in the context of the 'Africanist turn' suggested by Butler, a brief analysis of Diop's intellectual biography and work is necessary.

Cheikh Anta Diop: an intellectual biography



As against the unilateral and ethnocentric conception of Hegel, and Western scholars who have derived their view of history from him, Diop proposes a wider perspective from which to view the course of human development, a perspective that throws a new light upon Africa. His ideological project consists in projecting a vision of universal history in which Africa is profoundly involved. Secondly, that vision implies not merely the attribution of a distinctive historical personality to Africa, but also the claim, through the connection with ancient Egyptian civilisation, to an original heritage of philosophical thought.³⁰

Cheikh Anta Diop (1923-1986), the founding director of the radiocarbon laboratory at the IFAN³¹ (Institut Fondamental de L'Afrique Noir), Dakar, Senegal, was recognised (along with W. E. B. Dubois) at the first World Festival on Negro Arts in Dakar in 1966 as one of the African intellectuals who had the greatest impact on Black thought in the 20th century. He was

³⁰ A. Irele, 'Introduction', in P. J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth & Reality*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 22-23.

³¹ IFAN was created in 1932 as an institute for the study of Africa Francophone Africa.

described as the ‘Pharaoh of African history’ who laid the foundational of a paradigmatic change in African scholarship.³² Diop ‘proved the contribution of Africa to world civilisation and restored the place of Africa in world history’, according to Hugh Gloster, who acclaimed him as ‘the greatest champion of African cultural heritage’.³³ Diop was a pan-African political activist and participated in both the first and the second World Congress of Black Artists, in Paris in 1956 and in Rome in 1959.

Cheikh Anta Diop’s work is copious, and impossible to cover in one dissertation, even less in a chapter. Diop was a physicist, Egyptologist, historian, anthropologist, linguist and political theorist. Therefore, the focus of engagement with Diop’s work in this chapter is not a detailed exploration of his theses, but on the implications of his theses for and their relevance to an approach to Museum and Heritage Studies as a terrain for decolonising the study of Africa. Critical appreciation of the implications of Diop’s work for African Heritage Studies in locating its beginning and continued engagement with the museums as a space of research and scholarship is pivotal to this study. It is Diop’s engagements with numerous museums, and the problems with his use of visuals as not only sources but narratives of history in themselves as incipient public historical scholarship, a neglected aspect of Diop’s work, that confirms its relevance in African Museum and Heritage studies, which is a concern of this chapter.

As a trained scientist, Diop insisted on strict adherence to scientific methodology for his theses and warned against ‘deluding the masses engaged in a struggle for national independence by

³² See M. K. Asante, *Chiekh Anta Diop: An Intellectual Portrait*, (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 2006).

³³ Citation to Chiekh Anta Diop presented by Hugh M. Gloster, President of Morehouse College, on the award of an Honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, by the Morehouse College, April 1985, in Ivan van Sertima (ed.) *Great African Thinkers: Cheikh Anta Diop*, (New Jersey: Journal of African Civilization Ltd., 2007), 315-6.

taking liberties with scientific truth'.³⁴ Therefore, his central thesis of 'restoring the collective African personality'³⁵ relied strictly on scientific historicism, with explicit political objectives. According to Diop, 'the paramount political problem of our colonial situation',³⁶ which he argued was 'inherently cultural aggression', was the impetus of his work, as part of the anti-colonial struggle; with the objective of decolonisation in Africa, and the restoration of Africa's place in world history.³⁷

Diop echoed Fanon and Amical Cabral's³⁸ thesis on colonialism as epistemological, cultural and metaphysical violence on the historical being of the colonised, and argued that 'the negation of the history and intellectual accomplishment of Black Africa was cultural, mental murder, which preceded and paved the way for their genocide here and there in the world'.³⁹ Diop therefore insisted that the necessary point of departure for the anti-colonial struggle for political liberation should be the terrain of culture.⁴⁰ This hinged on the importance Diop attached to concepts of cultural identity or collective personality – and specifically, African personality; terms which he used synonymously with cultural heritage.⁴¹

Diop identified the historical, linguistic, and psychological factors that constitute the collective personality or cultural heritage of a people, and argued that although only the first two can and should be studied scientifically, it is only the historical factor that 'suffices to characterise

³⁴ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilisation: Myth or Reality*, xiii.

³⁵ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, xiii.

³⁶ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, xiv.

³⁷ Diop, 'Nile Valley Executive Interview' in Ivan van Sertima ed., *Great African Thinkers: Cheikh Anta Diop*.

³⁸ A. Cabral, *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches*, (New York: Monthly Review, 1967).

³⁹ C. A. Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology*, (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1981), 2.

⁴⁰ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, xiv.

⁴¹ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, 236.

cultural personality in the absence of the other two'.⁴² Citing the example of the Africa diaspora, where the 'linguistic bond is broken, but the historic bond remains stronger than ever, perpetuated by memory',⁴³ Diop stated that because of this, it becomes obvious that:

The feeling of historical unity, and consequently of cultural identity that scientific research is capable of proving at this time to the African cultural consciousness, is not only qualitatively superior to all those known to us up to now, but also plays a protective role of the first order in this world characterised by the generalisation of cultural aggression.⁴⁴

Asserting heritage as a history with its own paradigm of knowledge production (which has many parallels with claims made in the APMHS), Diop argued that 'one can say a people has left prehistory behind from the moment that it becomes conscious of the importance of historical events to the point where it invents a technique – oral or written – for its memorisation and accumulation'.⁴⁵ Diop's point was that a people without the collective historical consciousness that can ensure its historical continuity and collective survival are merely population. This is because, he said, 'what is important for a given people is not the fact of being able to claim a more or less grandiose historical past, but rather to be simply pervaded by this sense of continuity so characteristic of the historical conscience'.⁴⁶ Diop's view was that 'the historical conscience, through the feeling of cohesion that it creates, constitutes the safest and most solid shield of cultural security for a people'. This is why, according to Diop, 'every people seek only to know and to live their true history and transmit its memory to their descendants'.⁴⁷

Based on this logic he contended that the erosion and destruction of the historical conscience,

⁴² Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism*, 211.

⁴³ Diop, *Civilisation or Barbarism*, 219.

⁴⁴ Diop, *Civilisation or Barbarism*, 214.

⁴⁵ Diop, *Civilisation or Barbarism*, 214.

⁴⁶ Diop, *Civilisation or Barbarism*, 212.

⁴⁷ Diop, *Civilisation or Barbarism*, 212.

which he described as the ‘cultural cement that unifies the disparate element of a people to make them whole’,⁴⁸ was the classic technique of colonialism in Africa, ‘which engendered cultural stagnation, regression, disintegration and a return to barbarism’⁴⁹ on the continent. According to him, to correct the ‘deformed African personality, as a result of slavery and colonial destruction, Africans must be conversant with the full range of its ancestral past, not just to establish self-pride but for use as a basis for constructing a modern civilisation in the post-colonial and neo-colonial era’.⁵⁰

For Diop, imperial racist scholarship distorted and falsified African history through the discipline of Egyptology. He maintained that Egyptology had destroyed the collective historical consciousness of Africans by the excision of ancient Egypt from the history of Africa. This resulted in a distorted cultural historical consciousness among Africans of their true cultural identity. According to Diop, ‘the memory of recent slavery to which the Black race has been subjected, cleverly kept alive in men’s minds and especially in Black minds, affects Black consciousness negatively’. This, he argued, was because ‘from that recent slavery an attempt has been made to construct – despite all historical truth – a legend that the Black has always been reduced to slavery by the superior White race’.⁵¹ This cultural alienation due to the distortion of the collective historical consciousness of Africans by the deliberate falsification of Africa’s role in world history through the excision of ancient Egypt from the rest of Africa, according to Diop, was exemplified in the works of Negritude poets. His view is that the sentiments of Negritude

⁴⁸ Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism*, 212.

⁴⁹ Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism*, 213.

⁵⁰ G. Spady, ‘The changing Perception of C.A. Diop and his Work: The Preeminence of a Scientific Spirit’ in Ivan van Sertima (ed.) *Great African Thinkers: Cheikh Anta Diop*, (New Jersey: Journal of African Civilization Ltd., 2007), 96.

⁵¹ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, 26.

expressed by Leopold Senghor, ‘that emotion is African and reason is Greek’, and by Aime Cesaire, regarding ‘those who have invented neither gunpowder nor compass’, are examples of this alienation, the result of a lack of true historical conscience among even leading African intellectuals.

Crucially, for Diop, this falsification of the ‘true’ historical conscience of Africans is tantamount to the ‘stealing of the souls of Africans’, which ‘can only be retrieved through a scientific approach’.⁵² Diop’s notion of heritage as historical consciousness thus set the stage for an approach to African Heritage Studies as an ideological scientific undertaking aimed at ‘restoring the historical consciousness of the African peoples by reconnecting African history to ancient Egypt in order to re-conquer a Promethean consciousness’.⁵³ It is this focus on Egypt which laid the foundation for an approach to heritage studies as ‘African’, defined by an ideological epistemic positioning of the centrality of ancient Egypt to the study of Africa.

Diop’s thesis on the reconnection of ancient Egypt to African history based on the ‘Blackness’ of ancient Egyptians rested on a clear scientific, racial, essentialist argument, given ‘a tone of authority’ by Martin Bernal in the title and thesis of his *Black Athena* volumes.⁵⁴ Diop argued a pure, biological-colour, racial logic – ancient Egyptians were ‘Black’, and contemporary ‘Africans’ are ‘Black’, therefore the ancient Egyptian civilisation was an African civilisation,

⁵² I. van Sertima (ed.) ‘Death Shall Not find Thinking that we Die’, in *Great African Thinkers: Cheikh Anta Diop*, (USA, Journal of African Civilization, 2007), 12.

⁵³ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, xv.

⁵⁴ See M Bernal *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 1987). Bernal agreed that ‘Certainly, if a Black were to say what I am now putting in my books, their reception would be different. They would be assumed to be one-sided and partisan, pushing a Black Nationalist line, and therefore dismissed ... Being not only white, male, middle aged and middle class but also British in America has given me a tone of authority that is completely spurious’ see J Berlinerblau, *Heresy in the University: The Black Athena Controversy and the Responsibilities of American intellectuals*, (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 146.

having roots and umbilical cord in the African hinterland. This perspective (said to be common knowledge among ancient historians) was overthrown in the 19th century – for purely racist motives, according to Bernal.⁵⁵ Relying on Herodotus, Diodorus of Sicily, and Strabo and a host of ancient classical writers, in addition to evidence from archaeology, anthropology, linguistics, and racial scientific evidence, Diop insisted that the ancient Egyptians were genetically and physiologically the same as contemporary Africans, and that ancient Egypt, in all markers of its civilisation, was similar to and related to African culture. He maintained that ancient Egyptians were Africans, as a racial category, and ancient Egyptian civilisation was not only characteristically African in all cultural forms, but more importantly it was derived from and sustained by an interior African cultural metaphysical root.⁵⁶

It is ‘for these reasons’, said Diop, that ‘Black Africans can and must lay claim to the cultural heritage of old Egyptian civilisation, because they are the only ones today whose sensitivity is able to blend easily with the essence of that civilisation’.⁵⁷ He therefore argued that:

The oneness of Egyptian and Black culture could not be stated more clearly. Because of this identity of genius, culture and race, today all Africans can legitimately trace their culture to ancient Egypt and build a modern culture on that foundation. A dynamic, modern contact with Egyptian Antiquity would enable Blacks to discover increasing each day the intimate relationship between all Blacks on the continent and the mother Nile Valley. By this dynamic contact, the African will be convinced that these temples, these forests of columns, these pyramids, these colossi, these bas-relief, mathematics, medicine, and all the sciences, are indeed the work of his ancestors and that he has a right and duty to claim this heritage.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ See M, Bernal, “*Black Athena*”: *The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization. Vol. I, The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985*, (London: Free Association Books, Rutgers University Press, 1987); see also Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*.

⁵⁶ See Diop *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*.

⁵⁷ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization*, 250.

⁵⁸ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization*, 140.

Problematically for Diop's theses, the reclaiming of ancient Egypt as a remedy to the socio-cultural stagnation and regression of Africa was based on a clearly racialised essentialist assumptions. He argued that since the ancient Egyptians were 'Blacks', they are the ancestors of contemporary 'Black' Africans; therefore 'the moral fruit of their civilisation ought to be counted among the assets of the Black world'.⁵⁹ This consciousness, which rested clearly on racial colour of 'Blackness', was necessary (according to Diop) for the reconstruction of the African collective personality destroyed by slavery and colonialism. He stated 'to become conscious of that fact is perhaps the first step toward a genuine retrieval of him/herself' that one must take in order to avoid 'intellectual sterility' and cultural psychological alienation.⁶⁰

Diop maintained that the consciousness of reconnecting ancient Egypt to the history of Africa was necessary, to correct the negative effects of alienation on Africans caused by the racist distortion of African history through the excision of ancient Egyptian history from the history of Africa. He therefore argued, in his now famous dictum, that 'the return to Egypt in all domains is necessary for reconciling African civilisation with history'.⁶¹ This reconnection is a serious undertaking in Diop's opinion, because 'far from revelling in the past, a look toward the Egypt of antiquity is the best way to conceive and build our cultural future'.⁶² Thus, he declared:

The history of Black Africa will remain suspended in air and cannot be written correctly until African historians dare to connect it to the history of Egypt. In particular, the study of languages, institutions, and so forth cannot be treated properly; in a word, it will be impossible to build African humanities, a body of human sciences, so long as that relationship does not appear legitimate.⁶³

Diop's assertions that the ancient Egyptians were Black, and the role of ancient Egypt in African

⁵⁹ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization*, xiv.

⁶⁰ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization*, xiv.

⁶¹ Diop, *Civilization or Barbarisms*, 3.

⁶² Diop, *Civilization or Barbarisms*, 3.

⁶³ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization*, xiv.

history, were not new in African resistance historiography. Edward Blyden, W. E. B. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, William Leo Hansberry, Joseph Danquah, and G. M. James,⁶⁴ among others, all made similar claims prior to Diop. What was new about Diop's claim was that he turned the thesis of ancient Egypt being African into an operational scientific principle. As he himself admitted, the importance of his thesis was less to have stated the Egyptian connection to African history 'than to have contributed to making this idea a conscious historical fact for Africans and the world, and especially to making it a scientific concept'. This last point, according to Diop, was 'where his predecessors did not succeed'.⁶⁵

Diop's thesis generated serious challenges in the field of Egyptology, African history and African studies, and was the focus of a seminal UNESCO conference in Cairo in 1974,⁶⁶ where his thesis of the African character and origins of the ancient Egyptian culture being essential to debate in the reconstruction of 'African' was recognised as 'a new page in African historiography'.⁶⁷ However, it was regarding ancient Egypt as the archival reference point for the study of African society, culture and history that Diop's thesis became an intellectual operational paradigm. Scholars such as John Henrik Clarke⁶⁸ and Theophile Obenga⁶⁹ were among those

⁶⁴ See M. Lefkowitz 'Ancient History, Modern Myths' in See M. Lefkowitz & G. Maclean Rogers (ed.), *Black Athena Revisited*, (Chapel Hill: University of California Press, 1996), 6-9, where he traced the genealogy of this claim in African resistance intellectual tradition.

⁶⁵ Diop, *Civilization or Barbarisms*, 2.

⁶⁶ See *General history of African, vols.1 and 2* UNESCO Symposium on the Peopling of Ancient Egypt and the Deciphering of Meriotic Script. C. A, Diop (ed.), (1978), *The peopling of ancient Egypt and the deciphering of Meroitic script: proceedings of the symposium held in Cairo from 28 January to 3 February 1974*, UNESCO.

⁶⁷ Diop, 'Origin of ancient Egyptian', in *Great African Thinkers*, 53.

⁶⁸ The first stated 'main aim and objectives of the African Heritage Studies Association' according to John Henrik Clarke argued was 'the reconstruction of African history and cultural studies along Afrocentric lines'. - Clarke, Henrik *John* 'The African Heritage Studies Association (ASHA): Some notes on the conflict with the African Studies Association (ASA) and the fight to reclaim African history': *Issue: A Journal of Africanist Opinion*, Vol. 6, no. 2-3 (Summer/Fall 1975), 7.

⁶⁹ Theophile Obenga was a protégée and disciple of Diop. They co-presented the argument for the recognition of ancient Egypt as an African civilisation at the 1974 UNESCO Cairo conference. Obenga has written widely on the connection of Ancient Egyptian philosophy to African philosophy, and worked to develop the linguistic aspects of

who launched into detailed theoretical engagement with Diop's thesis in the reconstruction of African history, which is the sense in which 'Afrocentric' is used in this chapter; to mean strict adherence to Diop's philosophy of history and methodological paradigm. Nonetheless, Molefi Kete Asante popularised this approach by codifying it into an intellectual praxis as Afrocentricity; which encompasses. Afrocentricity, was defined by Asante as 'a consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis, and an actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency, to assert subject place within the context of African history',⁷⁰ will not be engaged with in this dissertation beyond its relationship to the Diopian philosophy of history.

There continues to be scholarly recognition of the relevance of the debates generated by Diop's thesis to African museum and heritage studies, as seen in the 'Africanist turn' debate discussed at the beginning of this chapter; but his theses on the race of the ancient Egyptians continue to generate strong controversies.⁷¹ Diop's thesis has been received as an article of faith by ultra-Afrocentrists,⁷² but has been challenged, especially in the *Black Athena* debate between Martin Bernal⁷³ on one side, and Mary Lefkowitz and Guy Rogers on the other.⁷⁴

Diop's work has also not been without criticism even from among those sympathetic to his objective of understanding the truth of the African past through rigorous study. While V. Y.

Diop's work. Books published by Obenga include: *African Philosophy: The Pharaonic Period: 2780-330 BC*, (Dakar: Per Ankh, 1990), *Ancient Egypt and Black Africa: A student's Handbook for the study of Ancient Egypt in Philosophy, Linguistic and Gender relations*, ed., translated from French by Ahmed Sheik (London: Karnak House, 1992).

⁷⁰ M. K Asante, *The Afrocentric Manifesto*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 16.

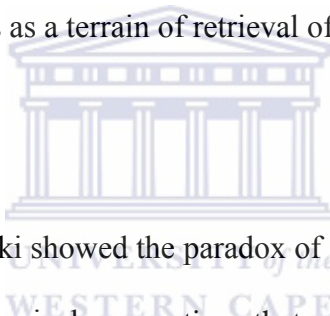
⁷¹ See M. Levine and J. Peradotto, eds., 'Arethusa Special Issue: the Challenge of Black Athena', *Arethusa* (fall 1989).

⁷² See Lance Morrow, 'Controversies: The Provocative Professor', *Time Magazine*, 24 June 2001, www.time.com/time/magazine/article/09171,157721,00.html, accessed 20/09/2011.

⁷³ Bernal, *Black Athena*.

⁷⁴ See M. Lefkowitz & G. Maclean Rogers (ed.), *Black Athena Revisited*, (Chapel Hill: University of California Press, 1996).

Mudimbe and B. Jewsiewicki acknowledged Diop's thesis that 'Egypt was an African civilisation just as the Eve of humanity appears to have been African',⁷⁵ they however question the validity of his motives and exposed the paradox that 'Diop is astonishingly faithful to Hegel, whom he set out to challenge by his African Egypt theses'.⁷⁶ This, they declared, was because Diop 'conceptualises in a similar manner as Hegel the 'colonial parentheses' of African history, as a period corresponding to a sort of descent into Hell and deserving only to be forgotten'.⁷⁷ Notwithstanding their criticism, however, they still classed Diop among 'partisans of a philosophical perception of the past, which believed it was necessary to reconcile the discourse of the past with a political philosophy of the present'.⁷⁸ This is a description which fits perfectly with Diop's idea of heritage studies as a terrain of retrieval of Africa's past in ancient Egypt for purely cultural politics.



However, Mudimbe and Jewsiewicki showed the paradox of seeing this philosophy as 'African' and 'critical', by exposing the ideological assumptions that underpinned it. These assumptions – which, they argued, betrayed the ideological conceptual incarceration of Diop's philosophy in Western racist enlightenment thought – are:

- resurrection by returning to one's root in Jerusalem, understood as purification;
- a rupture between the original time of African modernism;
- the central role of a socio-intellectual category of intermediaries, of quasi-apostles (not to say a Messiah) in the establishment of a link between two of these temporalities;
- the role of scientific construction of the historical narrative in order to re-establish links;

⁷⁵ B. Jewsiewicki & V.Y Mudimbe, 'Africans' Memories and Contemporary History of Africa', *History and Theory*, Vol. 32, (Dec., 1993), 4.

⁷⁶ B. Jewsiewicki & V.Y Mudimbe, 'Africans' Memories and Contemporary History of Africa, 1.

⁷⁷ B. Jewsiewicki & V.Y Mudimbe, 'Africans' Memories and Contemporary History of Africa, 1.

⁷⁸ B. Jewsiewicki & V.Y Mudimbe, 'Africans' Memories and Contemporary History of Africa, 2.

- finally, the necessarily historical character of a collective consciousness.⁷⁹

Based on the implicitness of these factors in Diop's philosophy of history, Jewsiewicki and Mudimbe argued that the epistemological exteriorisation of the Christian intellectual foundation, inescapable in African resistance narratives, and implicit in Diop's work, limits its radical edge. According to them, the paradox of Diop's philosophy is that 'while it presents itself as a radical alternative to the Hegelian exclusion of Africa from the history of humanity, it in fact constitutes a logical extension of Western thought and has its root in nineteenth-century epistemology'.⁸⁰

Despite this criticism, which points out the influence of enlightenment-scientific racial essentialism in Diop's theses, one aspect of his work that had been neglected was its implications for museum and heritage studies as being 'African'. To understand how the implications of Diop's theory of Egypt as 'African' provide a paradigm and set a new direction for an approach to African museum and heritage studies that salvages its relevance, it is necessary to locate the origin and relationship of Diop's theses in the museum as incipient public historical scholarship.

Cheikh Anta Diop, Museums, Heritage Studies and Incipient Public History

I would like to express certain concrete ideas of how we should inform ourselves in our own history.⁸¹

Diop's thesis of the connection of ancient Egyptian civilisation to African culture based on the

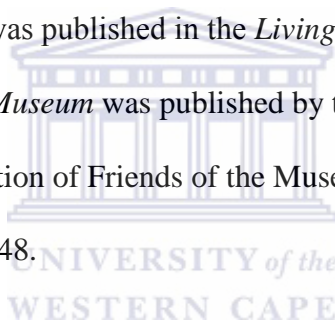
⁷⁹ B. Jewsiewicki & V. Y. Mudimbe, "'Africans' Memories and Contemporary History of Africa', 8.

⁸⁰ B. Jewsiewicki & V. Y. Mudimbe, "'Africans' Memories and Contemporary History of Africa', 9.

⁸¹ C. A. Diop, , 'The Beginnings of Man and Civilization', speech by Cheikh Anta Diop on receiving an Honorary Doctorate from Morehouse College, to the all-college Morehouse Assembly at the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Chapel, 4 April 1985, in *Great African Thinkers*, 351.

‘Blackness’ of the ancient Egyptians continues to generate intense debate, and the relevance of his work for the notion of ‘African’ in African Heritage is shown in the ‘Africanist turn’ debate.⁸² However, the implications of his theses for Museum and Heritage studies have rarely been examined. Diop described the museum as the ‘place for an alternative curative mode of memory work aimed at internal psychic restoration of the collective personality of Africans’.⁸³

James G. Spady, published ‘Negritude, PanBanegritude and the Diopian Philosophy of African history’,⁸⁴ the first essay in English on the thesis of Diop, located the beginning of the enunciation of Diop’s thesis in his third published article.⁸⁵ This article titled ‘When can we speak of an African Renaissance’ was published in the *Living Museum* magazine in 1948.⁸⁶ This special 1948 edition of the *Living Museum* was published by the Association populaire des amis des musees (APAM) – the Association of Friends of the Museum – to mark the centenary of the abolition of slavery in France in 1848.



According to Spady, ‘language, architecture, music, and visual arts were all useful evidence of civilisation’ that Diop employed as research sources to argue his thesis in the article, which according to him provided ‘a clear indication of the road he was taking to elucidate’ his thesis.⁸⁷

The launching of the special edition of the *Living Museum* magazine featured a special exhibition

⁸² *The New York Times*, *Time*, *National Geographic* and *New Africa Magazine*, have brought this debate to the public forum in various publications.

⁸³ Diop quoted in B. Beverley, *Return to Alexandria*, 70.

⁸⁴ J. G. Spady, ‘Negritude, PanBangritude and Diopinan Philosophy’, *A current Bibliography on African Affairs*, Vol. 5, Series II, 1972.

⁸⁵ Diop had previously published a two-part article titled ‘Origin of the Wolof Language and race’ (‘Etude de linguistique oulove: Origine de la et la race Wolof’, *Presence Africaine*, No. 4, 672-684 and No. 5, 848-853, 1948, prior to leaving Senegal in 1946.

⁸⁶ Spady, ‘The Changing Perception of C.A. Diop and his Work: The Preeminence of a Scientific Spirit’, in Ivan van Sertima ed, *Great African Thinkers: Cheikh Anta Diop*, 89.

⁸⁷ Spady, ‘The Changing Perception of C. A. Diop, 94-95.

of rare African art objects and books, at the Palmes Bookshop in Paris. This event – witnessed by Diop, Madeline Rousseau, and Alioune Diop of *Presence Africaine* – revealed the intellectual foundation and sociology of knowledge of Diop’s theses in the world of Africa in the museum and art collections, and his early involvement in public historical knowledge production. The influence of Madeline Rousseau, Diop’s co-editor of the *Living Museum*, who was a renowned collector of African arts, a Professor of art history and a French anti-colonial sympathiser, along with other members of the Association of Friends of the Museum (which included, notably, Aime Cessaire and Pablo Picasso), in Diop’s research for his theses was immense throughout his works.

As Spady noted, Diop’s sociology of knowledge seen in his relationship with Madeline Rousseau and ‘the Popular Association of Friends of the Museums gave him access to a range of material cultural objects in both private and public collections’,⁸⁸ which influenced the enduring themes of his research. According to Spady, the basic tenets of Diop’s theses were:

- (1) The African origin of Egyptian civilisation;
- (2) The spread and antiquity of the Black substratum of humanity;
- (3) The primacy of southern culture over the Mediterranean;
- (4) The cultural familial linkage of all African people;
- (5) The possibility of Africans building a modern culture which would benefit the human race as a whole.⁸⁹

These theses (articulated in an article titled ‘Toward an African Political Ideology’, published in the 1952 edition of the *Voice of Black Africa* bulletin in Paris) were developed during this period of associations.⁹⁰ As Kevin MacDonald observed, ‘remarkably, there were few changes in

⁸⁸ Spady, ‘The Changing Perception of C. A. Diop’, 95.

⁸⁹ Spady, ‘The Changing Perception of C. A. Diop’, 96.

⁹⁰ Spady, ‘The Changing Perception of C. A. Diop’, 96.

Diop's hypothesis throughout his almost 30 years of publication on the subject⁹¹ of ancient Egypt's connection to Africa.

The importance of these observations by Spady, along with his earlier observation of Diop's application of language, architecture, music and visual art as historical evidence, reveals the significance of Diop's work for Museum and Heritage studies. For, as the notion of the critical public history approach in heritage studies revealed, a defining feature of heritage studies as a distinctive field of study is its engagement with the public in historical knowledge production, through a space of expertise and public intersection, in a forum such as the 'Friends of the Museum'. Moreover, the recognition and application of non-orthodox historical sources and evidence (like visual materials, oral history, literature, music and art) in historical knowledge production marks a distinction between academic history and heritage studies as a separate field of study – evident in that Diop's early scholarship makes engagement with his work pertinent as an approach in museum and heritage studies. As Raymond Betts observed, 'Diop's history is engaged history, history written with a present-minded purpose',⁹² a political engagement, which is a feature of heritage studies as an enquiry of cultural politics and politics of culture.

One problematic aspect of Diop's work relevant to museum and heritage studies is the extensive use of visual images and photographs from the museums and archaeological sites,⁹³ not only as source and evidence to support arguments, but as historical narrative on its own. In arguing his thesis that the ancient Egyptian were Africans, Diop not only relied (problematically) on the

⁹¹ K. C. MacDonald, 'Cheikh Anta Diop and Ancient Egypt in Africa' in D. O'Connor and A. Reid, eds., *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press inc., 2003), 94.

⁹² R. F. Betts, *The Ideology of Blackness*, (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Co., 1971), 127.

⁹³ Most of these sites are designated World Heritage Sites.

racial science of laboratory analysis of the dermatology and crania of mummies in museums,⁹⁴ but on visual images of sculptures and paintings and photographs of images of ancient Egyptians in various museums and archaeological sites.

Relying on the scientific racial essentialist thesis that ancient Egyptians were Africans, by virtue of being 'Black', Diop presented and analysed photographs of sculptures and statues of Egyptian Pharaohs, encouraging us to simply 'examine the pictures and contrast them one with the other and to wonder how they could possibly inspire the notion of a white Egyptian race'.⁹⁵ In the *African Origin of Civilisation*,⁹⁶ a compendium of ten chapters from his book *Negro, Nations and Culture* and three from *Civilisation and Barbarism*,⁹⁷ later published separately, Diop relied on extensive engagement with visual materials in museums and archaeological sites to argue his thesis of the 'Blackness' of ancient Egypt. The book *African Origin of Civilisation* contained 50 photographs, while *Civilisation and Barbarism* contained 77 photographs. Diop maintained that the reality of Egyptian art contradicted any counter-claim of the African-ness of the ancient Egyptian. This is because (according to him) in Egyptian art and monuments from the time of the Pharaoh Menes to the end of the Egyptian empire, 'it is impossible to find anyone one there except Africans of the same species as all indigenous Africans'.⁹⁸

In another example, Diop presented a photograph of a 'handsome East African Hamitic type', to

⁹⁴ Cheikh Anta Diop claimed in an interview that he studied mummies at the Egyptian Museum and the London Museum. According to him, in the interview, 'they were Black, Black, more Black than I. All the plagues that I brought back are mummies I studied in Cairo in 1974 ... They are all in the London (British) Museum' - Diop interview with C.S Finch, Meeting the Pharaoh: Conversation with Cheikh anta Diop, in I. van Sertima, ed. *Great African Thinkers*, 33.

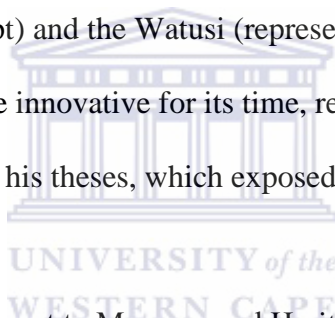
⁹⁵ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization*, 53.

⁹⁶ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization*.

⁹⁷ Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism*.

⁹⁸ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilisation*, 53.

ridicule the ‘white Hamitic myth’. He argued that the photograph of the obviously African man, regarded as white in the Hamitic myth, ‘enables us to perceive the biased nature of such theories’.⁹⁹ Crucially, he used visual images not merely as illustration but as critical elements of his argument. Diop presented a comparative analysis of the picture of Pharaoh Ramses II alongside a picture of a ‘modern Watusi’. Comparing the Pharaoh’s crown to the hair-do of the ‘modern Watusi’ man, Diop argued that the similarity of the ‘hair-do’ and the Pharaoh’s crown was because ‘Watusi hair can be conceived only for woolly hair and that the small circle of the Pharaoh helmet is meant to represent frizzy hair’.¹⁰⁰ Here, Diop uses visual similarities to argue for physical sameness and cultural connection, through the imitative hair-do, between the Pharaoh (representing ancient Egypt) and the Watusi (representing contemporary Africans). The use of visual images by Diop, while innovative for its time, revealed the influence of the racial physical anthropology of empire in his theses, which exposed their blind spot.



Another aspect of Diop’s work relevant to Museum and Heritage studies was that apart from his problematic use of visual images, Diop applied unorthodox historical sources – notably, oral history and the Bible – to support his thesis that ancient Egyptians were Black. In the first chapter of the *African Origin of Civilisation*, where Diop answered the question ‘What were the ancient Egyptians?’ he referred to the Bible in locating the etymology of the word Kemit, which means ‘Black’ from ‘Cham or Kam’, in the legend of the curse of Ham.¹⁰¹ This example of the use of the Bible as non-formal historical source and evidence, which revealed recognition of historical knowledge derived from public historical consciousness, is multipliable in an analysis of Diop’s work. However the example suffices for one to appreciate the relevance of the

⁹⁹ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilisation*, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilisation*, 12.

¹⁰¹ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilisation*, 2-9.

implications of his work to museum and heritage studies, as a terrain of alternative historical knowledge production, all weaved together to produce historical knowledge.

One other aspect of Diop's work that is also worth noting in consideration of its relevance to Museum and Heritage studies is Diop's engagement and perception of UNESCO. In the preface to the *African Origin of Civilisation*, titled 'The Meaning of our Work', where Diop enumerated his central theses, the ninth thesis revealed the importance Diop attached to UNESCO. The thesis stated:

In the Second part of Nations Negres, we demonstrated that African languages could express philosophic and scientific thought (mathematics, physics and so forth) and that African culture will not be taken seriously until their utilisation becomes a reality. The events of the past few years prove that UNESCO has accepted those ideas.¹⁰²

Diop footnoted the claim in the last statement by reference to the 1964 UNESCO colloquium on the transcription of African languages.¹⁰³ Moreover, he referred to other instances of participation in UNESCO conferences, such as the 1971 UNESCO Symposium on 'Lenin and Science'.¹⁰⁴ However, as mentioned earlier the seminal UNESCO moment for Diop was the 1974 UNESCO Symposium on the 'Peopling of Ancient Egypt and the Deciphering of the Meroitic Scripts' in Cairo, which Diop claimed he was instrumental in convening and where, he claimed, his conclusions 'gained wide acceptance in international scientific circles'.¹⁰⁵ It was in confirmation of his thesis, according to Asa G. Hilliard, that UNESCO published the General

¹⁰² Diop, *The African Origin of Civilisation*, xvii.

¹⁰³ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilisation*, xvii.

¹⁰⁴ Diop, *Civilisation or Barbarism*, 4.

¹⁰⁵ S. Moore, 'Interview with Cheikh Anta Diop' in I. van Sertima ed., *Great African Thinkers*, 243.

History of Africa vols. 1 and 2.¹⁰⁶

As stated previously, Diop maintained his theses were merely a progress report, rough outlines of successive scientific steps prepared as an indication of the direction in which future generations must follow, as an immense cultural effort which must never descend from the scientific to the emotional level.¹⁰⁷ In an interview with the Nile Valley Executive Committee in 1985, Diop provided details of the direction for an approach to African Museum and Heritage studies as the immense cultural scientific effort to reconnect ancient Egypt to African history, as a basis for building African humanities through exploring and substantiating ideas expressed in his theses.¹⁰⁸

Diop based his approach to an African Museum and Heritage studies as an intellectual effort to reclaim ancient Egypt as a basis for constructing African humanities on an ideological epistemological methodological assumption that the reconstruction of African history must begin with the scientific examination of ancient Egyptian and African objects in the storerooms of European museums. This, he argued, was because to make this ‘fact’ of Egypt-as-African an operational scientific principle, and ‘to rethink Egyptian history in the framework or mind of the African spirit’,¹⁰⁹ we would have to get into the museum collections and archives of European museums, which ‘contain[s] the fragmented, dispersed and disjointed ancient history of Egypt and Africa’.¹¹⁰ According to Diop, ‘what they have destroyed we cannot bring back anymore, but

¹⁰⁶ Asa G. Hilliard, Review, ‘*The Cultural Unity of Black Africa: The Domain of Patriarchy and Matriarchy in Classical Antiquity*’, in I. van Sertima ed. *Great African Thinkers*, 102.

¹⁰⁷ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization*, 276.

¹⁰⁸ Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization*, xiv.

¹⁰⁹ Diop, Nile Valley Executives, 292.

¹¹⁰ Diop, Nile Valley Executives, 293.

what we can do is have access to the storage of all museums from the Oriental Institute in Chicago to the Louvre in Paris, and the Metropolitan in New York'.¹¹¹

The purpose of access to the collections of these museums, Diop argued, was to 'study these pieces ourselves and re-interpret them to the extent that is possible with our own interest in mind'.¹¹² The objective of this undertaking, which Diop described as the foundation of scientific construction of African humanities,¹¹³ was 'to organise as quickly as possible, to create our own museums, our own storage facilities, and our own document'.¹¹⁴ This, he argued, would ensure that 'we will be the one who produce science in the most fundamental sense'.¹¹⁵

To achieve these objectives of creating a museum for the research of reconnecting ancient Egyptian history to 'African' history, Diop suggested the formation of teams of interdisciplinary researchers, consisting of polyvalent scientific teams (in natural and human sciences) capable of doing in-depth studies to see the weakness and the unfinished side of his work.¹¹⁶ As stated by Charles Flinch, Diop's work – as the 'search for truth, not the establishment of a new orthodoxy' – needed proper feedback, examination, and testing necessary to validate them despite their widening reception'.¹¹⁷

If we (hypothetically) agreed with Diop that the epistemological methodological starting point of 'rewriting and re-interpretation of African history by connecting it to ancient Egypt' is 'the

¹¹¹ Diop, Nile Valley Executives, 292.

¹¹² Diop, Nile Valley Executives, 294.

¹¹³ Diop, Nile Valley Executive, 293-295.

¹¹⁴ Diop, Nile Valley Executives, 295.

¹¹⁵ Diop, Nile Valley Executives, 295.

¹¹⁶ Spady, 'The Changing Perception of C. A. Diop, 92.

¹¹⁷ C. S. Flinch, 'Further Conversation with the Pharaoh', 230.

‘storage in all of the museums of Euro-America.’¹¹⁸ It would be easy to agree that acquisition of technical museological skills is indispensable as an approach to African Museums and Heritage Studies – from a Diopian perspective, which insisted on scientific engagement with technologies of museum collections and archives. It is the implication of the indispensability of scientific inquiry in Diop’s work that allows an understanding of the relevance of the necessary tensions in the APMHS. As seen in the preceding chapters, while there is a rejection of scientificity in the APMHS core course, it nonetheless incorporates elective courses on cultural resources management that entails scientific techniques of conservation management. Evidently, this scientificity of heritage is at odds with the core course, yet at the same time, it forms part of the larger programme. This approach places the programme in a forced critical engagement the realm of scientific methodology. This critical position to scientificity of heritage and acceptance of indispensability of scientific methodology in Museum and Heritage Studies therefore, sits together in a tension that is uneasy but has also proven to be productive in the APMHS.

This approach to heritage studies as the science of putting into operation a process of reconnecting ancient Egypt to African history as a foundation for constructing African humanities for the African renaissance is important for this dissertation. This is because it allows consideration of a notion of African heritage that goes beyond pre-colonial traditional ethnic notion and the dominant UNESCO paradigm of heritage. This approach to Museum and Heritage Studies as ‘African’ is defined not by the geographical location of the programme or African nationality of scholar, but by an epistemic ideological scientific methodological position of retrieval and connection of ancient Egypt to the study of Africa.

¹¹⁸ Diop, Nile Valley Executives, 294.

This approach offers an understanding of the divide between the technical conservation and the critical public history approach to heritage studies encapsulated in the APMHS, but it also allows a consideration of African heritage studies defined by epistemological location and disciplinary methodology, and not the Africanity of participants or the geographical location of the study. ‘African’ in African Museum and Heritage Studies, is thus defined by ideological epistemic positioning, of the centrality of the connection of ancient Egypt to the study of Africa history. Thus, Museum and Heritage Studies can be ‘African’ in St. Petersburg in Denver, Jenne or Bobodolaso; it exists anywhere the centrality of ancient Egypt to Africa is studied methodologically with an explicit cultural political objective of social justice.

To demonstrate the limitations of Diop’s theses and show how his approach, mediated by the Africanist turn, provides a framework for a new perspective in the notion of ‘African’ in heritage studies, I analyse a hypothetical course as both a correction to the rejected course proposed in 2006 and a conclusion to this chapter.

The Africanist turn: Cheikh Anta Diop and African Museum and Heritage Studies

The course aims to expose students to current debate of the ‘Africanist turn’ in museum and heritage studies. It critically engages Cheikh Anta Diop’s cultural theory of heritage and its implications for African museum and heritage studies. The central question that will guide the course is the relevance of ancient Egypt in Africa in the discourse of African heritage studies.

Prescribed readings

- B. Butler, ‘On the Ruins’: Postcolonial Heritage Metamorphosis” in B. Butler, *Return to Alexandria: An Ethnography of Cultural Heritage Revivalism and Museum Memory*, (California, Life Coast Press, 2007), 63-92.
- Diop, C. A., ‘The Meaning of our Work’, in *African Origin of Civilisation: Myth or Reality*, (USA, Lawrence Hill, 1974), xii – xvii.

- Diop, C. A., 'How to define Cultural Identity' in *Civilisation or Barbarism: an Authentic Anthropology*, (USA, Lawrence Hill, 1991), 211 - 219.
- Diop, C. A., 'The Beginning of Man and Civilization', lecture delivered at the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Chapel, Morehouse College, 6 April 1985, I. van Sertima (ed.) *Great African Thinkers: Cheikh Anta Diop*, (New Jersey, Journal of African Civilization Ltd., 2007), 323-351.
- B. Jewsiewicki & V.Y Mudimbe, 'Africans' Memories and Contemporary History of Africa', *History and Theory*, Vol. 32, No. 4, Beiheft 32: History Making in Africa (Dec., 1993).
- D. O'Connor and A. Reid, 'Locating Ancient Egypt in Africa: Modern Theories', Past Realities' in D. O'Connor and A. Reid eds., *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press inc., 2003).

This new course outline shows improvement in terms of focus from the earlier course designed in 2006, which took Diop's theses as given, with no critical engagement. The present course problematises Diop's theses through engagement with the limitations in his work, in the context of debate for an 'Africanist turn' in heritage studies and research. The course contains two readings from the 2006 course designed earlier, with addition reading, which is included for introduction to the ideological terrain of Diop's thesis, and the importance and implications of his theory of African heritage for an approach to African Museum and Heritage Studies.

The reading by Beverly Butler, 'On the Ruins: Post-colonial Heritage Metamorphosis', as the first text of the prescribed reading was prescribed to locate the work of Diop in the wider current of post-colonial research in museum and heritage studies represented by the 'Africanist turn' debate. This text is crucial in connecting Diop's work to the wider discourse that 'post-colonial acts of liberation are necessarily an act of culture'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ B. Butler, 'On the Ruins': Postcolonial Heritage Metamorphosis'' in B. Butler, *Return to Alexandria: An Ethnography of Cultural Heritage Revivalism and Museum Memory*, (California: Left Coast Press, 2007), 64.

In the text, Butler traced the post-colonial challenge of the ‘Africanist turn’ in Museum and Heritage Studies to Andre Malraux’ reflections on the Egyptian Museum, as opening ‘a psychic network of memory-space that takes the (European) museological imagination via Egypt further into the ‘Dark Continent’’.¹²⁰ Importantly, the text ‘underlines the need to apprehend alternative or parallel heritage and memory work in the global arena in the context not only of tangible cultural heritage but also of the West’s foundational value/ethics of democracy, universalism and humanism, from an alternative intellectual and political project which challenges the West’s exclusive right to claim possession of these values’.¹²¹

Apart from revealing ‘the specific crisis and breakthrough which gave rise to this context by rehearsing the intervention of writers like Andre Malraux, and deconstructionists like Jacques Derrida’,¹²² the text offers the context of the Africanist turn in Museum and Heritage Studies. The location of Diop’s theses in the ‘Africanist turn’ discourse provides an opportunity for understanding the ideological basis of Diop’s theses as ‘a resource for alternative memory-work’.¹²³

The next reading – ‘The meaning of our work’, in the preface to *The African Origin of Civilisation* – introduces Diop’s central thesis, which is crucial for critical engagement with and understanding of his work, and for the implications of his work for Museum and Heritage Studies as ‘African’. Diop started the piece with an argument concerning the political rationale

¹²⁰ Butler, ‘On the Ruins: Postcolonial Heritage Metamorphosis’, 65.

¹²¹ Butler, ‘On the Ruins: Postcolonial Heritage Metamorphosis’, 66.

¹²² Butler, ‘On the Ruins: Postcolonial Heritage Metamorphosis’, 67.

¹²³ Butler, ‘On the Ruins: Postcolonial Heritage Metamorphosis’, 67.

for his theses.¹²⁴ He located his work as part of the anti-colonial struggle, by tracing its genealogy to an earlier article, 'Towards a Political Ideology in Black Africa', published by the Democratic African Rally (RDA), the first post-war pan-African political congress of students, where, he argued, the main tenets of his political ideology were stated.¹²⁵

Diop's brief introduction of the thesis of collective African personality (Cultural Consciousness)¹²⁶ in the text helps connect the debate to the next reading of the proposed course. The reading 'How to Define Cultural Identity', a chapter in *Civilisation or Barbarism: an Authentic Anthropology*, introduces Diop's notion of collective cultural personality. This reading is crucial to the course because it introduces Diop's idea of cultural heritage, which underpins his ten theses and forms the basis of his approach to heritage studies as a scientific retrieval and historical connection of ancient Egypt to Africa.

As stated earlier in the chapter, according to Diop three factors constitute the cultural identity of a people – historical, linguistic and psychological factors, of which only the historical and the linguistic factors can be studied scientifically. Diop placed much emphasis on the historical factor as opposed to the linguistic factor of cultural identity, which can be irretrievable; the historical factor offers 'direction for a commendable research for the reinforcement of the cultural identity of the African people'. This is because, as he stated, 'it is by engaging in this type of investigative activity that our people will discover, one day, that Egypto-Nubian

¹²⁴ C.A. Diop, 'The Meaning of our Work', in *African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, (Chapel Hill: Lawrence Hill, 1974), xii.

¹²⁵ Diop, 'The Meaning of our Work', xii.

¹²⁶ Diop, 'The Meaning of our Work', xiv.

civilisation played the same role vis-a-vis African culture as did Greco-Latin antiquity in regard to Western civilisation’.¹²⁷

This focus on the historical factor is also instructive for understanding levels of distinction in African history. In answering the question of what constitutes African history, Diop argued that we need to distinguish two levels of African history; first, ‘the immediate one, of local histories, so dear, deeply lived, in which the African peoples, segmented by diverse exterior forces the principal one of which is colonisation, are shrivelled up, find themselves trapped and are vegetating today’.¹²⁸ Diop’s second level is ‘more general, further off in time and space and, including the totality of our people, comprises the general history of Black Africa’.¹²⁹ It is these levels of history, Diop argued, that research permits us to pinpoint, situate and restore in relation to general historical coordinates through a scientific approach.¹³⁰

The third prescribed reading suggested for the session, ‘The beginnings of Man and Civilization’, forms the key critical pedagogical pivot of the lesson of the session. The piece ‘The beginnings of Man and Civilization’ was a lecture delivered by Diop at the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Chapel, Morehouse College on 6 April 1985. This text was chosen for the course because of the significance of the public historical value of both the venue and the gathering in introducing students to the idea of historical knowledge production through historical public scholarship of a community, which the gathering symbolised. More importantly, the venue is a memorial to Martin Luther King, Jr. Here both King’s biography and the history of

¹²⁷ Diop, ‘How to define Cultural Identity’, 214.

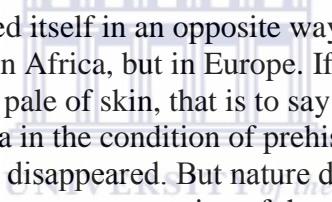
¹²⁸ Diop, ‘How to define Cultural Identity’, 213.

¹²⁹ Diop, ‘How to define Cultural Identity’, 213-4.

¹³⁰ Diop, ‘How to define Cultural Identity’, 214.

civil rights come to the fore, to expose students to the dynamics of the intersection of biography, memorialisation and monuments in understanding the idea and practice of heritage as public historical production.

Apart from the public historical value of the venue, it was at this forum that Diop clarified and refuted the charge of racial essentialism implicit in his theses. The clarification of his emphasis on ancient Egyptian and 'African' and 'Black' is worth quoting in full, because it presents Diop's succinct response to charges of over fixation with colour-racism and racial essentialism. In clarifying his emphasis on 'Blackness' as definitive of 'African', Diop stated,



Nature could have presented itself in an opposite way. Humanity could just as easily have been born not in Africa, but in Europe. If this had been the case, the first man would have been pale of skin, that is to say white. And if man had gone from Europe to Africa in the condition of prehistoric life, that man would have darkened in Africa or disappeared. But nature doesn't do anything by chance. The colour Black acts as a protection of the organism. If man was first born in Africa and had not been Black, he would not have survived! We know scientifically that ultraviolet rays would have destroyed the human organism in the equatorial regions, if the organism has not been protected by Black pigmentation, that is, by Melanin. That is obviously why the man first born in Africa was black, that's all. It is not something we need necessarily to be proud of, it is simply a fact. We should consider it only as a fact, scientifically substantiated. And we could say to ourselves that the contrary could just as easily have occurred.¹³¹

It is against this assertion that a critique of Diop, interrogating the racial essentialist assumptions and the pedagogical challenges of how he employed the 29 photographs of images of ancient Egyptians and contemporary Africans, presented in the lecture to prove his thesis of historical connection and cultural similarity between ancient Egypt and Africa, was based. The session will

¹³¹ Diop, 'The beginning of Man and Civilization', Lecture delivered at the Martin Luther King, Jr. International Chapel, Morehouse College, on April 6, 1985, in I. van Sertima ed. *Great African Thinkers*, 323.

debate how Diop's use of these series of photographs as not only sources or evidences of history trapped his thesis in the racist colonial idea of physical anthropology, and whether it can be salvaged in light of his assertion quoted above. Diop's statement, 'I have showed you the very first king in this Egyptian world, he was Black, I showed you the builders of the pyramids – they were black! ... We've been moving through Egyptian history from the origin of the New Empire'.¹³² This statement on the 'Blackness' of ancient Egyptians as a basis for his argument of the centrality of Egypt as 'African' serves as the basis of a discussion of the influence of racial essentialism as a major limitation of his work and how, in the context of the current research in Museum and Heritage Studies, its relevance can be salvaged.

Following a critique of the influence of racial essentialism in the last reading, the problem with the nostalgic return to source implied in Diop's thesis continued the focus of the next reading prescribed for the course. The reading, by B. Jewsiewicki & V. Y. Mudimbe, "Africans' Memories and Contemporary History of Africa",¹³³ which was discussed earlier in the chapter, was included to ensure critical debate on Diop's philosophy.¹³⁴ This text is included to expose the influence of enlightenment philosophy as the blind spots in Diop's works as a means of encouraging critical engagement to enhanced understanding of the relevance of his work in African museum and heritage studies.

The next text, which concludes the course, is the most crucial reading in the course. As with the text by Butler, which begins the course, it locates the engagement with Diop in current research

¹³² Diop, 'The beginning of Man and Civilization', 341.

¹³³ B. Jewsiewicki and V.Y Mudimbe, "'Africans' Memories and Contemporary History of Africa', *History and Theory*, Vol.32, No. 4, Beiheft 32: History Making in Africa (Dec., 1993), 4.

¹³⁴ B. Jewsiewicki and V.Y Mudimbe, "'Africans'" Memories and Contemporary History of Africa', 9.

in Museum and Heritage studies. ‘Locating Ancient Egypt in Africa: Modern Theories, Past Realities’ in *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, edited by David O’Connor and Andrew Reid, published in 2003 from papers delivered at the ‘Encounter with Ancient Egypt’ conference proceedings of 2000 of the Institute of Archaeology, University College of London, is instructive for concluding this critical debate on Diop. This is because, as stated by O’Connor and Reid, the significance of the work of Diop in Museum and Heritage Studies is in ‘reopening the debate about ancient Egypt in Africa in ways embracing all Africanists, instead of already committed groups of scholars such as Afrocentrists’, which has the potential for lessening the parochialism affecting the study of Africa .¹³⁵ As recognized by O’Connor and Reid,

North Africa is typically studied with little reference to Sub-Saharan Africa, and vice versa; within the former, Egypt is typically discussed with little reference to other North African cultures, including those with contacts extending deep into the Sahara and beyond, while within sub-Saharan Africa there is a natural tendency to focus on the demanding study of specific regions without reference to ‘commonalities’ in thought, symbol and action that might link them together.¹³⁶

The focus on Egypt by Diop therefore allows a study of Africa in its holistic dimension that escapes the sub-Saharan notion of ‘African’ in African Studies challenged by both Mamadani and Clarke. This text not only locates Diop’s theses in the wider debate of the notion of ‘African’ as it relates to the place of ancient Egypt in Africa, but crucially it also shows how an ideological epistemic notion of African can be constructed through a critical reading of Diop’s theses mediated by the ‘Africanist turn’ debate.

As argued by O’Connor and Reid, questions of Ancient Egypt in Africa, which is the focus of Diop’s work, provides opportunities for exciting and innovative research on the question of what

¹³⁵ O’Connor and A. Reid eds., *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 1.

¹³⁶ O’Connor and A. Reid eds., *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 1.

exactly Africa is and what is African in the study of African Museum and Heritage Studies,¹³⁷ which is the focus of this dissertation. This text is therefore crucial in understanding the notion of ‘African’ in African Museum and Heritage Studies as an ideological epistemic positioning in the study of Africa. As argued in the analysis of the notions of African in the APMHS in Chapters Three and Four, and as confirmed in this text by O’Connor and Reid, neither geography, race nor the memory of the slave trade provide an encompassing notion of African. Most importantly, as suggested by O’Connor and Reid, since no single qualifier or feature captures the notion of ‘African’ in museum and heritage studies, ‘ideology, or more correctly ideologies’, is the only means of articulating any notion of ‘African’ in scholarship.¹³⁸

As seen in this analysis of Diop’s theses, there are limitations in Diop’s work, especially its scientificity and biological essentialism, which make its wholesale appropriation as an approach to museum and heritage studies problematic. However, this chapter insists that despite these flaws, Diop’s thesis on Egypt has significant relevance for African Museum and Heritage Studies. Apart from the theoretical possibilities, it offers for the consideration of notion of ‘African’ in Museum and Heritage Studies as an ideological epistemic positioning in the study of Africa. A crucial significance of the consideration of Diop’s work in this dissertation is that it contributed to moving the debate of the study of ancient Egypt in Africa to the mainstream of Museum and Heritage Studies in Africa. More importantly, engagement with Egypt in the world of Museum and Heritage Studies enrich our understanding of influence of ancient Egyptian monuments and artefact on the origin, history and development of disciplines (such as archaeology, museology, and conservation science, or radio-carbon dating techniques) that

¹³⁷ O’Connor and A. Reid eds., *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 2.

¹³⁸ O’Connor and Reid eds., *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, 3.

constitute heritage and museum studies. A focus on ancient Egypt, which the work of Diop allows us, is I will argue crucial in understanding the origin, history and disciplinary distinctions of Heritage and Museum Studies as an academic discipline.

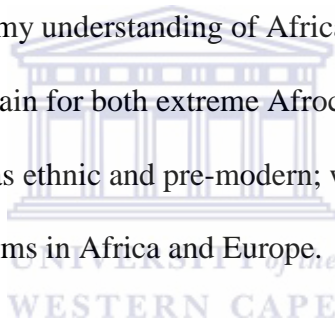
Museum studies and heritage technologies training in conservation and exhibiting, and the attendant critical debates in Museum and Heritage Studies, over human remains, reparation, the tourism dynamics of heritage – all critical debates in the past and contemporary present have their roots in or reference Egypt as the museum and conservation capital of the world. Moreover, it is a fact that the Egyptian collections continue to be the prime collections of major museums in the world; notably the Louvre and the British Museum, to mention just two.

The importance of the incorporation of Diop's works in the APMHS is thus 'that he asked appropriate and relevant questions, which few people have ventured to answer'.¹³⁹ Attempting to find answers for the questions raised by Diop and the debates it continue to generate thus offers immense opportunities for innovative research in African Museum and Heritage Studies in the context of the clamour for an Africanist turn' in Museum and Heritage Studies.

¹³⁹ MacDonald, 'Cheikh Anta Diop and Ancient Egypt', 96.

Conclusion

This dissertation derives from my background in African philosophy, and my research into the intellectual history of racism in Western philosophy. I encountered Cheikh Anta Diop's work through Afrocentric authors popularised by the 'Black Athena debate', during graduate studies at the School of Social Justice, University College, Dublin, Ireland. I arrived in South Africa in 2006 as an affiliated researcher in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Stellenbosch, to begin research in Afrocentric Philosophy and African Renaissance studies. It was in the course of this research that I gained employment at RIM as an academic coordinator on the APMHS. Prior to this time, my understanding of African heritage studies derived from the theory of Afrocentricity, and a disdain for both extreme Afrocentricity and the anachronistic representation of African heritage as ethnic and pre-modern; while my interest in museums was limited to extensive visits to museums in Africa and Europe.



One of the first things that I noticed in my first attendance of the core course session at the tail end of the second semester in 2006 was how debate in the session reminded me of my undergraduate class in Ethnophilosophy. Relying on my re-reading of Ivan Karp and Masolo's *African Philosophy, as Cultural Inquiry*, I was able to understand how African philosophy and African heritage studies share the same conceptual field of study – African culture. More importantly, I was also able to understand how heritage studies offers insights that are more expansive for inquiry into African philosophy, which reconciled my earlier approach in philosophy to the heritage studies I encountered in the APMHS core course.

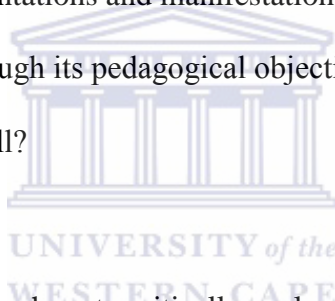
Notwithstanding this understanding, the focus of the RIM Academic Review Committee on the acquisition of technical museological skills as an approach to heritage studies convinced me sufficiently of the significance of Diop's work for museum and heritage studies that I presented a course on Diop as a proposal to the RIM Academic Review Committee. Although I was grossly naïve in my assumptions of the implications of Diop's work for African museum and heritage studies at the time, this study has confirmed my initial assumptions of the significance of Diop's work for museum and heritage studies. For, while I now understand the limitations in his work, in the process I have uncovered how his work offers a new direction for African museum and heritage studies.

Formidable as the designation 'African' might be to the rebranding of the APMHS programme, the debate that it waded into (either gallantly, or as an innocent wanderer!) is about the epistemological, theoretical and conceptual implications of the conceptual conjunction of 'African' and 'Heritage Studies' in the study of Africa. In the wider debate of the study of Africa as an academic discipline, the implication of the conceptual conjunction is an ideological, epistemological borderline.¹⁴⁰ This study explored whether the rebranding of the programme as 'African' signalled adherence to the ideological, epistemological, theoretical position of 'African' in heritage studies as a deconstructive hermeneutical signifier that is in contestation with the colonial African Studies establishment; for who controls the interpretation of the African past, or whether the similarity was only in terminology? This question leads to the examination of what, specifically, was the notion of 'African' encapsulated in the rebranded

¹⁴⁰ See J. H Clark, 'The African Heritage Studies Association (AHSA) and W. Martin and M. West (eds.) *Out of One, Many Africa*, .

programme in Museum and Heritage Studies – the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies.

Nelson Mandela's call for transformation in his speech at the formal opening of RIM, which is claimed to be the historical-ideological genesis of the APMHS, can be located within the context of the idea of culture as a terrain of resistance, as theorised by Frantz Fanon in 'On National Culture'¹⁴¹ and in Amical Cabral's 'National Liberation and Culture'.¹⁴² The question is, to what extent does the APMHS avoid the 'pitfalls of national consciousnesses'¹⁴³ identified by Fanon in its epistemological ideological orientations and manifestations, and how does it escape the chimera of a 'return to source' through its pedagogical objectives and methods, as warned by Cabral,¹⁴⁴ in heeding Mandela's call?



In sum, the concern of this study was how to critically analyse the intellectual history of the APMHS and the notion of 'African' it employs in ways that take into account how past knowledge of Africa has been as much a product of Western cultural priorities and prejudices as it is of anything African.¹⁴⁵ It was thus an attempt to explore and critically interrogate the hermeneuticity of the notion of 'African' encapsulated in the APMHS, as a new knowledge field and terrain of praxis of the study of Africa.

¹⁴¹ F. Fanon, 'On National Culture' in Azzedine Haddour eds. *The Fanon Reader*, (London: Pluto Press, 2006).

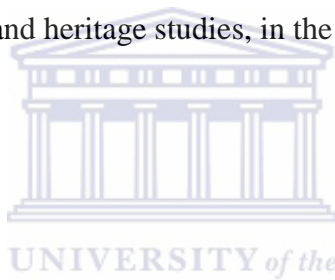
¹⁴² A. Cabral, *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973).

¹⁴³ Fanon, Franz 'Pitfall of National Consciousnesses' in *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1968).

¹⁴⁴ Cabral, *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches*.

¹⁴⁵ Mudimbe, *The invention of Africa*.

This study is an interdisciplinary endeavour, encompassing mainly the fields of historical and philosophical research. This was a decision based on the theoretical inseparability of the discipline of history from the discipline of philosophy; for the philosophical, empirical analysis of the where, who, when, how and why is the tool of understanding history, and investigating historical, epistemic and methodological assumptions is the subject of philosophy. It is theoretical engagement with the cultural politics of the concept of heritage by disciplinary historians that give rise to philosophical questions in heritage research; the theme of the 2007 APMHS colloquium: ‘What is Heritage Research?’ bears witness to these pertinent epistemic methodological debates in the APMHS.¹⁴⁶ This study is thus a foray into the fields of the history of philosophy of African museum and heritage studies, in the context of the geo-politics of the knowledge production of Africa.



This study conflates discourses and debates from African Philosophy with issues in African Heritage Studies, in an effort to interrogate the notion of ‘African’ in heritage studies as a hermeneutical undertaking – that is, the transformatory distinctive edge in heritage studies as a critical field of new knowledge production of Africa. The relevance of conflating issues, debates and discourses of African philosophy with issues in African heritage studies is not only to call attention to the continuing neglect of the philosophy of African cultural heritage in the debates on transformation of the knowledge production of Africa, but also to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort in scholarship and build on existing knowledge. For, as this study shows, virtually all the issues and debates that problematizes ‘African’ in heritage studies as an

¹⁴⁶ What is heritage research? APMHS Annual Colloquium, September 2007, Centre for Humanities Research, UWC.

emergent field of study have been foregrounded in the debates on the emergence of African philosophy as a field of academic inquiry.

In 'Investigating African Philosophy', Richard A. Wright suggested three basic questions any emerging or existing intellectual field of study must answer, which was pertinent to the questions this study attempted to ask of the APMHS: (1) What is the concise description of the area of its study? (2) What is the precise delineation of its area of study? and (3) What are its methodologies for study, and how appropriate are they for the study of the area?¹⁴⁷

The question of 'What is 'African' in philosophy?' is just as much, 'What is 'African' in heritage studies?' For if it is a truism that a philosophy presupposes a heritage, and a heritage is evidence of a philosophy, thus, the question of what is 'African' in philosophy as an academic inquiry can just as easily be directed to what is 'African' in heritage studies as an academic discipline. This question has been definitive of not only the ideological polarisation of contemporary African philosophical work, but of the meaning and relevance of philosophy in Africa. This debate and discourse in African philosophy is polarised, pitting the 'Ethno-philosophical school' against the 'Universalist professional philosophers', mediated by the 'hermeneutical orientation'. According to Tsenay Serequeberhan, the defining question of these debates is: does the 'African' prefixed to heritage studies or philosophy connote 'an ethnographic and antiquarian documentation of ethnic African worldviews and 'heritage' or does it denote a systematic philosophic exploration

¹⁴⁷ A. R Wright, *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, (Lanham Md: University Press of America, 1984), 42.

of the problems and concerns deriving from the history and concrete actuality of present-day Africa?’¹⁴⁸

How this question was answered resulted in various categorisations of trends in African philosophy. Henry Oruka, in a 1978 paper titled ‘Four Trends in African Philosophy’,¹⁴⁹ was the first to map the different trends of African philosophy, which he identified as ethno-philosophy,¹⁵⁰ philosophical sagacity,¹⁵¹ nationalist-ideological philosophy,¹⁵² and professional philosophy. There are other categorisations of trends in African philosophy; Lasana Keita, for example, argued from an historical perspective for the existence of a written philosophical tradition in Africa, and for three phases of the history of African philosophy: ancient classical, medieval and modern African philosophy.¹⁵³ However, the classification that was useful for this study was Samuel Oluoch Imbo’s ‘tripartite scheme of ethno-philosophical, universalist and hermeneutical orientations’.¹⁵⁴

The advantage of Imbo’s classification is that it allows a framework for the categorisation of different notions of ‘African’ in heritage studies. The questions that inform this study are: to

¹⁴⁸ T. Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 5.

¹⁴⁹ O. H Odera, ‘Four trends in Current African Philosophy,’ Paper presented at the Conference on Williams Amo Symposium in Accra, Ghana (July 24-29, 1978).

¹⁵⁰ Ethnophilosophy is a derogatory designation by Paul Hountondji of the approach that African philosophy is a geo-culturally specific phenomenon embedded in the myths, linguistics, religions, worldviews, art, sculpture and traditions of the different cultures of Africa, which share an underlying unity.

¹⁵¹ Philosophical sagacity, according to Oruka, is the theory that there exists in every African culture a critical thinker who challenges and analyses the conventional wisdom and underlying assumptions of the community.

¹⁵² Nationalist-ideological philosophy is represented by the incorporation of African communitarian traditional into political ideologies, as witnessed in Nkrumah’s ‘Conscientism, Nyerere, Cabral, Fanon.

¹⁵³ L. L. Keita, ‘The African Philosophical Tradition’, in *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, ed. Richard A. Wright, (Lanham Md: University Press of America, 1984).

¹⁵⁴ S. O Imbo, *An introduction to African Philosophy*, (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998).

what extent does the notion of African heritage as inheritance correlate to the ethno-philosophical approach; and to what extent does the universalist approach correspond to the PREMA/CHDA¹⁵⁵ notion of ‘African’ in heritage; and finally, to what extent can the notion of ‘African’ of the APMHS be described as hermeneutical, and how?

Ethnophilosophy is a derogatory designation by Paul Hountondji, descriptive of the approach that African philosophy is a geo-culturally specific phenomenon embedded in the myths, linguistics, religions, worldviews, art, sculpture and traditions of the different cultures of Africa, which share an underlying unity. The task of African philosophy, from this perspective, thus consists of a descriptive anthropological function of harvesting the belief and ethnological concepts (such as magic, personhood, time and ethics) believed to be embedded in the cultural manifestations of symbolic and ritualised behaviours, and in the myths and proverbs of the languages of Africa. Placide Temples, J. S. Mbiti, Alex Kagame, Leopold Sedar Senghor and (controversially) Cheikh Anta Diop, Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere were categorised as ethno-philosophers in Imbo’s tripartite scheme,¹⁵⁶ to which I would add Theophilus Obenga.¹⁵⁷ The lumping of Diop, Obenga, Nkrumah and Nyerere into the Ethnophilosophy School seems problematic at face value. However, the fact that they all share as a grounding principle ‘an acknowledgment of a distinct African epistemology that is inherited’¹⁵⁸ and predicated on an underlying cultural unity of Africa makes being grouped together as ethno-philosophers rehabilitative of the approach as worthy of critical engagement.

¹⁵⁵ PREMA/CHDA discussed in the first chapter of this study.

¹⁵⁶ Imbo, *An introduction to African Philosophy*, 34.

¹⁵⁷ T, Obenga, *African Philosophy: The Pharaonic Period: 2780-330BC*, (Dakar, Senegal: Per Ankh, 2004).

¹⁵⁸ Obenga, *African Philosophy: The Pharaonic Period*, 13.

The examination of the apparent correlation between ethno-philosophy and African heritage as a naturally occurring inheritance, and heritage studies as the study of collections and conservation of this heritage of philosophy as manifested in ‘African culture’, was pivotal to this study. For compared to Temples, Mbiti and Kagame, neither the influence of Senghor’s Negritude nor Nkrumah’s Consciencism¹⁵⁹ can be ignored in the intellectual map of African heritage; nor can the debate on Diop’s historiography of Africa be discounted in contemporary discourse concerning African heritage studies – and neither can Ujamma,¹⁶⁰ as an experiment in colonial political utopia?

Paul Hountondji, the unrepentant champion of the ‘Universalist’ approach, along with others (notably Kwasi Wiredu) rejects the specificity of the philosophy of African cultural heritage studies, because it further entrenches rather than frees Africa from the clutch of European conceptual subjugation. According to them, philosophy is a universal methodological activity; thus, the specificity of African epistemology propounded by ethno-philosophers is a regurgitation of the European stereotype of African as the primitive ‘other’, lacking the human prerequisite of reason. To paraphrase Hountondji, an ‘African heritage studies’ that emphasises its specificity through a preoccupation with inventorying and documenting ‘African cultural heritage’, without engaging in a critical deconstruction, will be nothing more than degraded ethno-philosophy ‘that perpetuates a colonial and neo-colonial stereotype that persistently sees Africa as a vast continent of primitives and savages for European gaze and patronage’.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ K. Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-colonization*, (London: PANAF Books, 1978).

¹⁶⁰ See J. Nyerere, *Arusha Declaration and (1973) Freedom and Development*, (Dar-es-Salaam: Government Printers, 1967).

¹⁶¹ P. Hountondji, *African philosophy: Myth and reality*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1983), 21.

According to this line of thought, ‘philosophy as an enterprise will not change in its essence or methodologies in the context of Africa. Philosophy is universal.’¹⁶² The correlation of this school of African philosophy with the notion of heritage dominant in the African heritage conservation training of UNESCO-, ICCROM- and ICCOMOS-sanctioned bodies such as EPA, WAMP, AFRICOM, CHDA, AFRICA 2009 and the African Heritage Fund was explored in comparison to the notion of African heritage encapsulated in the APMHS.

Although Hountondji’s argument on the anachronistic essentialist valorisation of the philosophy of African cultural heritage is clear, his over-reliance on an ‘objective universal’ philosophy seems naïve in light of Emmanuel Eze’s exposition of the intrinsic racism of Western philosophy.¹⁶³ Moreover, his outright rejection of the specificity of the philosophy of African cultural heritage has been regarded as hasty generalisation and unwarranted assumption, even by his Universalist co-traveller Kwasi Wiredu. One of the recurring themes in Wiredu’s expansive writing on African philosophy is on the implicit tension of syncretising the orientation in western philosophy and the philosophy of African cultural heritage. In contrast to Hountondji, Wiredu was not completely dismissive of the specificity of the philosophy of African cultural heritage, but he maintained that it is the critical reconstruction of this tradition through the application of the methodological rigour of analytical philosophy that makes philosophy African, and not the uncritical collection and ethnographic documentation.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Hountondji, *African philosophy: Myth and reality*, 19.

¹⁶³ See C. E. Emmanuel, (ed.) *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, (Oxford: Blackwell publishing, 1997).

¹⁶⁴ K. Wiredu, ‘On an African Orientation in Philosophy’ in *Philosophy and an African Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

The distinction Wiredu makes between what he termed ‘folk philosophy’ and philosophy as a second-order critique of the underlying assumptions and multi-complex dynamics of this folk philosophy was relevant in understanding the different notions of heritage central to this study. This is especially true of the notion of African heritage, in the sense of heritage as connoting ownership, and African heritage studies as a second-order methodological inquiry that exists in a critical relationship to the folk notion of heritage as inheritance. These contestations between the ethno-philosophical approach, and within the universal orientation in African philosophy on the epistemological specificity of ‘African’ philosophy, open the way for the hermeneutical orientation that takes the specificity of the philosophy of African cultural heritage as its point of departure.



The defining characteristic of the hermeneutical orientation in African philosophy is the rejection of both the ethno-philosophical and universalist approaches to the question of the specificity of the philosophy of African cultural heritage. They argue that these approaches are not only uncritically caught in the Eurocentric, categorical binaries of universality and relativism, but give insufficient attention to the fundamental disruption of Africa’s epistemological, historical, social, political and cultural trajectory caused by European imperial colonial violence as the distinctive locus of enunciation of the philosophy of African cultural heritage. Bruce B. Janz¹⁶⁵ suggested three complementary and contending trends in hermeneutical orientation to the philosophy of African cultural heritage that were useful to the concerns of this study. The categorisation of

¹⁶⁵ B. B. Janz, *Hermeneutics in African Philosophy: Is it Worth the Trouble?* <http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~janzb/papers/36%20-%20Hermeneutic>, accessed 11/04/2009.

Theophilus Okere's perspective of 'hermeneutics as cultural archaeology',¹⁶⁶ Tsenay Serequeberhan's articulation of 'hermeneutics as an emancipatory methodology',¹⁶⁷ and Raphael O. Madu's 'hermeneutics as tool of symbolic interpretation',¹⁶⁸ creates a framework for understanding the intellectual history of hermeneutics and interrogating its applicability as both an epistemology and a methodology in the philosophy of African cultural heritage. More crucially, it also offers an opportunity for possible theoretical syncretism of the different trends in the exploration of a hermeneutical approach to African museum and heritage studies.

Theophilus Okere, in his seminal book *African Philosophy: A Historico-Hermeneutical Investigation of the Conditions of Its Possibility*,¹⁶⁹ was the first to articulate a hermeneutical orientation to the philosophy of African cultural heritage as a theoretical 'critical-reflective appropriation and continuation of African emancipatory hopes and aspirations'.¹⁷⁰ This was followed by Okonda Okolo's 'African-oriented hermeneutical interpretation of Tradition and Destiny',¹⁷¹ and Marcien Towa's 'pragmatic hermeneutics'.¹⁷² Nonetheless, it is the theory of contemporary hermeneutical orientation as an emancipatory epistemology and methodology of philosophy of African cultural heritage developed by Tsenay Serequeberhan in *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse* and *Our Heritage: The Past in the*

¹⁶⁶ See T Okere *African Philosophy: A Historico-Hermeneutical Investigation of the Conditions of its Possibility*, (Lanham, Md: University Press of America, 1983)

¹⁶⁷ See Serequeberhan, Tsenay *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse* and *Our Heritage: The Past in the Present of African-American and African Existence*, (Boston, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers 2000)

¹⁶⁸ R. P Madu, *African Symbols, Proverbs and myths: The Hermeneutics Of Destiny* (Eritrea: Assumpta Press, 1996)

¹⁶⁹ Okere, *African Philosophy: Historico-Hermeneutical Investigation*.

¹⁷⁰ Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse*, 6.

¹⁷¹ O. Okolo, 'Tradition and Destiny: Horizons of an African philosophical Hermeneutics' In *African Philosophy: The Essential Readings*, edited by T. Serequeberhan, (New York: Paragon House, 1991).

¹⁷² M. Towa, 'Condition for the Affirmation of a Modern African Philosophical Thought' In C, Eze ed., *African Philosophy: The Essential Readings*, (New York: Paragon House, 1991).

Present of African-American and African Existence that was relevant to this study. The relevance of Tsenay Serequeberhan is the explicit articulation of the cultural politics of the hermeneutics of ‘African’ in heritage studies as crucial for the understanding of the notion of ‘African’ encapsulated in the APMHS.

The ‘Heidegger Affair’,¹⁷³ it has been argued (though it continues to generate debate on the appropriateness of appropriation and indigenisation of hermeneutical orientation in the philosophy of African cultural heritage) did ‘not in any way detract from the truth’,¹⁷⁴ of the hermeneutical philosophy espoused by Tsenay Serequeberhan. This clarification was important in the exploration and interrogation of his thesis that the ‘African’ in heritage studies ‘even when its protagonists are not aware of it – is inherently, and cannot but be, a hermeneutical undertaking’.¹⁷⁵

According to Serequeberhan, ‘the hermeneuticity of philosophy is grounded on the theoretic effort to reconstruct and appropriate meaning within the parameters of a lived inheritance and tradition that has become estranged and crisis-prone’.¹⁷⁶ Quoting Hans-Georg Gadamer’s view that ‘it is precisely this negative situation of ‘misunderstanding’ and the estrangement of meaning within the lived context of a tradition (i.e. a specific historicalness) which is the originate moment of hermeneutics as a particular philosophic orientation’.¹⁷⁷ He argued that ‘the indisputable historical and violent diremption affected by colonialism and the continued ‘misunderstanding’ of our situation perpetuated by neo-colonialism is what calls forth and

¹⁷³ How appropriate is the use of the philosophical methods of Martin Heidegger given his Nazism? See ‘The Heidegger Affairs’ T. G. Pavel, *MLN*, Vol 103, No.4, French Issue, (September 1998), 887 – 901.

¹⁷⁴ Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, 4.

¹⁷⁵ Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, y 2.

¹⁷⁶ Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, 24.

¹⁷⁷ Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, 16.

provokes thoughts in post-colonial Africa'.¹⁷⁸ Thus, according to him, the hermeneutical orientation to the philosophy of African cultural heritage is 'the self-critical interpretative effort to explore and decipher the source of this vexing 'misunderstanding' through 'critical remembrance''.¹⁷⁹

Many features of the APMHS are clearly hermeneutical in orientation, especially its historical epistemological genesis in the post-apartheid heritage transformation contestation. This, in addition to its critical theoretic orientation and pedagogical history, confirms the view that the hermeneutical epistemological orientation is theoretically, 'thematically and historically linked to the demise of direct European colonial dominance and is aimed at de-structuring the persistence of neo-colonial hegemony in contemporary African existence'.¹⁸⁰



¹⁷⁸ Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, 16.

¹⁷⁹ Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, 28.

¹⁸⁰ Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy*, 29.

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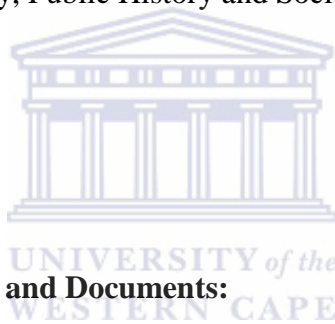
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