

An abstract painting with thick, expressive brushstrokes in warm tones of yellow, orange, and brown, with some cooler tones of blue and green at the bottom. The texture is very rough and layered.

PATHWAYS TO ANTHROPOLOGICAL FUTURES



EDITOR

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PREFACE

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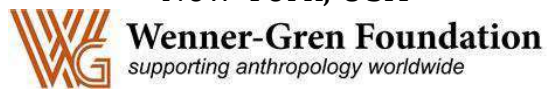


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PREFACE



Danilyn Rutherford

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As anyone who has hiked in the mountains can tell you, different paths can lead to the same destination. As anyone who has gotten lost in the mountains can attest, trails that seem to be leading in the same direction don't always end up in the same place.

In 2020, Gustavo Lins Ribeiro approached us with the idea of organizing a series of conversations with anthropologists from around the world on the past and future of our discipline. Covid-19 was casting new light on realities that have long been abundantly clear to scholars based outside anthropology's hegemonic centers. In the U.S., anthropologists of my generation came of age assuming we could go anywhere and talk to anyone. Suddenly, we weren't simply asking what research was possible, but why it was

worth doing. With George Floyd's murder, it felt even more urgent to challenge business as usual. A call went out to let anthropology burn so a new, better variety of scholarship could take root. Black and Indigenous anthropologists took the lead in these conversations, which quickly spread across departments and professional associations. Finally, it seemed like new voices were being heard.

For anthropologists trained in the U.S., the moment felt transformative. For anthropologists trained elsewhere, it felt both familiar and fraught. Brazilian and Mexican anthropologists, like anthropologists of color in the U.S., have been working to decolonize the discipline since at least the 1960s. They, and others, have been critiquing their discipline for decades, yet hierarchies of power and privilege remain. Scholars outside North America and Europe are no longer willing to be treated as if they are expert informants. To envision new, more equitable futures, we need to reckon with a diversity of pasts.

This forum will prove particularly helpful to anthropologists who want to do better work—which should be all of us—particularly if they are considering applying for one of our awards. Wenner-Gren receives applications from anthropologists based in nearly every country in the world, and we have reviewers from every continent except Antarctica. Applicants from the Global North can no longer get away with acting as if the anthropology they learned in graduate school is the only anthropology there is. If they don't

cite colleagues from other traditions, they miss out—not just on our funding, but also on the opportunity to advance scholarship in the field. Indonesian was never just a field language. No one should work in Brazil or elsewhere without consulting their local colleagues' work. This forum puts the broader landscape into context. It maps out interconnected yet singular histories of nation-building, colonialism, activism, professionalization, and the vicissitudes of research funding, all of which have shaped the discipline globally. Anthropologists from different backgrounds and institutional locations can learn from each other's struggles and dreams.

Of course, the question of language leads us into a thicket of complications, from which there's no easy way out. So does the question of subfield; when the contributors to this forum refer to anthropology's futures, it's social and cultural anthropology they have in mind. Still, anyone interested in the future of anthropology—which should be all of us—will benefit from these essays. Anthropology everywhere is at a crossroads. This forum can serve as a guide to what's to come.

PATHWAYS TO ANTHROPOLOGICAL FUTURES



Gustavo Lins Ribeiro

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The study of anthropologies on a global scale has expanded since the early 2000s, when the world anthropologies movement proposed it as a necessary step to tackle inequalities within the discipline and enhance anthropological scholarship by illuminating possible cross-fertilizations and futures. Although the movement was accompanied by a growth in awareness of our own

epistemological, institutional, and political diversity, much remains to be done. This collection of short essays is part of that same endeavor and hopefully will become a source of inspiration at a moment when anthropologists are engaging in a new round of rethinking the discipline by discussing, once more, the possibility of its decolonization. This project calls for assessments and a discussion of prospects. Whether in our local, regional, national, or international professional settings, we need to define our own pathways to anthropological futures. If we don't, others will, in a move that may place us in predicaments harder to solve than the current ones.

Anthropology's dilemmas have unfolded in different contexts, albeit often in relation to similar structures. Histories of interaction with differentiated cultural, social, economic, and political forces have placed the understanding of human diversity at the core of the anthropological imagination and action. However, there are many angles to the understanding of human diversity. In the context of colonialism and nation-building during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this expression's equivalents often were embedded in a semantic universe in which there prevailed a wish to swiftly integrate preexisting ethnic segments or foreign migrants into homogenizing colonial or national cultures and institutions. Anthropological research and thought, albeit in the service of a highly criticizable goal (that of changing other people's ways of living), were supposed to offer a peaceable and rational alternative to violence. Symbolic violence was surely

not a consideration for the politicians and researchers who adhered to this vision. In this line of thought, anthropology has been, from its inception, marked by the desideratum of understanding diversity in order to forge peaceful new and more complex political, cultural, economic, and social units. In this forum, the essay on Senegal provides a forceful example of how anthropology has been instrumental in contributing to the hegemony of imperialism, based on the supposed universalism of Western knowledge. The texts on Colombia, Indonesia, and Mexico exemplify the role of the discipline in nation-building.

Luckily, over time, the understanding that no one, in the name of science, reason, or goodwill, has the right to kidnap other people's capacity for agency has become well entrenched within the profession. Although many of us still believe that anthropological knowledge can help us establish friendlier ways of living together, anthropologists no longer condone those who would pursue this goal at the expense of other people's ability to be subjects of their own destinies. Such a posture coincides with my understanding that peace is anthropology's utmost metanarrative. The epistemological, ideological, and utopian operations characterizing contemporary anthropology's desideratum were well summarized by Shiv Visvanathan (2006:240) when he called the discipline "a compendium of alternative dreams," meaning not only that it advocates respect for other people's lifeways but recognizes that other worlds are possible and

that several of them already exist. In this sense, present-day anthropologists are constantly involved in utopian struggles.

But we also need to tackle the fact that anthropologists have contributed to the oppression and domination of ethnically differentiated peoples, as when they participated in the management of Japanese internment camps in the U.S. during World War II. The histories of anthropology in Austria and South Africa (and in Germany, too) show that anthropologists may hobnob with racists and provide ideological legitimation for their violent objectives. Is that a perversion of peace as an anthropological metanarrative? Or does it indicate that anthropologists, like members of any other professional community, are susceptible to political influence and power even in the most terrible ways? If the latter is true, as all of the following essays seem to confirm, then we need to have a much clearer understanding of the effects of politics (in the wider sense of the word) on anthropology. On the one hand, anthropologists can get involved in state-led social engineering. On the other hand, as the example of anthropologists persecuted in authoritarian rightist, leftist, or religious regimes illustrates, anthropologists may also be seen as threatening the state's security. This permeability to state projects and elites (in positive or negative ways), in different national settings and junctures, is an index of the discipline's vulnerability to changing political scenarios.

In the overall picture of international scientific, academic, and educational milieus, anthropology has had a minor position

compared to other disciplines virtually everywhere (except possibly in Mexico in the first half of the twentieth century and within the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [i.e., UNESCO] during its first decade). In the last few years, funding hardships and a shrinking labor market for new generations of researchers, together with increased labor precarity, have become common challenges across national settings. Indeed, some of the problems anthropology currently faces are related to the neoliberalization of research and higher education as a whole and are shared, to a lesser or greater degree, with other disciplines. But what of the discipline's autonomy when it exists, for instance, under the umbrella of regional studies or as a subarea of more powerful social sciences, which is a problem in countries such as Portugal? And what about the current difficulties anthropology faces in establishing itself in countries such as Kenya? However, in Latin America, as the Brazilian, Colombian, and Mexican cases epitomize, anthropology has steadily grown in past decades in spite of its often complicated relationship with governmental and private interests. At the same time, multiculturalism became an accepted discourse in some countries, such as Colombia and Japan, generating positive environments for anthropologists' engagements in public affairs.

It would be a mistake to see anthropologists as passive receivers or consumers of the prevailing discourses and politics of the day, as people influenced in a quasi-automatic fashion by the projects of the powers that be. In addition to

occupying its own hermeneutic and epistemological space, anthropology is also a political discourse, or as I prefer to say, a cosmopolitics (Ribeiro 2014). But the questions raised above remain. How can a metanarrative of peace become a tool for oppression? How do we avoid this negative transformation? While it is far from being a panacea, politics is the answer. We must engage in politics especially within our professional associations to encourage them to intervene actively and constantly, as collective organized political subjects, in public and state arenas where major issues are decided (see, for instance, the political role of the national anthropological associations in Brazil and Portugal). At the same time, it is common to hear that an association's leadership leans one way and its membership, another. This is true. But as long as the leadership stays in tune with and amplifies anthropologists' alternative dreams, what we teach, write, and do will continue to contribute to the protection of human rights and the construction of utopias, of other visions of the future, based on understanding and the search for common, balanced, collaborative worlds.

This collection of essays also reveals the existence of diverse international circuits and networks among anthropologists, structured by the pairing of imperialism and colonialism. Indonesia exemplifies how the Dutch influenced the country's national anthropological style; some of the relations between Portuguese and Brazilian anthropologists are made under the umbrella of the ideology of Lusophony; the influence of Mexican *indigenismo* throughout Latin America is related to

the sharing of a colonial language and history; India and Kenya have their own histories within the British linguistic and academic universes; postcolonial and post-apartheid South Africa shows how diverse settler colonialisms entailed different anthropologies within the same nation-state; and in Senegal, French imperialist articulations still mark the intellectual scenario and neocolonial governance. Austria has interesting particularities, since it was never a colonial power comparable to other European ones. However, Austria's ambivalent history of colonialist policies is exemplified by the Vienna-based Weltmuseum's contested ownership of the headdress of Moctezuma, the Aztec emperor. All of these situations, though, have been superseded by the growing presence of American anthropology as the main hegemonic center, especially after World War II, as the Japanese case epitomizes.

The overall picture I tried to summarize above could hardly be otherwise, because imperial and colonial and national histories, and especially their critical events (Das 1995) such as rebellions, revolutions, independence movements, and wars, mark all scientific and educational systems. In this regard, it would be interesting to delve into the history of Japanese anthropology's involvement with the country's imperialist expansion in Asia in the first decades of the twentieth century. Such an inquiry would surely be an interesting addition to the study of the relationships between anthropology and imperialism, which has almost always focused on British, French, and American cases. Colonial and

postcolonial predicaments have constructed different geopolitics of knowledge (Mignolo 2001) and loci of enunciation. They are explored in the essays on India, Indonesia, Kenya, and Senegal.

Pathways to Anthropological Futures and Decolonizing

What would decolonizing anthropological knowledge mean? The essays here pinpoint a bifurcated pathway that hopefully will lead to the same destination. First, decolonization involves including other voices, epistemic perspectives, and knowledges that have been systematically excluded by Eurocentric cognitive imperialism. Secondly, but not less importantly, it involves changing the institutions in which scholarly knowledges and hierarchies are produced and reproduced by opening them to people historically excluded from these settings and providing them with access to the mechanisms of power. These two pathways to anthropological futures call for decisive measures that are unevenly underway in different loci of the world system of anthropological production, including a critique of the discipline's canon (at the international and national levels) and the end of white supremacy in academia, along with gender, class, and global inequalities in access to visibility and the mechanisms of power. It is necessary to exercise cognitive justice (Meneses and Bidaseca 2018) to include other epistemologies and knowledge subjects (in both senses of the word). Such moves aim at putting aside the works of colonialism and imperialism and their remaining structures,

especially regarding the main inequalities these historical processes created or reproduced based on the power differences they took advantage of during their global expansion: racism, patriarchy, and classism.

Despite common decolonizing objectives, decolonizing anthropology may mean different things in different contexts. The bottom line seems to be the degree to which nation-states were westernized during and after the colonial experience as well as modernized by imperialist capital. The consideration of these powerful structural forces is mandatory if we think that the task ahead requires the establishment of alliances among and between different political subjects subalternized by imperial, colonial, or capitalist expansions.

A country's position within the world system as well as the particularities of its national history and ethnic segmentation are crucial variables. It is imperative to take into account, for instance, the difference between French or British imperialism and that of Austria or Japan, or the differences among Colombia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, and Senegal. Indeed, diverse histories of Eurocentric expansion, racializations, and local indigenizations, resistances, and politicizations within and beyond the academic system are central to this debate. Think, for instance, of what Gupta and Stoolman (2021) point out as one main problem in mainstream U.S. anthropology: the erasure of the colonialist and imperialist setting from its framework of analysis. By

contrast, since the early 1960s, Brazilian and Mexican anthropologists have incorporated the impact of colonialism and conflict in capitalism's expanding economic frontiers into their interpretations. Brazilian anthropologist Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, with his notion of interethnic friction, and Mexican anthropologists Pablo González Casanova and Rodolfo Stavenhagen, with their postulations on internal colonialism, come to mind. So does the 1971 Barbados Declaration "For the Liberation of the Indians" (IWGIA 1971), which was a turning point in Latin American anthropological politics. It denounced the ethnocides and genocides caused by religious missions and state and private interests, criticized conservative anthropology, and called for an anthropology that, among other political goals, commits itself to the "struggle for liberation" and acts "on behalf of the Indian communities" (IWGIA 1971:7). At the same time, the course taken by nation-building in many countries in Latin America affected national anthropologies, whether or not anthropologists adhered to the mestizo model of the nation. The quest for knowledge decolonization may entail different receptions of and articulations with Indigenous or diasporic subalternized subjects' struggles unfolding within national scenarios and/or imperial metropolises. The impact of the Black Lives Matter movement in Portugal or the protests against the persistence of local colonial symbols in educational milieus during the Rhodes Must Fall movement in South Africa illustrate this point. Both mobilizations show that decolonizing nation-states, public spaces, and knowledges is also a transnational political endeavor.

At the same time, nonhegemonic anthropologists want to be heard in global anthropological conversations and to offer responses to pressing planetary problems (see, for instance, the Indonesian and Japanese essays). This aspiration is not only related to the specificities of different loci of enunciation, i.e., by the geopolitical locations and characteristics of different epistemic communities, but sometimes also to critiques of the unequal access to global circuits of knowledge dissemination structured by language and other factors. In this context, South Africa is an interesting comparative example. We could ask, what has made white South African anthropologists influential within the world system of anthropological production? Could it be language or participation in British imperial educational and scholarly circuits and networks? But then why haven't Indian anthropologists been equally influential? These questions bring up the issue of how international circuits of prestige and visibility are constructed. It shows that language is a factor but not the only one. In fact, awareness of language barriers in global academic communication led Japanese and Brazilian scholars to create journals in English to internationally disseminate their scholarship (*Japanese Review of Cultural Anthropology*; *Vibrant-Virtual Brazilian Anthropology*). However, in spite of these cosmopolitan initiatives, ignoring Brazilian and Japanese production remains a problem. As the Japanese case seems to clearly reveal, it's the ethnocentric gaze of American and Western researchers that has led hegemonic scholars to ignore the

anthropological productivity and agency of other anthropological epistemic communities.

There are several proposals to decolonize the academic status quo and the political economy of academic prestige and visibility currently under discussion. They put emphasis on different demands according to the various loci of enunciation from which the colonality of knowledge, epistemicide, and cognitive injustice are being criticized. Decolonizing anthropology is a mode for debating pathways to anthropological futures that has its own histories. It is embedded in different conflictive institutional, political, and interpretive environments that make it hard to foresee which outcomes will prevail in diverse scenarios. In this sense, decolonizing is a form of utopian struggle, a way of struggling in the present against academic subalternization that aims at the construction of a different future.

Perhaps, in its grand scope, the current quest for decolonizing is demanding too much from anthropologists. But it is undoubtably right in asking scholars to consciously oppose the discriminatory, oppressive, and exploitative systems responsible for much of the unjust inequalities of the current world. I find it interesting that, in the 2020s, decolonization is consolidating itself as a discourse that calls for the surpassing of class, gender, racial, and international inequities. Concurrently, I believe that we need to keep in mind the huge problems that capitalism, a most powerful machine of inequality production, continues to cause for a planet

haunted by complex challenges, such as those stemming from climate change—or the capitalocene, as some call it—growing interimperialist tensions, and proxy wars. More than ever, we need to add to our horizon a postimperialist imagination.

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TRANSCENDING ANTHROPOLOGY'S PRESENT



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To a substantial extent, anthropology's future will depend on the ways in which anthropological knowledge is critically solidified, elaborated, disseminated, discussed, and practiced worldwide. Reflections on the prevailing conditions and premises under which anthropological knowledge is produced and circulated are thus crucial for sound assessments of the field's future. These conditions and premises are shaped by the intrinsic interrelation between two main sets of relevant forces. One set includes predominantly content-related matters, such as theories, concepts, topics, methods, debates, and forms of application, all of them related to insights. The other set includes predominantly power-related matters, such as funding opportunities, institutional architectures, political priorities,

language hierarchies, or access to academic and nonacademic media outlets. For any network of anthropologists, both sets of factors are unavoidably framed within the national, continental, and global conditions for the production of anthropological knowledge.

The following remarks begin by outlining the author's primary institutional environment in Austria and the European Union (EU) and how this background has shaped currently prevailing features in local and regional anthropology. From there, the argument addresses some of the wider global issues in this debate, in view of both its content and its power-related global dimensions.

Local and Regional Conditions

Today, Austria belongs to a group of small and fairly affluent European countries that are either members of the EU or have close affinities to it (Hannerz and Gingrich 2017). Many of anthropology's institutional and power-related features in Austria are thus comparable with those in the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, or Norway. In these countries, there is strong national public funding for research in the social sciences and humanities, with growth in the relevance of big interregional and EU public funding, and some limited private funding. A second parallel is intellectuals' strong affinity to English as a public and academic lingua franca, although communication and publication in local languages remain important to an extent.

A third parallel among most of these and a few other (e.g., German, Finnish) academic landscapes is the enduring institutional separation between anthropology and ethnology at home and in Europe (i.e., folklore studies) and comparative sociocultural anthropology worldwide. Although content-wise this distinction is becoming increasingly blurred, it continues to be relevant in terms of budgets, staff, degrees, and media outlets. Many representatives of both institutional settings envision a future of increasing collaboration and interrelation between them, provided this is not accompanied by deterioration in institutional infrastructures and finances.

Apart from this separation, other legacies from Austria's past also continue to inform sociocultural anthropology's regional present. One set of factors relates to the Habsburg era before 1918, when Vienna was the capital of a vast multilingual, territorial empire with no substantial colonies beyond Europe. Originally in the interest of that empire's coherence and integration, a certain emphasis on comparative, nonnationalist, and cross-cultural methodologies has remained an intrinsic element in local anthropologists' approaches to this global field. This also includes the central importance of Vienna as the field's primary institutional location and an ensuing appreciation for the relevance of museums. Today, museums are among several crucial outlets for anthropological knowledge to the local public. In turn, that appreciation of museums has led to Vienna museums' open and well-informed participation in current debates about colonial legacies and the original donor populations'

legitimate requests for adequate access to their own cultural heritage. Last but not least among anthropology's productive legacies from the Habsburg era, an intermittent but substantial appreciation of ethnographic fieldwork in its primarily small-scale and qualitative dimensions is worth mentioning. In part parallel to large-scale imperial expeditions of the colonial and orientalist type, these small-scale ethnographic fieldwork endeavors began in the 1880s, often with support from philological and museum circles. Hence, they emerged out of Vienna parallel to Franz Boas' early fieldwork endeavors launched from the Berlin Museum für Völkerkunde, many years before Bronislaw Malinowski. That fieldwork orientation thus has a strong local background.

A second set of factors from the past, with a profound impact on anthropology's present, relates to the Nazi period, when Austria was occupied for 7 years by Hitler's Germany. Many residents at the time were either Nazis themselves or at least supported that regime, while opponents and/or minority members were persecuted and either murdered, imprisoned, or forced underground or into exile. Sociocultural and physical anthropologists were on both sides of that terrorist, criminal, occupationist scenario. While many of them engaged in and benefitted from it in Europe and Africa, quite a few became victims and/or participated in Austrian resistance activities at home, or from exile in British-administered India, or out of Sweden, Switzerland, and North America. Three main consequences of that experience may be identified for

sociocultural anthropology's present in Austria. First, the wide institutional separation between physical (or biological) anthropology and sociocultural anthropology (as well as from folklore studies) has remained uncontested ever since 1945. Second, the meticulous and critical elaboration of anthropology's local and regional histories has emerged as a crucial subfield in all realms of the German-speaking academic world and beyond (Gingrich and Rohrbacher 2021). Third, at least since the mid-1970s the basic epistemological and practical premises of sociocultural anthropology in Austria have been firmly grounded in anti-racist, anti-colonial, and pluralist orientations (Gingrich 2021).

Zooming in now more closely on today's features and future potential, sociocultural anthropologists in Austria largely see themselves as local representatives of a transnational, intercontinental, and/or global field. Attitudes of most local anthropologists vis-à-vis those in major institutional and political power positions have remained skeptical but creative. Within the higher regional academic echelons, the field thereby has maintained specialized museums that follow European standards, specialized departments and units at several universities in and beyond Vienna, and the Institute for Social Anthropology at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Academic education and training are no longer confined to forming the next generations of scholarly academics, but of practitioners as well. Comparable in this regard, again, to their colleagues in other small, affluent European countries, at least 25 percent of professional sociocultural

anthropologists now in Austria were trained elsewhere, often with idioms other than German as their first language and with citizenship other than Austrian. Furthermore, several Austrian anthropologists have pursued careers in North America or elsewhere in Europe for substantial periods. Active engagement not only in the field's leading journals but also in influential or powerful international institutions, by Austrian sociocultural anthropologists or by colleagues affiliated with Austrian institutions, remains crucial. This includes interactions with the European Research Council (the EU's largest funding institution for non-applied basic research) as applicants, panel members, or reviewers, as well as with several other national or transnational EU funding institutions. Moreover, the active involvement of Austrian-trained or Austria-based sociocultural anthropologists in the operations of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) has been a good brand signature in this field from EASA's foundation (1989) to this day. Crucial cross-continental, institutional cooperation with academic sites ranging from Indonesia to Canada completes these endeavors.

Whether the field's relative success story in national and Central European settings since around 1975 has also led to relevant research contributions on an international scale should be left to other colleagues to decide. Still, an affirmative answer seems to be clearly indicated, in this author's view, by wider scholarly appreciation and resonances for some key publications authored by Austria-

based scholars. These include, for instance, Peter Schweitzer's investigations into circumpolar conditions including climate change (e.g., Schweitzer and Povoroznyuk 2019), Ayşe Çağlar's work on urban development and migration on a global scale (e.g., Çağlar and Glick-Schiller 2018), recent advances in medical anthropology by Stephan Kloos (e.g., Kloos 2017) and Eva-Maria Knoll (e.g., Campbell and Knoll 2020), as well as a renewed interest in anthropological comparison.

A Note on Decolonization

I have already pointed out that Austria's history is ambivalent with regard to colonialism. The country was never a substantial colonial power outside Europe, and in a way it was itself subjected to quasi-colonial aggression by Nazi Germany, although many benefitted from that in some respects. Simultaneously, however, Imperial Austria participated in a global hegemonic colonial constellation. Moreover, parts of the Habsburg realm (e.g., Bosnia) may be identified as colonial domains inside Europe, with some limited Habsburg control in international zones of northern China and elsewhere. In a different but comparable way, Austrian-based Catholic missionaries before and after World War II played a central role in several colonial fields. This concerned transformations of local lifestyles, social interactions, and regional worldviews in many parts of today's Global South. Ever since the colonial era ended in most parts of Africa and Asia, Austrian governments and

companies have continued to participate in maintaining global inequalities, often changing their practices only reluctantly, by belatedly accepting, for example, Scandinavian alternatives.

I therefore endorse, where relevant, those academic efforts that focus on critical reassessments of local institutional, economic, military, and academic records with regard to Austria's involvement in the colonial and postcolonial pasts elsewhere, including local museums' inventories.

Nevertheless, it is useful to remember Gustavo Lins Ribeiro's caveat, as formulated in a recent interview (Ribeiro 2021), that decolonization is better understood not as a generalizing moralist term, but rather as a fine-tuned working tool adapted for relevant contexts in terms of time, space, objects, institutions, and topics.

As a general term, "decolonization," in my view, has an epistemological and methodological value that is at least equal to practical concerns regarding access to museum objects. That general dimension of the term relates to the fact that many of global sociocultural anthropology's key referent figures in philosophy and epistemology are white men from the Global North—whether their names are Hegel or Heidegger, Husserl or Gramsci, Foucault or Rorty. I have repeatedly emphasized (e.g., Gingrich 2010) that a serious contribution by sociocultural anthropologists to future efforts toward intellectual decolonization will concern this particular realm. This will include a wide range of possibilities, from

retrieving and integrating works by masters of non-European philosophies to the reassessment and further elaboration of ethnographers' valuable works on Indigenous epistemologies and cosmologies. In today's global situation, in which Euro-American philosophy can no longer maintain its erstwhile master-narrative status, anthropologists' contestation of the legacies of Euro-American thinkers should be an absolutely normal and self-evident endeavor. Of course, contesting is not synonymous with discarding but includes possibilities for reassemblage and innovation. Sociocultural anthropologists in most countries around the globe are indeed in a privileged position to take on leading roles in this crucial dimension of intellectual decolonization.

Other Voices, Other Futures

Any appropriate vision for anthropology's future(s) has to combine utopian perspectives with realism, by not only breaking with bad routine, but also by making coherent use of today's unfolding potentials and necessities.

When contemplating sociocultural anthropology's future(s), that realism reminds us that this field will only have a future if it continues to address humanity's most urgent and pressing topics, at the core of which lie all major environmental questions and issues of disease and health, assessed through sociocultural diversity in the past and present. If anthropologists fail to address these properly, by their own means and tools but also through considerable

cross-disciplinary efforts, then their field has no future at all. Consequently, this means that for the next quarter century or so, other topics and research orientations in all likelihood will have to be considered less relevant. In turn, sociocultural anthropologists would be well advised to strengthen or reactivate their existing forms of cooperation with the environmental and life sciences (Tsing 2015).

Breaking with bad habits will also mean that sociocultural anthropologists in academic positions will have to stop looking down on their colleagues who are practitioners in the field. Instead, like any other field that has managed to outlive the twentieth century, we have to recognize that coming of age for an academic discipline implies the maturity to combine efforts, rather than ignore each other. Top medical researchers will fail if they ignore their practicing colleagues' clinical insights. The same is true for sociocultural anthropology; practitioners will matter more than ever before.

Last but not least, public funding for sociocultural anthropologists in the Global North will need to rest on the binding inclusion of valid cooperation with scholars from the relevant parts of the Global South. This is already an existing clause included in the requirements of some of the more affluent European countries' funding institutions, and it should become a general rule.

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BRAZILIAN ANTHROPOLOGY RELOADED



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When my article “Ethnology Brazilian Style” (Ramos 1990) came out more than 30 years ago, the number of anthropologists in Brazil—a mere 800—added up to but a fraction of the current membership in the Brazilian Association of Anthropology (ABA), created in 1955 (ABA 1990). The number of ABA members now—more than 2,000—by no means includes all professional and aspirant anthropologists in the country. The scenario today is strikingly different from what it was back when all Brazilian anthropologists knew each other personally or by name, when anthropology was a cozy community of thinkers (Velho 1980). In these three decades, some things changed, others remained as solid as ever.

First, what persists. Historically, research with Indigenous peoples, as a major intellectual interest, set the tone of Brazilian anthropology for years, even decades. Today, despite the growing number of professionals and interests,

Indigenous ethnography continues to be a hallmark of the discipline, albeit in a symbolic rather than statistical sense. We might say that this situation mirrors the very character of the Indigenous presence in this country, where Indigenous people make up a tiny percentage of the national population: a small number of anthropologists studying a small minority, yet both capable of firing the collective imagination of those in the discipline.

Indigenous studies were the focus of two major ideas exported by Brazilian anthropology, namely, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira's interethnic friction, mainly in the 1960s and 1970s, and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's Amerindian perspectivism, at the turn of this century. For decades, a plethora of theses and dissertations explored the concepts laid out by Cardoso de Oliveira. It was *the* research model and conceptual framework par excellence. Two decades later, the notion of perspectivism became the hegemonic model for Indigenous ethnography. It was the germ of the ontological turn, which is still in vogue, albeit waning.

Why did these notions travel abroad from a country away from the center of anthropological production? A solid answer would require an equally solid inquiry; as a preliminary hunch, we dare say that the absence of an arching faithfulness to specific creeds has freed Brazilian thinking to experiment with theoretical bricolages when research findings require them. Inspiration has come mainly from France, Britain, Mexico, and the U.S. An amalgam of distinct

traditions has resulted in what figures as Brazilian creativity, with an accent no doubt borrowed from the variegated sites of fieldwork (Indigenous, Black, peasant, urban, foreign, Amazonian, Northeastern Brazilian, etc.).

Funding sources are a second factor that has persisted. In Brazilian anthropology, the discipline's dependence on public funding has proven just as resilient as the centrality of Indigenous studies within it. Positive though it is for recognizing the responsibility of the state for the country's collective good, this dependence constantly subjects scientific endeavors to political whims, sometimes (as right now) leading to drastic budget cuts that jeopardize both teaching and research. In the case of graduate programs, the initial thrust came from Ford Foundation funds, with the tacit agreement that the state would soon take over that task, which did occur nearly half a century ago.

Another constant feature is Brazilian anthropology's public vocation. The choice of research topics and sites reveals its involvement with issues of nation-building. As an example, suffice it to evoke ABA's engagement in the entire process to formulate a new constitution during the 1988 Constituent Assembly, which led to a substantial improvement in policies to defend Indigenous rights. In this respect, Brazil hardly differs from other Latin American countries where anthropology has flourished. This is perhaps one reason why many Latin American students have chosen to do graduate work in Brazil. For a long time, Brazilian researchers, like

their colleagues throughout the continent, dedicated themselves to anthropology at home, seemingly a novelty in centers of anthropological production.

Now, the changes. Among the perceptible changes in the discipline over the past 30 years is the sheer number of professionals. The tremendous expansion of graduate programs in anthropology countrywide has enlarged the scope of research themes manifold (Trajano Filho and Ribeiro 2004; Simião and Feldman-Bianco 2018) and intensified the influence of anthropology in the academic milieu and to a large extent, in public debates (pace Eriksen 2006).

With the proliferation of professionals and research interests, the anthropology-at-home tradition now coexists with a growing trend to do research abroad. Among the new sites are countries belonging to the Lusotopy ecumene (Pina-Cabral 2015)—mostly former Portuguese colonies such as Guiné-Bissau, Cabo Verde, and East Timor. Thus, anthropology abroad is as new to Brazilians as anthropology at home is to North American and European colleagues. Internationalization of anthropological research, however, has not diminished the profession's inward drive, now oriented to the critique of forms of domination other than class and ethnic subjugation. Topics such as gender, race, health, corruption, governance, science and technology, sexuality, etc. engage the graduate programs operating in the country. In less than 10 years, these programs have increased

in number from 21 (Simião and Feldman-Bianco 2018:36) to more than 30.

A most welcome development in Brazilian academia is the increasing number of Indigenous and Black students enrolled in anthropology departments. Affirmative action, implemented in 2012, has greatly contributed to this and proved to be a positive policy to correct the centuries-old neglect of minority education (Baniwa 2019). In 2020, there were at least 60,000 Indigenous university students (Baniwa, Tuxá, and Terena 2020) and more than 20 Indigenous lawyers and other professionals in Brazil. It is noteworthy that a large number of those students chose anthropology as their career.

The advent of Indigenous intellectuals in the academy opens up some promising vistas. Bringing with them a plethora of non-Western forms of knowledge, they are in a particularly privileged position to practice what anthropologists advocate but don't always do themselves, namely, adopt an attitude of suspicion toward the notion that there is a single story. There have been Indigenous negative reactions, for instance, to perspectivists who simplify and misinterpret cultural features as they sacrifice detail to "elegance," because life is infinitely more complex when regarded from within.

If taken to its ultimate conclusions, Indigenous influence on anthropological thinking can potentially elicit further self-analysis and critique within the profession, springing from

this new, more ecumenical scenario. Since long-standing ethnographic research is largely responsible for the interest Indigenous students have in anthropology, there is nothing more appropriate than for anthropology to apply this interest to refine its approach to the celebrated *other*. Unlike countries where anthropologists were at the service of the powers that be, leaving a bitter taste of domination amongst the “natives” in Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America, anthropologists very often fought for Indigenous rights while regarding themselves equally as targets of colonialism.

Hence, nothing prevents these often-successful political partnerships from extending to academia, by welcoming Indigenous systems of thought to the classroom on an equal footing with the academic armchair “theories” ¹ that have fed the anthropological imagination for more than a century. Rather than translating Indigenous systems into the slanted idiom of what Clifford Geertz (1983:57) called experience-distant concepts, why not bring them up directly from their source, language barriers notwithstanding? Then we might experiment with a sort of ecumenical anthropology (Ramos 2018)—a rebellious discipline (no oxymoron intended) at once multithought and multivoiced—as befits a profession bent on human diversity. Unlike in New Zealand, for instance, where the thrust of decolonization comes mainly from the brave effort of the colonized (Smith 1999), Brazil would have the conditions of possibility to put forth such a project, including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars’ intent on creating an intellectual ecumene. Whether Brazil’s

anthropologists are willing to break free from die-hard academic habits and accept the challenge posed by this joint venture is a burning question.

All of this signals the need to decentralize, decolonize, and “de-eliticize” Knowledge with a big K. From the innermost and smallest level upward, like Russian dolls, *mutatis mutandis*, what I say about ecumenical anthropology vis-à-vis Indigenous knowledge can also be said about the worldwide division of anthropological labor: the Demiurge’s “chosen” Center versus the “forgotten” Periphery. Are these terms objectionable? Yes, they are. Yet, no matter how much we try, we never succeed in equalizing their referents, for the simple and obvious reason that the real world is not symmetrical and differential world power is one of the hardest facts on earth. Attempts to deconstruct European predominance (Chakrabarty 2000), for instance, are very welcome, but so far have had no effect on the existing global order of academic power. Impervious to neat classifications, the unequal exchange between Center and Periphery will continue to haunt us, perhaps indefinitely. We might try another pair: anthropologies of the North versus anthropologies of the South. But consider, for instance, German anthropology. It is located in the North, but is it *of* the North? Or Australian anthropology. It is in the South, but is it *of* the South? Would German anthropology be part of the Center? Would Australian anthropology be part of the Periphery? I am not, of course, referring to individual anthropologists, who can achieve worldwide recognition wherever they happen to be

located, but to anthropological communities. Be that as it may, since changing the order of factors does not alter the product, selecting one pair is equal to selecting any other or none at all.

Elsewhere I asked, “What then would be the central issues that prevent the blooming of a genuinely cosmopolitan anthropology?” Here are some of them: “the strong linguistic hegemony, the inequality of the editorial market, the intransitivity of ideas from Periphery to Metropolis (or worse, the latter’s unwillingness to acknowledge inspiration coming from the former), and even the studied ignorance about what is produced outside the Metropolis. All of this greatly contributes to the invisibility of that which is not Metropolitan” (Ramos 2012:115). Addressing our present anticipation of alternative anthropologies, I excuse myself for repeating the obvious:

If Metropolitan anthropologists left Metropolis just for a moment and examined what anthropology looks like in the Periphery, they would see that contextualizing the local in a wider political perspective is the bread and butter of Mexican, Argentine or Brazilian anthropologies, to limit ourselves to the Latin American circuit. . . . Hence, for those who grew up professionally with the perception that to do anthropology is a political act . . . , which, by definition, favors the contextualization of social transactions within and between peoples, those issues that . . . have disturbed our Metropolitan colleagues seem to us a little like inventing gunpowder anew. . .

. I hope someday, somehow, we can pierce through the Metropolis shell and inseminate it with the virus of self-doubt (Ramos 2012:119).

The welcome enterprise titled “Pathways to Anthropological Futures” is a promising step toward an equitable and inspiring Anthropology ecumene.

Footnotes

1.

“Theory” is too grandiose a term to fit the interpretations, hypotheses, hunches, and musings that pervade the social sciences.

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NOTES FROM COLOMBIA



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If human beings are the subjects of history—but not in conditions decided by them—our futures depend on how we understand our pasts and how these interpretations are articulated through our present perspectives. For this reason, to engage in a conversation about pathways to world anthropological futures, it is relevant to consider what we have thought of the past and how we currently position

ourselves within different epistemic anthropological collectivities. My contribution to this forum is tied to a peripheralized tradition within the world system of anthropological production: anthropologies made in Colombia and spoken in Spanish.

To tie anthropology's emergence in Colombia to the creation of its first institutions explicitly defined as anthropological ones is to risk falling into a historicism of the "first in Europe-United States and then in the rest of the world" variety that Chakrabarty (2000) warned us against. Unfortunately, the dominant view of anthropology's history as a discipline is akin to diffusionism, depicted as arriving in countries like Colombia from certain places in Europe or the U.S., where it originated. This vision runs the risk of reproducing a Eurocentric historicism.

Thus, in order to understand the history of Colombian anthropology and other world anthropologies (including those imagined as the originators of the discipline), we have to denature historicist accounts that have been sedimented generation after generation. Like myths in many societies, these accounts have captured the imagination of fervent colleagues and constitute the intelligible principles that define what anthropology has been. Inspired by Eric Wolf's well-known *Europe and the People without History* (Wolf 1982), we could say that this historicism has established the notion that a handful of anthropologies have history while other anthropologies do not. These others have no place in

dominant histories of discipline. At best, they appear as footnotes.

At first glance, the most tempting way to question the idea that anthropology (in the singular) came from Europe and the U.S. to supposedly *tabula rasa* territories, like Colombia, is to think of these countries' intellectuals and institutions as precursors. Preexisting concerns, studies, and approaches are identified and considered "evidently" anthropological, anthropology *avant la lettre*, if you will. In Colombia, for example, the Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval is mentioned as such a precursor. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, he wrote a treatise (*De instauranda aethiopum salute*) on how to catechize the enslaved Africans who were brought by the hundreds to the port of Cartagena. Since Sandoval commented on the customs of the nations and castes of these Black or Ethiopian people, many consider him the first anthropologist or ethnographer of Afro-descendants in the country.

However, we cannot counter Eurocentric historicism with the epistemic violence of historical presentism. It is impossible to think about the pasts of anthropologies in different ways unless we interrupt the historical presentism that inhabits the essentialized conception of anthropology in the singular. Problematizing this perspective was one of the pillars of the world anthropologies conversation.¹ Inviting colleagues to abandon the assumption that anthropology possesses a transcendental identity guaranteed by objects such as culture

or alterity, a methodology such as ethnography, or a communality of cultural heroes like Bronislaw Malinowski and Clifford Geertz, is a task difficult to achieve, but it has been present in the world anthropologies project since the beginning of the new millennium. Like Michel Rolph-Trouillot, Clifford Geertz, and Renato Rosaldo, three authors who circulate in the American anthropological establishment, the proponents of world anthropologies posited that anthropology is what anthropologists do in institutionalized contexts and, to return to Immanuel Wallerstein and Pierre Bourdieu, on the different scales at which power relations and disputes define the world system of anthropological production as a field of forces.

The resilience of the idea of anthropology in the singular, as a discipline that shares a transcendental unicity, is part and parcel of many scholars' canonical imagination. Indeed, anthropology tends to be imagined by certain colleagues in certain loci as an essential entity, in a kind of platonic, metaphysical exercise that can be undone by the most elementary genealogical or ethnographic scrutiny. It is this essentiality that guarantees anthropology as one thing that is put into play with historical presentism. If someone has described the customs of enslaved people from Africa, then what else could those descriptions be if not anthropology? Perhaps a babbling anthropology, with obvious Eurocentric arrogance, but without a doubt it is anthropology for our historical presentists.

From perspectives such as the decolonial turn (Ramón Grosfoguel), postcolonial studies (Stuart Hall), or world-system theory (Immanuel Wallerstein), Europe is neither previous nor external to the modern or colonial world-system. Europe is not a demiurgic entity or subject that creates history, science, or anthropology, later to be taken, like modernity (Mitchel 2000; Gruner 2010), to the rest of the world. Provincializing hyper-real Europe (Chakrabarty 2000), disengaging from coloniality (Mignolo 2007), or interrupting the reality effect of North Atlantic universal norms (Trouillot 2003) are analytical strategies useful to interrupt the historicism and presentism sedimented in the dominant accounts of the origins and history of anthropology (in the singular). Taken together, these strategies, which are heterogeneous and have different scopes, are vital not only to conceive but also to make possible other pathways to anthropological futures.

At the same time, Colombia's historical and sociocultural particularities have generated specific anthropological developments, conceptions, and practices in the country. Even if Colombian anthropology inscribes itself in what Esteban Krotz (1997) has called "anthropologies of the South," this does not mean there are no specificities related to national contexts (Restrepo 2020). Although it shares certain features with other Latin American anthropologies, following Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (2000), what I posit there is a Colombian anthropological *style*.

The decolonization of present and future anthropologies made in Colombia is linked, among other issues, to how we narrate our histories. There have been times when decolonizing accounts have been asserted with greater force and embodied in concrete, ethical-political practices. For example, in the 1970s, strong questions arose concerning the more aseptic views of anthropological work, the relevance of the theoretical paradigms in vogue in metropolitan anthropologies, and the scientism of methodological frameworks that had as their horizon the accumulation of anthropological knowledge.

This was not unique to Colombia; it also happened in other Latin American countries such as Mexico or Peru, and even in the U.S. (Hymes 1974 [1969]). However, it is possible to trace local inflections and concretions. There was a moment of rebellion in the classrooms of the four Colombian anthropology departments that existed at that time. It was boosted by the strong social and political mobilization that had resulted in, for instance, peasant, popular, and Indigenous uprisings and the birth of different guerrilla movements in the country. In those years, the search for a Colombian anthropology implied questioning the ethical-political agendas of metropolitan centers that, appeased by an aseptic neutrality and objectivity, pretended to study subalternized societies in the name of science or salvage ethnography's urgencies, without directly committing to local struggles or questioning the hierarchies and privileges that made possible a model of cognitive extractivism from which

metropolitan anthropologies and their partners benefited within and without Colombia (Caviedes 2002). This questioning of metropolitan anthropologies meant imagining new field methodologies in which the problematization of the hierarchical and extractivist subject/object relationship led to more horizontal and heterodox research processes, oriented to accompany and/or collaborate with agendas defined by the people with whom anthropologists worked. In this framework, multiple styles of intellectual labor and methodologies emerged among anthropologists and other social scientists. The best known of them is participatory action research, developed by Orlando Fals Borda.

In the 1990s, Myriam Jimeno (2008) proposed the concept of “citizen-researcher” to indicate how our work has been oriented to study sociocultural issues in our own country. This notion also means that anthropologists share, with the people they study, similar concerns for Colombia’s present and future. Therefore, our anthropological duty implies a contribution as citizens that analyze the country’s problems and challenges with knowledge based on extensive fieldwork. From this perspective, anthropological research is an ethical-political practice within the framework of the nation-state.

My understanding of anthropology in Colombia is influenced by the contributions of the world anthropologies perspective described in Ribeiro and Escobar (2006). In this framework, the specificities of the discipline are not understood as dilettante derivations of a single and homogeneous

anthropology (made in the metropolis) but as the result of processes of localization that constitute what existing anthropologies have been and will be. For instance, the fact that Colombia is the country in Hispanic America with the largest Afro-descendant population (and that a significant portion of this population lives in the tropical rainforests of the Colombian Pacific and in cities such as Cali and Cartagena) has posed a big challenge to anthropology. Colombian anthropologists have staged debates and generated concepts for thinking about issues related to these populations, such as invisibility, stereotyping, marronage, and ethnicization. But the work of anthropologists has also contributed to the design and implementation of public policies oriented toward the recognition of Afro-Colombian rights.

The first Indigenous organizations emerged and were consolidated between the 1960s and 1980, and many anthropologists participated actively in their struggles. The multiculturalist turn, which was formalized in the 1991 Political Constitution of Colombia, is largely the result of anthropologists' work. For decades, they have produced knowledge that allows the public and policy makers to understand and value the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity that exists among Indigenous and Black communities. Today, Colombia has some of the most progressive legislation in the continent when it comes to the recognition of cultural diversity. These achievements, in turn,

have strongly marked the professional practice of local anthropologies.

An armed conflict has shaped the country's political history for more than 50 years. This provides yet another example of how the specificities of the anthropologies made in Colombia are related to the realities of the national setting. Topics such as violence or displacement, methodologies including different approaches to the ethnography of the conflict, and conceptual elaborations focusing on emotional discourses and war masculinities, influence the trajectories and interests of Colombian practitioners. The armed conflict has also had an impact on employment opportunities; anthropologists, together with a large group of diverse experts, have been hired to carry out government measures and humanitarian actions organized by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international cooperation agencies.

In order to further understand anthropology's complexity in Colombia, it is important to distinguish between academic anthropology, as established in universities and institutes devoted to research and teaching in formal programs, and anthropology as a professional practice, which represents the majority of the anthropological work in the country.

In the last two decades, we have grown from an academic milieu limited to four departments (with only undergraduate training) to 15 centers, of which half provide graduate programs (four master's degree programs and three doctoral

programs). The number of graduates in the first 10 years of the current millennium tripled the total in the entire country from the 1940s to the end of the 1980s. Undergraduate programs (leading to what are called bachelor's degrees or general degrees in other countries) used to be the only setting for anthropological training. They are now under pressure from university bureaucracies aiming to make them cheaper, faster, less demanding, and—hopefully—online. The undermining of undergraduate degrees (not only in anthropology) is a process that has been underway since the 1990s. The reduction in the number of semesters and the elimination of a dissertation requirement had already managed to lighten and trivialize undergraduate anthropological training.

In recent decades, the changes in Colombian anthropologies have been not only in size and composition, but also in their theories and methodologies. The anthropology of Indigeneity is no longer prominent. The study of Indigenous peoples is now marginal and questioned by most students and professors. Furthermore, the conversations, authors, categories, and bibliographical references have ceased to be predominantly intradisciplinary and now cover diverse fields and a range of contemporary social and cultural theories.

The Colombian anthropological academic milieu has undergone a radical transformation in the last two decades as a consequence of intense internal dynamics and the impact of a productivist ethos oriented toward the publication of

articles in indexed journals. This situation has been encouraged by science and technology policies that use electronic forms to measure and standardize the production of individuals and institutions. In addition, we should note the precarious employment situation of professors and researchers in public and private universities and research institutes.

Unlike in the mid-1980s, anthropologists' work outside academia is currently much more varied since it is not predominantly limited to state projects targeting Indigenous or rural populations. New jobs have appeared in a field larger than the academy, including development projects, market studies, interventions in local populations, consultancies, NGO activities, the provision of expert opinions, and more. These new forms of employment require keeping office hours from eight to five and coexisting with other experts in different fields.

The changes that have taken place in the last three decades are conceptual, but they also impact academic life and professional practice. They go beyond the academic world and show a consolidated and thriving discipline, with specificities and strengths closely associated with the country's particularities. Colombians have broadened their spectrum of anthropological interests and areas of relevance. In this sense, the future of anthropologies made in Colombia does not entail their disappearance or decline. However, we should not forget that we are talking about anthropologies

that are becoming more docile in responding to market and government demands. Everything seems to foreshadow the rise of productivist anthropological enterprises, a practice without much critical perspective and with little political relevance.

Footnotes

1.

Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, Arturo Escobar, Marisol de la Cadena, Susana Narotzky, Eduardo Archetti, Esteban Krotz, Myriam Jimeno, myself, and many other colleagues participated in this conversation. See Ribeiro and Escobar (2006) for a discussion of world anthropologies.

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MEXICAN ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE CRISIS OF STATE HEGEMONY



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The history of twentieth-century Mexico is, in many ways, the story of the triumph of anthropology. Born at the turn of the nineteenth century in a modest corner of the National Museum in Mexico City, anthropology was a consolidated discipline by 1963, when the museum moved to its current modernist location and acquired its definitive name, the National Museum of History and Anthropology. Entirely supported by the state, the discipline's influence was felt well beyond the academic field, as it played a decisive role in shaping agrarian policy, public education, and a nationalist

culture that shaped the lives of millions of rural and urban Mexicans.

Like so many other things during the twentieth century, Mexican anthropology was part of a nationalist enterprise that sought to decolonize science and reject all forms of cultural imperialism. The pioneers of Mexican anthropology were trained at American institutions such as Columbia University and the University of Chicago, in projects funded by U.S. public and private agencies or by individual scholars doing fieldwork in Mexico (e.g., Bronislaw Malinowski or Robert Redfield). They gave way to a generation of researchers educated at the National School of Anthropology and History (ENAH) or the National Autonomous University of Mexico. These nationally educated anthropologists developed a hegemonic style of thought known as *indigenismo*, which comprised a (nationalist) theory of social, linguistic, and cultural change; a complex discourse on national identity; and a collection of ethnographic methods to account for the diversity of Indigenous peoples.

In Mexico, modernization and anthropology almost became synonyms. The paradigmatic anthropologist should know the history and theories of the discipline, available in translations of Euro-American classics published by Fondo de Cultura Económica, the state's publishing house. However, the ideal anthropologist should be, above all, a competent fieldworker, applying various techniques to provide information on the social condition of peasants and Indigenous peoples.

From the state's point of view, anthropology's worth resided in its potential contribution to governmentality. This novel discipline could provide a scientific approach for the flagship policies of the revolutionary state and become an instrument for social intervention.¹ Its main task was strengthening the nation by helping to create a homogeneous population, modified through persuasion and technocratic mediation rather than coercion or violent compulsion. Anthropologists were revolutionary agents implementing land redistribution, linguistic change policies, or integrating Indigenous communities to state and party rule.

Revolutionary Mexico (1910–1940) reserved an essential role for anthropologists in the newly created museums and universities. The towering figures of Mexican anthropology were highly regarded intellectuals who were heard by ministers and presidents while they occupied relevant political positions. Nevertheless, histories of anthropology centered on the “great men” of the discipline have been oblivious to the hundreds of anthropologists who worked in remote areas, together with land surveyors in charge of agrarian reform, medical personnel involved in vaccination campaigns, or engineers building highways, dams, and all kinds of development projects.

Many graduates from the national schools of anthropology became bureaucrats and officials in distant posts in Indigenous areas, imprinting an anthropological tone on public policy and political mediation. Furthermore,

professional anthropologists shaped a semiprofessional class of Indigenous “cultural promoters” who served as local brokers to implement *indigenista* and other state policies. An army of cultural promoters created a sort of folk anthropology that captured the imagination of thousands of rural communities throughout the country.

During postrevolutionary times, culture played a role similar to religion in colonial Mexico; its original inception was a matter for experts and scholars, but then it transpired to the rest of society. Anthropological concepts and imaginaries were thus engraved in a public culture beyond academia. State-led anthropology contributed to creating a culturalist parlance that became a vehicle for the communication between the state and its subjects.

The political and cultural idiom of rural teachers, for example, was populated with ideas of society, community, nation, or personhood that resembled those created by nationalist anthropologists. A popular version of *indigenista* anthropology became an idiom of mediation between the state, peasant communities, and Indigenous peoples. Anthropology, in brief, turned into a vehicle for hegemony.

In sum, during the first half of the twentieth century, anthropology became inseparable from state-building. Such a pairing transformed research into a vertical and bureaucratic matter, often curbing creativity by subsuming scholarship to

the state's agenda and, despite some important exceptions, reproducing a deeply bureaucratized and formulaic style of ethnographic description.

Toward 1965, students at ENAH saw the hegemonic role of anthropology as profoundly problematic. Born under the rule of an institutionalized revolution, young anthropologists educated in the 1960s were increasingly aware of the ideological stiffness of the regime, its repressive nature, and mounting contradictions.

This new generation of scholars soon realized that *indigenista* anthropology was at the core of the problem. Their ethnographies and their own experiences as Mexicans showed a reality that had little relation to the state's discourse. The orthodox and even reactionary character of an allegedly revolutionary discipline became transparent during the infamous public persecution of Oscar Lewis, who had published *The Children of Sanchez* in Mexico. In this book, he depicted the living conditions of the urban poor, the sprawling slums of Mexico City, and the growth of an underclass relegated to poverty by the postrevolutionary regime. Many leading figures of institutionalized anthropology joined a xenophobic chorus demanding Lewis's expulsion from Mexico and the banning of his book. Once again, anthropology was at the center of public discussion. However, this time it was due to its nonconformist character, independence from dominant ideologies, and a disposition to give voice to the voiceless.

Mexican anthropology was slowly but firmly moving into its own modernist crisis. The “Oscar Lewis affair” provided an image of the estrangement between the Mexican postrevolutionary state and its anthropologists. Such distancing would evolve in a multi-linear direction during the following 30 years. Between 1965 and 1994 (the year of the Indigenous uprising in the southern state of Chiapas), any remaining illusions of harmonious identification between the state and the discipline vanished into thin air.

Responses to this crisis of hegemony varied greatly, and many anthropologists experimented with different types of Marxism to advance a critique of the Mexican revolution. Research on political mechanisms of domination and mediation gave birth to an anthropology of the state inspired by Antonio Gramsci, Vladimir Lenin, or heterodox thinkers such as Alexander Chayanov. Marxist anthropology turned the discipline upside-down by making the state its primary object of inquiry instead of the theoretical standpoint for social analysis.

The 1970s witnessed a radical rebuff of *indigenista* culturalism and a renewed interest in class and political economy. Nonetheless, a different strain of militant anthropology, energized by the Declaration of Barbados ² and the emergence of Indigenous movements, focused on aspects related to autonomy, environmental rights, and self-determination.

Other anthropologists kept distant from the most blatant political struggles and focused on more academic concerns associated with the structuralist project. They produced an ethnographic corpus on Indigenous peoples' rituality, mythology, and ontological and cosmological aspects.

The decay of *indigenismo* and postrevolutionary hegemony has often been equated with a general decline of anthropology. While it is true that Mexican anthropologists have a fatalistic sense of their work (especially when they compare their discipline with metropolitan anthropologies or Brazilian ethnography), the fact is that the crisis of hegemony described on these pages took the discipline into new and surprising directions.

Disillusionment with the Mexican Revolution and its state expanded the field into cities, factories, laboratories, and urban households. Academic anthropology acquired a more cosmopolitan character, as more students pursued degrees at American, French, British, and sometimes Brazilian universities. After being (relatively) freed from applied anthropology and state-sponsored social engineering, anthropologists managed to see Indigenous practices under different lenses.

The late 1970s and a good part of the 1980s comprised a golden era for what was known as ethnoscience. Ethnobotany, ethnoecology, and ethnozoology became promising fields, producing major comparative works that

took the epistemological basis of Indigenous knowledge seriously. The ethnoscientific approach produced ethnographies that were (sometimes inadvertently) concerned with symmetry and the pluralization of anthropologies, long before European and North American intellectuals reflected on those issues.

The decline of the postrevolutionary regime and the rise of neoliberalism inspired Mexican anthropologists to think of their discipline beyond the rigid frame of national borders. Massive migration and globalization forced ethnographers to think about and do empirical work outside the physical and conceptual framework of the nation-state. Migration studies permitted a relativization of Mexico, recognizing its mythical aspects and advancing a cultural critique of nation-building in equally exciting and disconcerting ways. Classic anthropological certainties about being Mexican, Indigenous, Mestizo, or any other category that informed Mexican anthropology since its inception became highly problematic and subject to thorough reconsideration.

Present-Day Anthropology

The anthropology that accompanied the Mexican Revolution is now long gone. The discipline in Mexico was born at an exceptional time, when people had a clear sense that they were rebuilding a country reduced to rubble by more than a decade of civil war. Due to a strange combination of events, anthropology was chosen to provide direction to the attempt

to produce a unified nation, the solution envisioned by the revolutionaries as the definitive remedy against violence and injustice.

Nevertheless, the cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and political homogeneity that revolutionary anthropologists proposed is now clearly undesirable and dangerous. Anthropologists can be stubborn, and we do not learn from others as fast as we should. However, we now have a better understanding of the message that Indigenous peoples attempted to communicate every time they opened their doors to us. Part of that message is that there cannot be a single anthropology. Homogenous anthropology can be as damaging as a homogenous nation. Mexico is a country with an almost endless variety of anthropologies, and only a fraction of them come from universities. In that sense, we can celebrate that there is no longer a single, homogenized Mexican anthropology.

Regarding academic anthropology, we can happily assert that it is as alive and stimulating as ever. Even now, when the violence of the so-called war against drugs engulfs many parts of the country, anthropologists insist on visiting others to learn from them. The bulk of the work is being carried out by undergraduate and graduate students who persevere in fieldwork with enthusiasm and a high ethical standard. Current concerns are dramatic: violence, forced migration, environmental destruction, dispossession, and all sorts of exploitation and domination. Nevertheless, anthropology also offers the possibility of hope, rebuilding, and peace.

Footnotes

1.

The modern Mexican state emerged from the revolutionary armies that fought against the liberal dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz (1877–1910) and a civil war between revolutionary factions (1914–1917). The term “Mexican Revolution” often refers to the armed period spanning from 1910 to 1917 and the constitutional regime derived from that conflict. The revolution was mainly but not exclusively a peasant struggle seeking land redistribution, labor rights, and limits on the excesses of unrestricted capitalism. The revolutionary state was a constitutional regime with a nationalist political and economic leaning that included state ownership of production and the control of strategic natural resources under a hegemonic, corporatist, revolutionary party.

2.

The declaration “For the Liberation of the Indians,” commonly known as the “Declaration of Barbados,” is a crucial document drafted during the Symposium on Inter-Ethnic Conflict in South America, which took place on the island of Barbados in 1971. The World Council of Churches organized it under its Program to Combat Racism, with the University of Bern and the University of the West Indies (Cave Hill, Barbados). The meeting summoned anthropologists, mainly from South America, who denounced genocidal acts against Indigenous peoples in various Latin American countries. A second Declaration of Barbados gathered many Indigenous leaders, activists, and organizations who urged Indigenous peoples to self-organize to protect their rights, territories, and way of life. “Barbados II,” as it is often referred to, was received with skepticism and rejection by the Catholic Church, most Latin American governments and, in the Mexican case, by the anthropological establishment.

INDIA IN WORLD ANTHROPOLOGY: EMPIRE, COLONY, AND NATION



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There is perhaps no other way to respond to anthropology's potential futures than to look back at a subjective past, imitating the discipline's long, deliberately reflexive engagements with its field. What is the *response-*

ability (displacing the phrase from another genre) of the discipline from India, where diversity itself, undoubtedly anthropology's mandate, was putatively central to the imagination of the nation but now is suffering grievous damage? In fact, the discipline itself is diverse in India, expressing a complex legacy that narrates itself across regional and institutional variations—for example, the folding in of sociocultural anthropology with sociology in the department in which I was trained: the University of Delhi's Department of Sociology, which was established in 1959. In this brief reflection, I link a past-future imagination of a nation to my personal positional view of anthropology, to provide an assessment of the discipline and respond with potential futures for our field. While speaking for myself, I do not speak in any single "Indian" voice, as that homogeneity has always been and must remain an impossibility.

India's place in social and cultural anthropology and sociology has shifted over time. India started as an object of empire, of British Imperial rule to be precise, and moved on in the 1950s, after Indian independence, to focused nation-building. In keeping with the Empire/Nation double articulation in Indian sociological and anthropological discourse over the past 75 years, one illustration is how the nation-building exercise at the time of the newly formed nation was reflected in research agendas that were at the heart of efforts to know Indian social worlds, e.g., by approaching "village India" or "rural-urban linkages" as a microcosm of the real India, however diverse they may have

been in substance across the Indian regional terrain. The theoretical outcome within the notable body of human sciences in India, as was the case in many similar locations in the Global South, was the postcolonial paradigm, one that analyzed colonial inscriptions on the Indian social anthropological staples of tribe, religion, culture, and the ubiquitous gatekeeper, caste. The blend of sociology with social anthropology in that same time period was an interesting turn that reflected both a theoretical and epistemological idiosyncrasy at the University of Delhi. Studying independent India meant using a conventional sociological approach to researching one's own society, which brought with it the expected genealogy of classical sociological theory. Using the fieldwork-based method in studying villages implied a typical social anthropological ethnographic approach, however, now used not so much in exploring an "other" but rather the "self"—a postcolonial blend of disciplinary methods, perhaps.

However, to speak from postcolonial India in the contemporary is also to speak in the wake of disciplinary decolonization and the furore that has been unleashed in recent years. I understand the postcolonial stance to be one past its prime in a mature postcolony such as India, while the decolonizing impetus is yet an unknown vector. In these geopolitical ways of anthropological being and becoming, I would differentiate the decolonizing intent from the postcolonial stance, where the former is an imagination usually linked to the Global North (or in response to Western

capitalism as well)—but now spreading much beyond the North—and the latter a perspective articulated in India or the Global South. Illustratively, the North American decolonizing intentions in the political economy of anthropological knowledge production center on redemptive narratives proposed in the context of slavery and settler colonialism, or within the kind of relationship that the human sciences in the U.S. have with Latinx universes. The postcolonial narrative does not necessarily deal with the same substance of inequity in anthropology, nor the same histories. To put it succinctly, the Oxbridge cultures in the United Kingdom, with their attitudes toward and connections with knowledge in the former colonies, especially with the Brexit turn, lead to a specific political economy of discourse and critique. The relationship between North American area studies programs and India, on the one hand, and the current Black Lives Matter considerations in American academia, on the other, lends itself to another kind of discursive economy. So, how do these two sets of attitudes converge on an Indian anthropologist or sociologist who finds themselves immersed in this current decolonial turn and past postcolonial critique, which is global but also national, local, and contextual? That becomes something to explore.

A second layer of related exploration is connected to a synthetic classification dividing scholars of India who are located and trained outside India, which is a vast community, and those who have been trained and located within India, like myself. Those of us in India and those abroad carry

signifiers of three geopolitical maps, the Global South, the Empire, and the Nation, but in very different ways. For both groups, these are heavy maps to carry. These maps shift and mold what knowledges can be intended, produced, and circulated. These knowledges are a function of located intellectual contexts and climates—their idioms of expression reflect embedded institutional cultures and traditions, the audiences they sustain or address, and the locations of these audiences. A number of additional concerns accompany those above, including, importantly, the fact that scholars in both groups find themselves reduced to an essentialized identity of the sort once critiqued in the postcolonial paradigm but which somehow continues to serve as the decolonial anthropological academic currency. Just as an Indian student abroad returns to their own country for fieldwork, a Southern Indian student in India will, in all probability, study their anthropological own. An indispensable essentialism accompanies both the decolonial and the postcolonial exercise, in both cases in the name of authenticity. A combination of positional ideology and pragmatics, like funding, govern these movements.

This brings me to a knotted problem of location, identity, and representation in the knowledge production exercise, and, in parentheses, the burden of *responsibility* (this time in its original meaning) that anthropology takes upon itself in aspiring toward better futures in academia and, it would seem, in humanity. To put it bluntly, and again, this is my personal position, can I be anything different than a “native”

or a Global South representative? This question of the transaction between being and becoming is one that I have posed in my writing and also in relation to questions of theory and knowledge production that are not limited to an Indian positioning alone (Arif 2021). What kind of knowledges am I allowed to dabble in and what is expected of my voice? While the contestation against hegemonic empires and nations is an old one, the problem I now raise is how must one mobilize that contestation in our contemporary times, which are marked by planetary concerns like pandemics, climate change, environmental degradation, urban poverty, and gendered violence. This leads me directly to intertwining *response-ability* with *responsibility* in this exercise of envisioning futures. The sum of it is this: the convergence between postcolonial authenticity, decolonizing assertion, and malignant nationalism is an alliance that anthropologists, Indian or otherwise, must pay serious heed to, especially if the future we want is about developing an equitable community of difference without insularity.

Let me suggest a local example from the Indian context: the Dalit issue, or the Indian malady of the subjugation, extraction, and humiliation of lower castes that is now achieving renewed visibility as “caste matters.” Does this issue have universal significance? Probably, and if so, should discourse on this issue be about a decolonizing subject or postcolonial attitude? Or should it, rather, be framed as a globally relevant instance of social oppression? What might another subjugated voice in India sound like—for example,

that of an Indian Muslim? To what audience and where must these voices speak? Must that Indian Dalit or Muslim voice find tonal resonance with racial decolonizing and caste references in America, to be heard in the decolonizing boombox? Can there be any value ascribed to these subjugated voices if they do not pose as stable decolonial or postcolonial subjects from the Global South—as figures who are culturally pure and bound forever in their historical condition? Within India, how will these voices find a pitch that makes them audible above the dated postcolonial song of imperial dispossession, which flattens all discordant notes into a deadly nationalistic monotone? In my work on mass violence (Arif 2016) and now continuing through my work on identity in governance, I have tried to conceptualize a form of neo-comparison (keeping with the trend of inventing neologisms) where resonances and assemblages matter but borders do not. In that work, I raise the question of the possible relevance of *life per se*, especially when both the human and humanity seem unstable in their purchase. Some similar intentions, very well posed yet typically North American, are captured in the slogan “let anthropology burn” (Jobson 2020).

The aim behind foregrounding *life per se* is to pursue the possibility of seeing beyond geographies carved in stone, of recognizing the fluid realities of the human condition that require global support and humane intent. This is where I would insist on the possibility of anthropology taking on the challenge of asserting global relevance rather than

emphasizing authenticities and particularities through a narrow decolonizing or postcolonial perspective.

Decolonization and postcolonial critique must not be dictated, scripted, and orchestrated, nor should they be echoes of the metropolitan centers. So, I would like to propose that anthropologists be offered a choice that takes them out of identity restrictions, locational constraints, and geographical purity. I would ask for an equal field of participation. In effect, I would propose an anthropological community where everyone, regardless of where they belong or come from, enjoys an equal opportunity to explore their choice of research topic and mode of representation. Epistemic diversity and difference are productive, but epistemic insularity is not. And this is a problem we need to tackle within national and regional anthropology cultures.

This brings me to my final point, which is how this can be supported in pragmatic terms—some of which relate to funding practices, publication, and citation hierarchies and eventually the skills market. As we know, funding practices have a lot to do with how research and knowledge production takes place. To adjust the current political economy of knowledge production, we need to have dedicated funding for students to pursue anthropological work that takes them from local Global South institutions to worldwide locations where they can have the same privileges and access opportunities as their counterparts in Northern universities. Similarly, there must be funding to support social science and humanities research in the Global South in subject areas that

are not necessarily about the Global South alone. I have long written on the profound epistemological (and citational, quite possibly) impact this could have on encouraging some equity and balance along the many divides called into being in the name of diversity. International funding bodies and their grantees are not usually from nonmetropolitan centers or outside the Global North. And if there are grantees from nonmetropolitan centers or the Global South, they fall into dedicated categories by research area and other classifications, playing on the authentic identity label, which is debilitating to say the least. Producing high-quality, competitive applications is challenging, and funding to support grant writing and even academic writing workshops would be very useful. Needless to say, we have few funding possibilities for such anthropological work in India.

Buffering local endeavors in the South with global funding and with global research sites would also legitimize marginalized research, thereby addressing the hierarchies that are inevitable in academia, e.g., between the hard sciences and soft sciences. There are of course, many collaborative funding avenues—joint projects, outreach programs, etc.—between North and South universities and research institutes. However, it is important to recognize what is extractive in those relationships, what power dynamics of knowledge production are in place, and so forth. The unsaid here is of course the division of labor between those who can and will theorize and those who will and must remain in the informant's slot. Publication and citation

politics are not new, and they are reflective of the same division. Variations on the same theme appear in settings like the World Anthropologies section of *American Anthropologist*, where anthropology from elsewhere is made visible but classified as peripheral to that from a North American center. Revised practices of publishing, training, and funding might create a new generation of global students and academics who are globally competitive in the job market as well as within India.

To conclude, recalling Reinhart Koselleck's (1979) "futures past," sometimes anthropological revivals have been about asking old questions in new times, and in that process have generated new vocabularies and contingent politics. In that spirit, contemporary knowledge politics need to tackle issues and concerns that keep the planet and planetary subjects in view, even while one is standing in one's own locational shoes.

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ANTHROPOLOGY IN KENYA: A TALE OF MISSED OPPORTUNITIES



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In 1984, a team of scientists working in East Africa unearthed what is now considered the most complete early human skeleton of a child or adolescent *Homo erectus*, dating back 1.5 million years. This skeleton was found along the shores of Lake Turkana in Northern Kenya, leading to its name, the “Turkana Boy.” This historical find, along with other human fossils found by Louis and Mary Leakey in 1968 along the Rift Valley, placed Kenya squarely on the archaeological map of the world. Half a century earlier, in 1934, Jomo Kenyatta had

started attending seminars at the London School of Economics, where he met and learned from Bronislaw Malinowski, who became his master's studies supervisor (De Menil 2013). Malinowski also wrote the foreword to Kenyatta's ethnography, *Facing Mount Kenya*, which was published in 1938. In the foreword, Malinowski makes mention of culture contact between Africans and Europeans (Kenya was at the time a British colony) and the role a "progressive African" like Kenyatta had in shaping the continent's future.

In the preface of his book, Kenyatta confirms his training in anthropology, stating that "during my anthropological studies and visits to various countries in Europe, I had the opportunity of meeting men and women who were keenly interested in hearing about African ways of life" (Kenyatta 1938:xvi). *Facing Mount Kenya* was written at a time when Kenya's cultural terrain was framed within the binary opposition of African and Western, barbaric and civilized. In 1929, for instance, the practice of clitoridectomy was banned and labeled barbaric and unchristian. Those participating in it were denied enrollment in Christian schools, which at the time were the schools of choice in Kenya (Nyamongo 2007). Kenyatta was so opposed to such sanctions that when he had the opportunity to give a talk at the Malinowski-led seminars at the London School of Economics in November 1935, he chose female circumcision as his topic. He argued that "Europeans and missionaries consider this rite disgusting and

barbarous, the Kikuyu consider it very important for the solidity of the social structure” (Malinowski 1962:190).

Kenyatta returned to Kenya and became heavily involved in agitation for self-rule, serving at institutions of learning including the Kenya Teachers College in Githunguri, which was the local alternative to colleges set up by missionaries and the colonial government that had denied enrollment to Kikuyus who were involved in or sympathetic toward clitoridectomy. The college was ordered closed in 1952 and Kenyatta was arrested. Eventually, Kenyatta became Kenya’s prime minister in 1963 and its first president in 1964, ruling the country for 15 years until his death in August 1978.

Kenyatta held strong intellectual and practical positions and views regarding the interpretation of local culture, including in educational settings—hence the emphasis in his ethnography on “putting the record right” about the life of the Kikuyu, in contrast to what was presented by Europeans. One wonders why he did not institute or introduce anthropology into the university, given how well it served him in rebutting colonial and missionary constructions of the African social life.

Why is it that Kenyatta, who had benefitted from training in anthropology, found himself in an ambivalent relationship with the discipline upon taking on Kenya’s leadership as president? Why didn’t he do something like what Nnamdi Azikiwe, his counterpart in Nigeria, did? In 1960, after training in the U.S., Azikiwe introduced anthropology as a

discipline at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, which was the first Indigenous, fully fledged university in Nigeria. Prior to Kenya's independence, Kenyatta had used anthropology to assert a distinct African identity and destiny for the Kikuyu ethnic group, showing that they had well-established and independent social structures that were being destabilized by colonial and missionary activities in Kenya. Upon ascending to the most important political leadership of the country, Kenyatta abandoned anthropology even though he had by then designed a philosophy of unity and nationalism. Given that anthropology was tainted by being associated with the same colonialists and missionaries that Kenyatta used anthropology to rally against, there was no place for the discipline in his government. Moreover, the prevailing circumstances at the time were such that the Kikuyu were under great economic, religious, and political pressure from missionaries and the colonial government, which increased the veracity of Kenyatta's anti-missionary/colonialist message (Ntarangwi 2008). Anthropology thus lost any possible place in Kenyatta's public life and never became part of the intellectual discourse of many scholars in the young nation.

Meanwhile, the discipline of anthropology was being shaped by other processes taking place at the first public university in Kenya. During Kenyatta's reign as president, the Institute for Development Studies at what was then University College, Nairobi, expanded to include a cultural division that would later host anthropology. In 1970, the Cultural Division

morphed into the Institute of African Studies (IAS), with a focus on research in history, religion, music, arts, and related fields. IAS would come to play an important role later, in developing what is now the most enduring program in anthropology in the country but without the direction or support of the head of state, who had previously embraced it as a tool to advance his political goals. Having seen the value of anthropology in constructing an alternative image of the Kikuyu ethnic group, Kenyatta had a golden opportunity to provide students and faculty the same tools he had developed in London, to enable them build a local narrative of Kenyan cultures and societies. Instead, he shunned the discipline, which has continued to struggle for survival in Kenya, especially compared to history, where several anthropologists launched their careers. Toward the end of the chapter on education in *Facing Mount Kenya*, Kenyatta concludes that the European is unable to understand the African simply by living for many years amongst them. Instead, he advocates “knowing,” not just “living with” them. Could this have been a veiled attack on anthropology? My argument is that this was an attack on anthropology, specifically for presenting indigenous peoples as objects of study rather than subjects with agency. Kenyatta’s work came out clearly as a correction to such anthropological approaches. As I have shown in the case of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, there was a prevailing uneasiness toward anthropology among some African leaders, who saw it as a tool to stifle African political advancement immediately after independence from colonial rule (Ntarangwi 2019:444).

These were the first steps toward decolonizing the discipline, but they did not go deep enough because the leaders did not support the discipline as part of the university offerings.

Anthropology in Kenya has thus continued to be peripheral as a taught subject, because of the lack of a strong institutional structure supported by an independent department. Instead, it has been part of other disciplines. The first department-like arrangement for anthropology as a discipline had to wait for the mid 1980s, when a department of anthropology was started at Moi University at the same time that IAS enrolled its first cohort of anthropology majors. Prior to that, there were a handful of students trained in archaeology in the history department at the University of Nairobi and in anthropology at IAS. This is not coincidental. That first group of anthropology students found that there were not enough anthropology teachers for the courses needed to build a major; they had to take courses in other departments, with faculty trained in such fields as history and sociology. The number of trained anthropologists grew but they brought with them the disciplinary traditions of the countries where they had studied, including Denmark, the U.S., and the U.K. The majority were medical anthropologists.

Today, anthropology faces the neoliberal turn in education, which demands that it justify its existence in terms of the employability of its graduates. For a discipline that never quite grew any roots in Kenya, it is hard to see how it will weather such a challenge. Anthropologists are now forced to

package themselves and their programs to “respond to the market,” by looking for programs that sound like they will ensure employment. Interest is high in the fields of reproductive health and infectious diseases, and many anthropologists are hoping that such an application of their skills will protect them from becoming irrelevant. The challenges continue. On October 25, 2018, Kenya’s deputy president, William Ruto, was reported in the Daily Nation newspaper as saying that “there are over 1,000 students learning sociology and anthropology, but if you look at the requirements of the industry, how many anthropologists or sociologists do we need?” (Mburu 2021). This narrative has been picked up by other leaders rallying against anthropology because of the neoliberal turn in higher education. Market-oriented disciplines are favored, to the detriment of anthropology’s survival in the university.

As a discipline, anthropology is only taught in a few universities in Kenya, not as a stand-alone program but as part of other programs. At Moi University, the anthropology program is in the Department of Sociology, Psychology and Anthropology; at Maseno University, in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology; and at the University of Nairobi in the Institute of Anthropology, Gender and African Studies. To endear itself to students, anthropology is presented as a tool to enhance development, an important focus in Kenya. The description of the anthropology program at the University of Nairobi, for instance, reads thus: “The study of Anthropology is now widely recognized in developmental

circles as a crucial subject in the development of any nation. In the recent past, development institutions including the World Bank have realized the centrality of culture in development. They are now incorporating people's way of life in everything they do for developmental sustainability.”¹

The history of anthropology in Kenya is fraught with missed opportunities. It had a high-profile position as the discipline that gave the first president tools to present his cultural and political agenda for the nation. Then there's the long history of archaeological and paleoanthropological research findings with global ramifications. Why has anthropology been unable to be grounded and is now being accosted by neoliberal administrators? Why is it now trying to survive by being part of other programs? One can only hope that having lasted all these years as a practice, anthropology will always find a way of staying alive in Kenya.

Footnotes

1.

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ANTHROPOLOGY IN INDONESIA



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Indonesia was an occupied territory of the Dutch East India Company and later a colony of the Dutch Crown. The history of Indonesian anthropology can thus be traced to a long-standing tradition of Oriental studies of the languages, cultures, and histories of the *Nederlandsch-Indië*, as the Dutch colony in Island Southeast Asia was called. This tradition was produced in countless accounts of travelers, explorers, geographers, and missionaries, most of which were recorded in the various journals and proceedings published by major scientific institutions. The Batavian Society for the Arts and Sciences and the Royal Institute for Linguistics, Geography, and Ethnology were founded respectively in Batavia (Jakarta)

in 1778 and The Hague in 1850, to promote scholarship on the Netherlands East Indies.

Since its inception, this tradition was expected to produce knowledge of great practical relevance to the Dutch colonial administration. For a long time, Oriental studies were taught in the academies where prospective colonial civil servants and military officers were trained. Such courses were first developed on Java in Surakarta (1832), then taught in the Netherlands—in Breda (1836), Delft (1843), and Leiden (1864). Anthropology was established for the first time as an academic subject in the Netherlands in 1877, when Leiden University inaugurated a chair of anthropology. In 1902, Leiden University obtained the exclusive right to educate colonial civil servants within the framework of a multidisciplinary program of Indonesian studies, in which the subject of anthropology was firmly embedded.

Ever since the Netherlands' recognition of Indonesia's independence at the end of 1949, Indonesian social scientists have tried to decolonize and indigenize the Dutch scientific tradition. However, it has not been an easy task. The first generation of Indonesian scholars was trained within the framework of the educational system created by the Dutch. Koentjaraningrat, for instance, who is known as the father of Indonesian anthropology, received his undergraduate degree under Gerrit Jan Held, who taught in the University of Indonesia Faculty of Law and Social Sciences from 1941 to 1955. Koentjaraningrat later studied for his PhD at the

University of Indonesia, with Elisabeth Allard and F.A.E. van Wouden.

The intellectual climate in postindependence Indonesia posed a great challenge for the meaningful development of anthropology. From the 1940s to the 1950s, a period spanning the Indonesian Revolution, anthropology was represented by Dutch anthropologists, such as Held and van Wouden, and their students, including Koentjaraningrat. The discipline was deemed the handmaiden of Dutch colonialism, aimed at preserving the forms of feudalism and traditionalism that Indonesia's first president, Soekarno, fervently opposed. Nationalist intellectuals dismissed anthropology, which they considered irrelevant, unlike sociology, which was regarded as more modern. Anthropologists' employment options were limited to academic institutions. At this juncture, Koentjaraningrat decided against continuing his studies in the Netherlands. Instead, he moved to the U.S., where, supported by a Fulbright scholarship, he studied for a master's degree from 1954 to 1956 and received extensive anthropological training. During this time, Koentjaraningrat was also invited to contribute to the Human Relations Area Files Project, led by George P. Murdock. In 1956, upon his return to Indonesia, Koentjaraningrat founded the Department of Anthropology in the University of Indonesia's Faculty of Letters. Jan B. (Johannes Berthus) Avé was appointed as the chair of the department because Koentjaraningrat, supervised by Allard, had yet to complete his PhD.

Under Koentjaraningrat, the anthropology department's mission was to produce as many Indonesian anthropologists as possible and to prepare them to conduct research on their own cultures. Koentjaraningrat believed that Indonesian cultures had to be understood by Indonesian people in order to reject the Western Orientalist gaze. He also believed that anthropology should be able to offer practical solutions to the practical problems faced by the Indonesian nation-state. This vision was very much welcomed and embraced by Indonesia's second president, Soeharto, who appropriated Javanese elements into his style of leadership and governance. Koentjaraningrat was thus appointed to high-level positions in government and scientific institutions and led major government research projects financed by the Ministries of Education and Culture, Information, Public Health, and Higher Education, and even by the Ministry of Religion. He was also appointed director of the National Cultural Research Institute of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (1964–1967) and deputy chair of the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (1967–1977).

Koentjaraningrat's strategic position helped anthropology climb in stature to a rank of great importance. Anthropologists now held government positions as well as academic ones. Koentjaraningrat wasted no time. Inspired by Murdock (1967), he attempted to produce a sort of encyclopaedic database that examined all the cultures of Indonesia in detail (Koentjaraningrat 1971). He also utilized Florence Kluckhohn's scheme from *Variations in Value*

Orientations (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961) to survey the mental attitude of people from various cultures in Indonesia (see also Kluckhohn 1951). Policymakers were supposed to use his research results in development and nation-building projects. Koentjaraningrat's best-known book, *The Basics of Culture, Mentality, and Development*, summarized his research, dealing with questions such as what sort of cultural values can drive or hinder development (Koentjaraningrat 1974).

In Indonesia, then, anthropology was initially promoted as an applied discipline. Whether this form of anthropology succeeded in decolonizing or indigenizing the Dutch colonial tradition is contestable. What mattered to Indonesian anthropologists was their ability to offer practical solutions to society and to broaden the discipline's relevance to the wider public. To that end, Koentjaraningrat never followed or developed a school of thought for Indonesian anthropology and mixed together as many inspirations as possible from various major universities around the world. He founded anthropology departments in various universities across Indonesia, including in private universities such as Universitas Khairun in North Maluku and Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana in Central Java. He trained students and sent them to many universities in countries including the U.S., U.K., Australia, the Netherlands, and Japan.

This applied approach was not exclusive to anthropology. Selo Soemardjan, a contemporary of Koentjaraningrat, is

considered the father of Indonesian sociology. He received his master's degree and PhD at Cornell University under the supervision of George McT. Kahin, with a fellowship from the Ford Foundation. Like Koentjaraningrat, Soemardjan (1959) rejected the Western gaze. He was against Parsonian modernization theory (Parsons 1951, 1960), which held that tradition would be outpaced by Western style rationality, especially in bureaucracies, which should be universalized and homogenized to function properly. For Soemardjan, locality was an important component in bureaucracy, not something to be subsumed by the rational impersonal model. Inspired by Kahin, Soemardjan wanted to dismantle the Parsonian influence to prevent the Americanization of Indonesian society. Sartono Kartodirdjo (1966, 1987), who received his PhD from the University of Amsterdam in 1966, had a similar perspective. He argued that history “cannot be studied from the decks of VOC (Netherland East Indies Company) ships”—mocking the Dutch—but instead had to be examined and understood through Indonesian frameworks, based on Indonesians' own historical texts and manuscripts. A Dutch scholar, Jacob C. van Leur (1955), had argued in this direction, but Kartodirdjo's call resonated more deeply among Indonesian historians. The students and successors of Soemardjan and Kartodirdjo in the next generation maintained this pragmatic approach. Sociologist Arief Budiman, for example, was deeply concerned by issues posed by modernization theory. Budiman, who received his sociology PhD from Harvard University in 1980, was also against

Parsonian modernization theory. He employed dependency theory as an alternative approach (Budiman 1983).

In the field of history, Kuntowijoyo, who received his PhD from Columbia University in 1980, stressed the importance of local manuscripts, as had Kartodirdjo. Kuntowijoyo (1999) initiated the field of “prophetic sociology” based on the premise that as sociologists study social structures, they have a moral obligation to act not only as academic observers but also as Muslim insiders trying to grasp how these structures can discipline Muslim believers into becoming pious religious subjects. Contrary to Parsonian structural functionalism, which understood structural institutions merely in functional terms as assuring integration and solidarity, Kuntowijoyo’s prophetic sociology called for a “transcendental structuralism.” Kuntowijoyo thought Indonesian sociology had to be transcendental to be able to solve Muslims’ practical religious problems and move beyond the discipline’s Western secular-rational legacy.

Today, we can still see a similar problem-solving approach in Indonesian anthropology and in Indonesian social science more widely. Since the end of Soeharto’s authoritarian regime and the beginning of democratization in Indonesia (1998), also known as the Reformation era, anthropologists have worked as activists in civil society organizations as well as in academic and governmental institutions. Legal anthropologist Sulistyowati Irianto (2009), for example, has been determined to uphold customary law to the same degree as

positive law, in order to protect Indigenous societies in Indonesia. Again, this is not a completely novel idea—B. ter Haar (1948), a Dutch law expert, argued something similar back in colonial times—but it only resonated deeply among Indonesians late in the period of Soeharto's regime and especially after Reformation. In Central Kalimantan, when the government transformed a local community's ancestral land into a national park, Semiarto Aji Purwanto (2007) facilitated a collaboration between this community and the national park management, to develop an alternative livelihood program. Tackling planetary problems of climate change and global heat, anthropologists such as Yunita Triwardani Winarto and Rhino Ariefiansyah have worked closely with farmers (Winarto et al. 2018; Ariefiansyah and Webber 2021). Hailing from civil society organizations, Suraya Afiff is known as a high-profile activist anthropologist. With Nancy Lee Peluso and Noer Fauzi Rachman, Afiff wrote a book discussing the grounds for agrarian and environmental reform in Indonesia (Peluso, Afiff, and Rachman 2008). Other leading anthropologists in Indonesia, such as Paschalis Maria Laksono (2016), Pujo Semedi Hargo Yuwono (Yuwono and Prasetya 2014), Nursyirwan Effendi (2005), and Prihandoko Sanjatmiko (2019), have also published applied or engaged anthropological works. My own research in anthropology is built upon the shoulders of these local problem-solving giants. Embracing a local view of history, as posited by Kartodirdjo, I have studied the people of Buton through local manuscripts (Rudyansjah 2009, 2016). I am also concerned by planetary problems and examine them through the lens of

the seascape to understand social and ecological change on Seram Island (Rudyansjah, Kaartinen, and Prasetyo 2021).

A consequence of this pragmatic approach could be the absence of a theoretically significant Indonesian school of anthropology. For Indonesians, the call to provincialize or indigenize anthropology poses a problem. We never have had our own postcolonial or decolonial turn, as India has had with subaltern studies or some South American countries have had with their call for *buen vivir*. Academic discourse questioning basic epistemological perspectives has never been a major concern for Indonesian anthropologists; perhaps we might even see such questioning as a luxury. Indonesianizing anthropology is not about deconstructing paradigms, as was done by the ontological turn. Instead, in Indonesia the discipline is glued together by its practitioners' focus on solving social problems, empowering local communities, and supporting government policies. Our starting points were the rejection of Orientalism and Parsonian notions of modernization, and from there we have kept our feet on the ground in an attempt to contribute to solving practical problems. In some ways, if we understand the ontological turn as a call to return to reality as it is, perhaps we can argue that the development of Indonesian anthropology has always been a call to return to reality as it is. We always stress the empirical and do not bother much with the theoretical. Ironically, in acting this way, it seems that Indonesian anthropologists are complying with the Dutch tradition of the discipline. For the Dutch, anthropology is a factual

description, an ethnography with an emphasis on “graphy,” an extensive writing about a certain culture.

This applied tradition is a blessing in disguise. Although Indonesian social science is at times criticized for not being able to theorize and thus being unable to gain relevance in global academic discourse, I think our pragmatic, problem-solving tradition instead has trained us to think in terms of practicality and urgency. We, humankind, now live and confront major problems on a planetary scale, such as climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic, and so forth. The major difficulty in dealing with such issues is that our time consciousness and imagination only reach as far back as the beginning of globalization—some 500 years ago—while major planetary processes, such as the formation of biodiversity, for instance, have taken millions of years. Such processes are thus beyond our comprehension, since our time frame only deals with global processes that are much shorter than planetary ones. We therefore tend to take what exists on our planet for granted and assume that things such as biodiversity, rivers, mountains, and seas have been here forever. This “given” character drives humankind to do things without noticing their negative impact on the sustainability of our planet Earth.

I want to propose two things. First, we have to understand biological sciences (including anthropology) and geology as part of *one system*. Second, we anthropologists need to see how human institutions can provide humankind with the

capability to cope with planetary problems, or, conversely, hinder us in our ability to deal with them. To do that, we need to conceive of institutions as the embodiment of human subjectivity and consciousness, as well as the pre-consciousness in a phenomenological sense. That is, we need to pay attention to how the intentionality of humans and nonhumans are mutually shaped and were laid down by their histories, which have given rise to the actions they can enact within their horizons. These actions respond to the ways humans cultivate and are cultivated by their ecosystems, and in turn, manifested in the systems we call institutions. What I have in mind is something similar to Clifford Geertz's (1963) *Agricultural Involution: The Processes of Ecological Change in Indonesia* and Gregory Bateson's (1972) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. These could serve as pioneering examples of this kind of study, regardless of their flaws.

Geertz's *Agricultural Involution* was remarkably different from his later works, which took a more semiotic approach. In this book, Geertz employed a practice of noticing biodiversity—a method that is only later articulated by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (2015). Geertz paid attention to the shaping of Javanese social institutions as a result of a specific response toward the history of the plantation economy in the region. He synergized his anthropological analysis with biological science: examining paddy fields, slash-and-burn systems, and other man-made changes to the landscape, noticing the ways the natural sequences of such actions responded in turn to these man-made changes, resulting in a

massive growth of population within a shrinking living space. This sedimentation of actions also shaped the Javanese worldview, Geertz observed, resulting in the Javanese living in ambivalence, which he called the “dual economy.” The Javanese shaped an institution that hindered their livelihood by trapping them within a cycle of poverty. Thus, in his analysis, Geertz tied the study of biological systems together with historical approaches, discussing the growth of rice alongside the rise in population density and the history of colonialism, which affected patterns of human and nonhuman interactions in Java. His overall depiction of Java in *Agricultural Involution* is an amalgamation of history, anthropology, and biology. He paid attention to a natural-historical trajectory he dubbed agricultural involution. Similar, and perhaps even more remarkable, is Bateson’s *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Bateson used biology, physics, information science, psychology, and anthropology in developing his theory of cybernetics.

These pioneers could be our inspiration to develop a one-system paradigm. They treated systems as a whole, rather than focusing on parts, and explored their horizons through a holistic lens. We need to upscale our discussion to move beyond the level of globalization. We have plenty of historical records on land history, language, and culture, collected since the sixteenth century with the institutionalization of European colonialism. Only recently have we become concerned with collecting data on planetary processes, such as the rise of biodiversity, which developed over the course of

millions of years. If we start to think in terms of one system, perhaps in terms of a *life science* that covers not only nature but life as a whole—including natural, social, and historical processes—we might be able to imagine and develop a science that is a science of the planet. Like Indonesian anthropology, which glues itself together from various sources with one aim, we can glue the discipline together by taking multiple elements and fields as sources of inspiration. My call for this approach goes beyond a demand to become interdisciplinary. If interdisciplinarity still acknowledges borders between disciplines, the one-system approach integrates them under one roof. Franz Boas laid the foundations for this with his four-field project within anthropology, but there is a need to expand our vision beyond the anthropological lens. Bateson, once again, could be a good starting point. He took other disciplines not merely as sources of inspiration to be anthropologized; he merged all these together into one single approach for studying complex systems.

There is no time more pressing than today for this call for holism. The Covid-19 pandemic should have made us realize that there is no single disciplinary solution to wide-scale societal, political, and natural problems. Ecological crises, medical and biological disasters, theological resurgences, social and economic faltering, and political authoritarianism all emerged during the course of the pandemic as the focus of apocalyptic imaginaries. Unfortunately, science policies across the globe have taken a turn for the worse, with many

governments and academic institutions cutting funds for social science and humanities research and programs, focusing almost exclusively on the natural sciences and engineering. This move only further entrenches scientific barriers that have plagued academia in the last five decades. We need to smash through this backwardness and stress the urgency of the one-system integration. If there is a question as to how to glue everything together under one banner, the experience of Indonesian anthropology might be able to provide some possible solutions.

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SOCIAL ISSUES AND THE ROLE OF ANTHROPOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN



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Background

The Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology is one of the largest anthropological organizations in the world, with approximately 2,000 members. It is a founding member of the World Council of Anthropological Associations. The society's publications include the *Japanese Journal of Cultural Anthropology*, a quarterly journal published in the Japanese language with summaries in a European language, as well as the *Japanese Review of Cultural Anthropology*, an English-language journal published annually. The organization also holds an annual meeting in the spring, as well as various

regional meetings, both with the purpose of promoting research on human cultures.

The history of the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology can be traced back to 1934, when the Japanese Society of Ethnology was established. Since then, it has gone through several reorganizations: in 1942, it was reorganized as the Association of Ethnology; in 1964, the Japanese Society of Ethnology became an independent association; and in 2004, it adopted its current name. Since the end of World War II, American cultural anthropology has had a significant impact on Japanese cultural anthropology in contrast to the prewar decades, when it was European ethnology that was relatively more influential.

Subdisciplines of Anthropology in Japan

No umbrella organization exists in Japan for integrating the various subdisciplines, as the American Anthropological Association does in the U.S., although the Council of Associations Related to Anthropology does serve as a loose network organization. Its activities include an annual symposium, which anthropologists from the different subdisciplines of each respective association take turns hosting.

The absence of an umbrella organization is related to the system for teaching anthropology in Japan. Courses on cultural anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, and folklore are offered in the humanities and social sciences departments

in Japanese universities, while life science departments offer physical and biological anthropology courses. This is why I had never taken a course nor had any kind of training in physical anthropology when I first started teaching quiz sections of an introductory course as a teaching assistant at an American university. Anthropology 100 consisted of three parts: cultural anthropology, archaeology, and physical anthropology. I had to learn, for example, the differences between bone shapes in humans and chimpanzees, and men and women, and memorize the names and positioning of their teeth!

In Japanese universities, students are enrolled in the humanities, social sciences, or natural sciences at least at the entrance exam level, so unless a student opts to take courses in different colleges on campus, formal training in all four fields of anthropology is nearly impossible. This kind of training has also become less common in the U.S. in recent decades. The gulf between different kinds of scholarship is making it challenging for anthropologists to tackle contemporary and future issues, including those relating to the environment, postcolonialism, or health care.

Promoting Anthropology in Japan

To address how Japanese cultural anthropologists have raised awareness of their discipline's importance and contributions to Japanese society, I draw examples from the past and present activities of the Committee on Cultural Anthropology

and the closely related Committee on Multicultural Coexistence in the Science Council of Japan (SCJ), which is, according to its website, “the representative organization of the Japanese scientific community ranging over all fields of sciences.” Each committee is expected to submit a proposal, either to “promote research on human culture” or “to deliberate on important issues concerning science and help solve such issues.” If a proposal gets approved by reviewers, a report is sent to a relevant ministry of the Japanese government, depending on the specific research or issues.

The Committee on Cultural Anthropology consists of about 15 to 20 leading cultural anthropologists from across Japan. In September 2011, the committee submitted a report, “Policies toward the Ainu people and guiding people’s understanding of the Ainu.” At that time (and until 2019), the Ainu were not officially recognized as an Indigenous people by the Japanese government. The report stated that the Japanese government should set policies toward the Ainu that acknowledged their status as an Indigenous people and that the administration should also promote a better understanding of the Ainu by Japanese society as a whole.

For a long time, there were very few cultural anthropologists researching the Ainu, partly because there have been nearly no jobs available in Ainu studies. It should be noted that in 2007, the University of Hokkaido, a major research and education institution located in Japan’s northernmost major island, established the Center for Ainu and Indigenous

Studies. The center currently comprises eight full-time faculty members, including one anthropologist of Ainu descent. Hokkaido has historically been considered the main homeland of the Ainu.

Among the various urgent and critical issues pertaining to the Ainu and, in Southern Japan, the Okinawan people, is the repatriation of their ancestral remains. Most Ainu remains that used to be preserved at some national (formerly Imperial) universities are now stored at the recently opened Upopoy National Ainu Museum, located in one of the major Ainu communities in Hokkaido, although some Ainu, especially those in other regions, are dissatisfied about the collective preserve at Upopoy. Some Okinawan remains, on the other hand, are stored in repositories, e.g., most notably, at Kyoto University. Many, if not all, leading physical anthropologists claim that these remains should stay in universities for future research on the origin and evolution of these peoples. Virtually all cultural anthropologists, in contrast, believe that they should be returned to their communities of origin or their families if they are identifiable, as they believe that outsiders do not have the right to own them. This tension is further complicated by incongruous opinions amongst the Ainu and Okinawans themselves, especially regarding to whom or to which community to return the remains, who should bury them and how, as well as the favored method to preserve them.

In the early 2010s, the Committee on Cultural Anthropology collaborated with the Committee on Geography to raise their collective voices in a quest to increase opportunities to teach geographical and anthropological knowledge and perspectives at the high school level. In this endeavor, the Committee on Cultural Anthropology stressed the discipline's importance in promoting an understanding of other cultures and different ways of thinking and customs, to showcase its usefulness for an education designed to promote multicultural coexistence among peoples from mainstream, minoritized, and foreign backgrounds within an increasingly diversified Japanese society. Additionally, some Japanese cultural anthropologists, sociologists, and other scholars in related fields, including myself, now serve on national or local government committees on multicultural coexistence.

Anthropology in Japanese Secondary Education

SCJ's Committee on Multicultural Coexistence in Japan, of which I have been serving as chair since 2017, submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Education in 2020. We set forth a number of proposed systems and reforms regarding high school multicultural education, especially for students with foreign cultural backgrounds, including those with Vietnamese, Japanese-Brazilian, Chinese, or Korean roots.

Each year, the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology has also been lobbying the Japanese government to integrate anthropology into the high school curriculum, but so far this

has been in vain. Cultural anthropology has little visibility amongst high school students in contrast to history (both world history and Japanese history). This is also true amongst first-year college and university students. In comparison to related fields such as sociology, psychology, journalism, and geography, students generally do not have an elaborated understanding of what anthropology entails. With the Covid-19 pandemic, this situation has deteriorated further, as it has become nearly impossible to undertake fieldwork, the fundamental research method of cultural anthropology.

Japanese Students as Peripheral to Western-Centered Anthropology

While anthropologists are traditionally expected to conduct research outside of their home society, this classical rule can very easily change depending on where home is. This is not only an issue stemming from the relationship between developed and developing countries; it holds true even within industrialized, developed countries.

At American universities, anthropology students from “peripheral” developed nations such as Japan, planning to do fieldwork in the U.S., frequently face strong pressure to do fieldwork in their home countries instead. Back when they were doctoral students, the vast majority of Japanese cultural anthropologists who received their PhDs from North American or European universities were encouraged to do their dissertation fieldwork in Japan. This is true not only for

Japanese students but also for students from other Asian or developing countries. It appears that this basic tendency continues today, with many Japanese students and academic researchers steered toward writing ethnographies about Japan. In this respect, the power relations between students or researchers and senior scholars or advisors reflect those between the center and the periphery. This may lead the “peripheral” anthropologists to be deprived of their academic freedom and independence as researchers.

In the wider picture of these academic power relations, we find not the gaze of the anthropologists themselves but instead the Orientalist gaze of the center. As one Japanese anthropologist trained in the U.S. expressed it, “The American, and more generally Western, lack of interest in collaboration has led native anthropologists to complain that they are treated as knowledgeable informants or even local travel guides, rather than respected, equal research partners” (Kuwayama 2004:25). This statement echoes that of other Japanese anthropologists (including some based in the U.S.) who have criticized the Orientalist gaze that some American anthropologists cast on Japanese society and the Japanese people (Kato 2007; Yoshihara 2003).

On the other hand, many Japanese anthropologists, excluding a small handful of scholars, have internalized this unequal center-periphery relationship. They think that their fluency in the Japanese language is the only advantage that allows them to compete with European and North American researchers

in interviews or archival research. Indeed, language skills are a large obstacle for scholars from overseas, even if they work in the field of Japanese studies. But the implication is that researchers from Japan (or other peripheral countries) are only able to contribute to Western academia through research that emphasizes their linguistic and cultural background, as when they conduct interviews with participants in their own language or use their language skills to access and read textual archives from their own region. On the contrary, the linguistic plurality these researchers possess should in fact be utilized and treasured since it broadens the possible scope of an anthropological project, whether it be a broad comparative ethnographic study or even a relatively localized, small-scale project. The main issue at play here is that anglophone academia should not act as if researchers from peripheral countries can bring nothing to their work other than linguistic abilities. Doing so limits and confines Japanese researchers, as well as marginalizes them within the global academic community (particularly in publishing, where they are already underrepresented). Most seriously, it is a betrayal of the privilege of any researcher, no matter where they come from, to engage in free academic thought.

Academic Independence from and Funding Dependence on the Government

As far as most disciplines in the humanities and social sciences are concerned, most researchers receive, through

tender of an application and a competitive selection process, a research grant from the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Sciences (JSPS)—a semigovernmental organization. Because of the nature of these funds, which are solely derived from public taxation, the recipients are subjected to the most intense scrutiny by their own host institutions over any potential ethical issues manifesting from the ways in which the grant is (or is planned to be) used. As far as JSPS is concerned, however, academic freedom is fully maintained, as the organization itself—as well as its academic proposal reviewers—are comprised of scholars.

Job Market in Japan

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, the academic job market has featured ever-decreasing opportunities at the entry level. It is not uncommon for recent PhDs to take adjunct positions at different universities for several years until they are finally able to acquire a permanent (tenured) position, if they are lucky. Only a limited number of universities have anthropology programs. Most junior anthropologists get an academic job in other fields, such as area studies, global communication, or foreign languages. Some with a bachelor's or a master's degree find jobs in the media, as the skills associated with journalism are compatible with those associated with anthropology, e.g., in conducting interviews and writing essays based on research. Others become museum curators if they take the required courses to get a license, or they become high school teachers.

But overall, the job market has become increasingly challenging, mostly due to the rapidly shrinking youth population in Japan, which means lower enrollments and correspondingly weaker demand for faculty hires. Japan's huge national deficit, the largest in the world, continues to have a serious impact especially upon its national universities, including its research universities.

Other Contemporary Issues

A number of cultural anthropologists in Japan conduct research on contemporary issues that reflect the current characteristics and problems of Japanese society. For example, since the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, some anthropologists have been studying the effects of the evacuation and the forced relocations on human relationships, economic activities, and mental health amongst affected individuals, families, and communities. Likewise, other studies look at the effects of the other natural disasters that Japan has endured. Japanese society, known for its progressively aging population and increased longevity of its citizens, is generating a growing interest in research focused on aging and caregiving. Until recently, these domestic issues were considered the territory of sociology. But the lines between the two disciplines are now blurring, partly because anthropologists today are more careful in their use of the term “culture,” and many sociologists conduct fieldwork and interviews. Covid-19 has also drawn junior scholars' attention to its domestic impact, especially because, as is the

case for anthropologists in other parts of the world, fieldwork overseas has been severely restricted during the pandemic. These trends are likely to continue into the near future. At the same time, Japanese anthropologists will continue to face challenges in how to represent the uniqueness of their discipline and its appeal when it comes to the study of domestic issues.

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NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY IN PORTUGAL: HISTORY, CHALLENGES, AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES



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Ancestors and Pioneer Institutions

Like other European scholars, some nineteenth-century Portuguese intellectuals who engaged in the study of their people and their roots were influenced by the Romantic tradition and a positivist approach. Johann Bachofen, Lewis Morgan, and Max Müller are some of the authors who inspired reflections on the Portuguese people and their ancestors, customs, folklore, myths, fairy tales, archaeology, rituals, festivities, religious cults, linguistic forms, dialects, family types, and physical constitutions (Bastos and Sobral 2018). A few examples of such thinkers include Teófilo Braga (1843–1924), who was interested in ethnography,

philosophy, and literary history and became an influential politician in the First Republic (1910–1926), serving as prime minister from 1910 to 1911 and as president in 1915; Adolfo Coelho (1847–1919), philologist and ethnographer who worked on linguistic matters and folktales; Consiglieri Pedroso (1851–1910), a philologist and ethnographer, who studied myths and folktales; Leite de Vasconcelos (1858–1941), who left the medical profession to pursue the archaeological, philological, geographic, and ethnographic interests that led to the multivolume *Portuguese Ethnography* (1933–1988) and to the foundation of the ethnographic museum in Lisbon in 1893; and Rocha Peixoto (1866–1909), an archaeologist and ethnologist who produced several works on material culture. All of them addressed subjects such as language, ethnicity, uses of land, material modes of subsistence, arts and crafts, traditional cures and prayers, religious rituals, oral literature, and comparative mythology (Bastos and Sobral 2018). They were inspired by their French, German, British, and Italian counterparts and addressed major international debates on the primitive family and Indo-European mythology, while also speculating on the ethnogenesis of the European peoples (Leal 2000).

In Portugal, physical anthropology emerged within the same intellectual circles as ethnography but had a different institutional history. The historian, economist, and public intellectual Oliveira Martins (1845–1894) was one of the first authors to introduce physical anthropology to Portuguese readers. He contributed to the spread of the belief in the

reality of race and the existence of hierarchically ordered human types, an idea that was common in Europe until the Holocaust (Matos 2013).

The 1880s were important for the institutionalization of anthropology in Portugal, especially physical anthropology. In 1880, Lisbon hosted the ninth International Congress of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archaeology, and in 1885, the University of Coimbra started teaching anthropology. Bernardino Machado (1851–1944), a mathematician and politician who later became the president of the republic (twice: 1915–1917 and 1925–1926), created a chair in anthropology, human paleontology, and prehistoric archaeology (Matos 2013). Machado also created the Portuguese Ethnographic Museum (1893), and in 1898 he founded the Society of Anthropology, the first scientific society in Portugal devoted to the discipline. The museum hosted important collections of colonial artifacts gathered in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Brazil, Africa, and Macau. However, ethnology, or cultural anthropology, remained peripheral in Coimbra until later on (Matos 2012).

Although there were colleges and other schools in Lisbon and Porto, Coimbra had the only university in the country until 1911, after the end of monarchy. At that time, the polytechnic schools of Lisbon and Porto became universities, and the teaching of anthropology started in these cities. With the founding of the Carlos Ribeiro Society and its journal in 1889, Porto became an important location for the emergence of

different anthropological fields, including archaeology, physical anthropology, and ethnography. In 1923, Porto had an anthropological museum and laboratory; these served as the institutional base for the Porto School of Anthropology, where archaeologist and anthropologist Mendes Correia (1888–1960) was the main figure. He was also one of the founders of the Portuguese Society of Anthropology and Ethnology in 1918. Correia promoted an ethnoracial nationalism that linked the Portuguese with the half-mythical, prehistoric people of Lusitania (Matos 2017). He was also a racist who was afraid of miscegenation in the colonies (Matos 2019).

Nation and Empire

George Stocking (1982) drew a distinction between anthropologies of empire-building and anthropologies of nation-building. In Portugal, as we saw, some authors were more interested in writing about their own people, their people's ancestors, and the roots of the Portuguese nation than they were in studying other populations. As such, in the 1870s and 1880s, the discipline developed as an anthropology of nation-building (Leal 2006). However, some authors have questioned whether there may have been other scholars interested in colonial issues who are currently unknown or have been ignored (Pereira 1998; Roque 2001). In fact, the dichotomy proposed by Stocking doesn't seem to fit Portugal. In the late nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, political and institutional actors as

well as intellectuals imagined Portugal as a nation in the sense of an “imagined community” (Anderson 1991 [1983]) that included a colonial empire (Matos 2013). These two dimensions were not mutually exclusive, nor should they be analyzed in isolation from one another. Additionally, several institutional initiatives were developed to stimulate research in the colonies, like the Lisbon Geographical Society, founded in 1875, and more effectively in the 1930s, with anthropological missions supported by the state.

1930s to 1960s

The twentieth century was marked by the authoritarian regime of the Estado Novo (1933–1974), which imposed censorship on books, the press, and movies, for instance. Members of the cosmopolitan generation of the late nineteenth century began to disappear, but ethnology continued to be taught in departments of geography in Lisbon and Coimbra. Physical anthropology was also taught, but the training tended to focus on anthropometrics and physical differentiation. The objective was to rank populations, mostly in the colonial context, or to find out who were the strongest and most qualified individuals for forced labor in Africa. The most important figures in this context were Correia, in Porto, and Eusébio Tamagnini (1880–1972), in Coimbra. Although they had different perspectives on other issues, both were against miscegenation in the colonies (Matos 2019).

After World War II, with growing criticism of the concept of race and of Portuguese colonialism, anthropology began to change. Some scholars, and the regime itself, were inspired by the Lusotropicalist theory of Brazilian anthropologist Gilberto Freyre (Cahen and Matos 2018), which they used opportunistically to argue that Portuguese colonialism was different from and more benevolent than other forms. But reality put the lie to this formulation. Portuguese colonialism was as racist as other colonialisms.

In the 1940s, Correia started to support anthropologist Jorge Dias (1907–1973) and recognized the political relevance of the social sciences—particularly the importance of colonial social scientists. Dias had a German doctoral degree in ethnology and played a decisive role in bringing anthropology closer to the social sciences, which was a turning point in the discipline’s history. With his team, which included his wife Margot Dias, Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, Benjamim Pereira, and Fernando Galhano, Dias established a research program focusing on material culture in agriculture (Oliveira, Galhano, and Pereira 1976). He identified with the program of the Commission for Arts and Folk Traditions, which was founded in 1928 and was the predecessor of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore, of which Dias was a secretary (1954–1957) (Bastos and Sobral 2018). Dias was influenced by German and North American cultural anthropology and quoted authors like Richard Thurnwald, Wilhelm Muhlmann, Franz Boas, Robert H. Lowie, Melville J. Herskovits, Alfred L.

Kroeber, Robert Redfield, Margaret Mead, and especially Ruth Benedict (Leal 2006; Sobral 2007).

However, Dias was also “a man of the establishment” (Bastos and Sobral 2018). He conducted an important anthropological mission among the Macondes of Mozambique, which at the time was still a Portuguese colony although anticolonial movements were already underway. In his monograph (Dias 1964–1970), it is impossible to perceive the racist and discriminatory practices that were taking place in Mozambique. Instead, they are recorded in the confidential reports that Dias wrote for the Portuguese government (Pereira 1998). Dias also founded the Center for Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology and later the Museum of Ethnology.

Besides the work done by Dias’s team, important surveys in ethnomusicology were undertaken by Michel Giacometti and Fernando Lopes-Graça, and a survey of vernacular architecture was carried out in Portugal by the National Union of Architects between 1955 and 1960.

1970s Onward

After the end of the Estado Novo regime in 1974, some social scientists (most trained abroad) came to work in Portugal. A new phase began, and new anthropology courses were created. The end of the authoritarian regime was followed by revolutionary social change and agrarian reform.

The Portuguese Anthropological Association (APA), founded in 1989, has made great efforts to publicize anthropology and the work of anthropologists. Despite financial and resource constraints, the community of anthropologists has endeavored to defend anthropology—both in academia and beyond—as a fundamental science for the critical understanding of humanity. Portuguese anthropologists are also connected to other international circles, especially in Europe. Some of them were among the first members of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA), which convened its first biennial conference in Portugal in 1990.

Social science conferences and funded programs have encouraged the circulation of Portuguese-speaking social scientists. This has led to improved exchanges between Portugal and Brazil and the establishment of a network of social scientists from Portuguese-speaking countries.

Currently, there are seven training institutions that offer degrees in anthropology in Portugal: the Centre for Research in Anthropology; University of Coimbra; Institute of Social Sciences and Higher Institute of Social and Political Sciences, both at the University of Lisbon; New University of Lisbon; Lisbon University Institute; University of Minho; and Trás-os-Montes and Alto-Douro University.

Education, Research, and Labor

One of the struggles of the APA has been over the autonomy of anthropology. In the current science classification system applied by centralized agencies within the Portuguese state, anthropology appears as a subfield of sociology, which goes against how research and teaching of anthropology are organized in the university. For the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), the General Directorate for Education and Science Statistics, and the State Department of Science,¹ the social sciences are currently the main scientific area, with a secondary scientific area, sociology, within which there is a subarea of anthropology. This classification renders anthropology invisible and contradicts its history in Portugal, which is totally independent from that of sociology. The APA has proposed classifying anthropology as a secondary scientific area at the same level as sociology, with both classified as part of the social sciences. In addition, it has stressed the need to include two scientific anthropological subareas: social and cultural anthropology and biological anthropology.

Another of APA's struggles, and that of several university departments of anthropology, has been to promote anthropology in secondary education, with two specific objectives: "to make anthropology return to being a subject available as an option for secondary students and ensure that anthropologists are able to teach their own subject and others for which they have qualifications in schools."² This

effort—which unfolded in the late 1990s and the 2010s, and recently, in 2018 and 2019—had a new impetus. Over the last 4 years, the APA has contributed to the dissemination of anthropology in schools, carrying out various activities in partnership with several researchers.³

The main professional options for Portuguese anthropologists are teaching and research, service in city councils and municipalities or museums, and applied work. Research funding comes primarily from the state, through FCT, the main agency that supports science in Portugal. Alternative funding sources are not common, perhaps because anthropology's potential is not yet well-known to companies or investors unless they have specific interests or a wish to develop targeted projects. The APA has also been developing a study—the “Profile of the Anthropologist in Portugal,”⁴—that aims to characterize the situation of the anthropological community and their training, scientific and professional activity, and possibilities for and obstacles to the practice of anthropology.⁵

The Impact of Language

As convenor of the Europeanist Network of EASA, I am facing challenges. Sometimes the main issues are not caused by language but are related to the specific history and dynamics of the discipline in different countries. Anthropology has followed several different paths. But despite this cultural

diversity, the English language has served as an important tool for dialogue.

Berghahn Books has published a book that takes this issue into account (Wulf 2016). The effort to publish in English comes under criticism; some say texts should be published in their authors' own languages. Others say it's important to communicate in a language that more colleagues and readers will understand than would otherwise be the case. It would be good, though, to reach a balance. In several institutional assessments of scholarly productivity, only publications in English are valued (or overvalued). This is wrong. It is important to disseminate scholarly works in languages such as Portuguese, which is spoken on different continents and continues to be a tool for dialogue among scholars in Portugal, Brazil, and Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa and Asia.

Debates on Decolonization

The Black Lives Matter movement spread to many parts of the world. In Portugal, the movement inspired the graffitiing of monuments and statues of figures linked to colonialism, slavery, the slave trade, and the exploitation of people in general. It also started a public debate over the controversial place of colonial inheritances in Portuguese society and the need to confront the architectural, historical, cultural, and museological heritage associated with this history.

The idea of decolonizing knowledge has not, however, become widespread. Despite various critical discourses and debates on colonialism, initiatives intended to preserve what are considered the heroic historical facts of colonization still persist alongside movements that promote decolonization. In 2018, the mayor of Lisbon called for the creation of a Museum of the Discoveries, aimed at highlighting Portugal's role in great journeys around the world. Like other tourism projects, the initiative was promoted on the basis of the financial return the new museum would supposedly provide the city. The mayor's proposal sparked debate, mostly in the media. For several weeks, Portuguese newspapers (*Público*, *Expresso*, and *Observador*, for instance) included opinion articles and a petition written by academics, artists, and activists (which I also signed), appealing for further discussion. ⁶

The centrality of discoveries and heroic facts in Portuguese ideology is possible because certain aspects of the country's history, such as slavery, the violence of colonialism, racism, forced labor, and the emancipation movements of the colonies, continue to be silenced or softly accounted for in the present. This discussion should be broadened in light of the example provided by movements taking place in other countries (Matos and Sansone 2021).

Voices to Include

Anthropology should include more than the perspectives of people who are members of groups discriminated against in

history and society. A phenomenon related to the decolonization of thought is the growing numbers of associations dedicated to representing and defending racialized communities or ethnic minorities in Portugal. People from these communities have struggled to have an active voice in the critique of the colonial past, but they are still not visible in the academic world. In 2017, the Djass Afro-descendants Association proposed the creation of a memorial to people enslaved by the Portuguese empire, as part of the Participatory Budget of Lisbon—a program promoted by Lisbon City Council. Djass's entry won, with "Plantation: Prosperity and Nightmare," an installation by Angolan artist Kiluanji Kia Henda, to serve as the monument.⁷ Symbols of the Portuguese empire and Portuguese colonial exploitation persist in public spaces and museums. But initiatives such as a tourist route that covers sites associated with slavery may contribute to instilling a more plural perspective in which diverse identities can converge and a sentiment that inspires the restoration of justice can emerge.

To finish, I agree with Adam Kuper (1988:243), who wrote that "my own hope is that, although certain things have been done badly in the past, we may still aspire to do them better in the future." We need a living anthropology, one aware of the archive and history of anthropology but that also takes into account the challenges of the present and the reality that surrounds us. We need an anthropology that doesn't just criticize or contemplate the past, but instead actively promotes inclusive futures.

Footnotes

1.
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2.
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3.
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4.
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5.
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6.
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ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE END OF INDEPENDENCE: WHAT'S NEXT?



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From the mid-nineteenth century, which marks the beginning of French colonial rule in Senegal and Africa, France and French corporations and institutions regularly commissioned and funded targeted anthropological inquiries designed to inform and guide colonial and neocolonial governance. Over the past two centuries or so, these inquiries ranged from simple projects—like the students' summer assignments at the William Ponty School in colonial Senegal, which were

recorded in their notebooks—to major research and data collection projects like the Dakar-Djibouti mission led by Marcel Griaule. They were all instrumental in building a “colonial library” that functioned as a memory aid for governance.

While I was writing this essay, France commissioned, at the expense of French taxpayers, a summit to assess and reform its relationships with African nations—its former African colonies in particular. Those relations are referred to in the political jargon as “FranceAfrique,” a term loaded with negative connotations, with deep roots in colonial asymmetric power relationships, exploitation and depletion of economic and natural resources, racialization, and racial inequity and injustice, to name but a few. FranceAfrique defines the relationships by which France continually and forcefully abuses independent African nations. France’s entanglement in its former colonies’ internal affairs rests on pillars of colonial control and domination that have never been lifted and that allow it to impose puppet governments and French corporations to pursue a neocolonial exploitation of resources (Borrel et al. 2021).

The 28th FranceAfrique summit was held on October 8, 2021, in Montpellier, France. Unlike at all prior meetings, French President Emmanuel Macron was the only head of state present. The summit was like a state of the union meeting for the French colonial empire and, according to its organizers, it was designed to reform the FranceAfrique paradigm.

Intriguingly, though, the exclusion of African heads of state posed concerning issues of sovereignty for African nations. Many compared the Montpellier summit to the conference of Brazzaville, convened by General de Gaulle in 1944, during which France reiterated its assimilation policies in the African colonies (Lamko et al. 2021). The Brazzaville conference recommended the creation of the African universities of Dakar, of Tananarive for the Indian Ocean, and of Fort de France (Martinique) for the Caribbean, in order to build a diverse but united French community with France at its apex.

All of the FranceAfrique summits, including the Montpellier one, were unquestionably imagined as serving the same objective—the realization and maintenance of a hegemonic French Empire (Yamb 2021). To reach that goal, France leaned on anthropologists, historians, and other social scientists to establish its hegemony over its former African colonies. Carefully selected civil society organizations and activists were involved in the 2021 Montpellier summit, which was like a talk show cohosted by President Macron and superstar African scholar Achille Mbembe.

Anthropology and the Roots of France Afrique

Ethnology was critical to France's empire-building project and was strategically used to gather information on Indigenous cultures throughout the colonies. Many colonial officials, including administrators, school teachers, medical

doctors, and military officers, were anthropologists in their own right. Colonial officials created periodicals that become unique platforms to disseminate knowledge gathered on Indigenous cultures.

Soon after his arrival in Senegal in 1854, Governor Louis Faidherbe created the Directory of Senegal and Dependencies and then the Monitor of Senegal and Dependencies, which published official acts as well as articles on political, economic, and social affairs. Later on, the development of dedicated research institutions such as the Committee for Historical and Scientific Studies of French West Africa, which was created in 1915 and replaced by the French Institute of Black Africa in 1936 (later becoming the Fundamental Institute of Black Africa [IFAN]), became critical to the empire-building project. Their bulletins were powerful platforms for the dissemination of anthropological research. Meanwhile, in 1865, Governor Faidherbe set up the first museum in Saint Louis, which was transferred to Dakar in 1869. The museum's permanent exhibition displayed material pertaining to agriculture, industry, ethnology, and natural history, designed to garner public support for the colonial project (Charpy 1958:528–532; Thiaw 2012). Similarly, the Dakar Djibouti mission was widely publicized and popularized to demonstrate its relevance to the French public and to the rest of the world. From May 1931 until February 1933, the mission traveled 20,000 kilometers across 22 countries, from Dakar to Djibouti; collected 3,600 objects, including 300 manuscripts and amulets; took 6,000

photographs; and made 200 audio recordings (Biro and Thiaw 2020). But as the archivist of the mission, Michel Leiris (1996:204), lamented in a letter addressed to his wife on September 19, 1931, “The Negroes are plundered, under the pretext of teaching people to know and love them, that is to say, in the end, to train other ethnographers, who will also ‘love’ and plunder them.”

Educational institutions constituted the regiment to conquer the minds and souls of the colonized, to ensure a smooth incorporation via assimilation or annihilation. This is understood in the same sense as presented in the Borg nation episodes of the American television and film science fiction series *Star Trek*, in which cybernetic creatures are imagined to assimilate others by dissolving them into the Borg biologically and technologically so they perfectly embody the Borg’s cultural and scientific norms.

While the military left deep wounds on the bodies of dominated peoples, anthropology through its various subfields acted more perniciously, destabilizing and taming the minds and souls of the colonized through a pretentiously universalizing global knowledge system. It is through scholarship that colonial nation-building was the most effective. Through ethnology, history, archaeology, and language, scholarship instigated the colonization of the minds of colonized peoples in order to reproduce itself. ¹ Education was key to molding the minds of the colonized to serve colonial governance with docility and abnegation, in its

mission to subjugate, exploit, and dominate Indigenous peoples and their cultures (Charton 1931). It helped mask the massive enterprise that despoiled the cultural properties of the colonized peoples through ethnographic missions and punitive expeditions (Bathily 1974; Leiris 2017). Today, the looted cultural properties of the colonized continue to adorn museum galleries of heritage institutions in the Global North, which participate in the fabrication of the image of the other and the elsewhere. Despite formal accession to independence, the confiscation of cultural properties, international migration policies, racialization, and the reification of non-Western bodies are stark reminders of global unilateralism, injustice and inequity, domination, and the symbolic violence inflicted on the minds and bodies of formerly colonized peoples.² Political and economic subordination of local people is still insidiously referred to by colonial historians as “pacification.”

Anthropological Communities: From Yoro to Mbembe

In 1855, Governor Faidherbe created the School of the Hostages to instill French manners and practices of governance, along with the French work ethic, in the sons of defeated princes throughout the West African colonial empire. In 1903, the William Ponty School was created as one of the School of Hostages’ sections at Saint Louis but was relocated to Gorée island (1913–1937) and then Sebikotane (1937–1967). Most of the African intellectual elite from the French colonies during the first half of the twentieth century

were trained at the William Ponty School. As part of their summer assignments, students there were required to write about their own cultures. This was recorded in over 700 notebooks covering various aspects of Indigenous cultures, which today make up one of the most precious archives in IFAN's collections.

On July 14, 1860, 12-year-old Yoro Dyao was one of the first graduates of the School of the Hostages (Rousseau 1929). His career as an African chief serving the French colonial administration was fraught with problems, leading to a series of revocations, negotiations, and reinsertions. Dyao was ultimately forced to retire in February 1914, with a pension of 1,200 francs, but he died five years later (Rousseau 1929). An educated man, Dyao was one of the first Senegalese commissioned by colonial authorities to write about the culture and history of his province, the Oualo, which was one of the first provinces in Senegal where France imposed its sovereignty in the mid-nineteenth century. Dyao's notebooks, which were later assembled, edited, and published by Governor Henri Gaden (1912) and R. Rousseau (1929), were a remarkable X-ray of the social and political anthropology of Wolof society. Although Dyao was influenced by colonial ethnographers of his time, his work became a firsthand source of knowledge of Wolof culture. Throughout French colonial history and far beyond into the postcolonial era, students, amateurs, and professional anthropologists were trained and later commissioned to collect massive amounts of

anthropological data that served—indirectly or directly—the French colonial agenda (Thiaw 2018).

President Macron's selection of anthropologist/historian Achille Mbembe for the Montpellier 2021 FranceAfrique summit stands in the same tradition (Mbembe 2021).

Macron's advisers, diplomats, and officers of the French Agency for Development who were involved in preparing for the summit allegedly added their input to the Mbembe report, which was severely criticized across Africa and the diaspora (Lamko et al. 2021). The summit was designed to serve as a forum for free speech and for listening to the African and African diaspora youth, who largely disapproved of the France Afrique *modus operandi* and were pushing for its reform. From March to July 2021, Mbembe organized more than 65 meetings and debates across 12 African nations and in France, to engage young people on various topics including health, climate change and the environment, migration, memory and the memorialization of the legacies of slavery and colonization, the African Financial Community (i.e., CFA) franc currency, gender equality, the circulation and restitution of cultural property stolen during colonization, and much more (Mbembe 2021). It appeared, though, that President Macron received participants' questions ahead of the summit, which made the event look more like theater than a real conversation. For many African scholars and the wider public, this meeting was rooted in the same imperial academic tradition and in the long history of liberal political hypocrisies that knowingly continue to trap Africans and

stifle their aspirations for equity, freedom, and reparative justice. It was devoid of systemic transformative capacity, and Mbembe appeared in the eyes of many as a coconspirator in the reproduction and maintenance of the imperial postindependence status quo. These critics saw Mbembe's report as caught in the imperial time of unfinished reflection and reform that has continually delayed change, rather than heralding a time for action and radical rupture from the colonial agenda. The current context is epitomized by a widening gap of mistrust in the midst of a profound crisis of insecurity, abusive practices of power, and unethical tactics of economic domination and exploitation founded on colonial inequities and unfulfilled promises.

Just a couple of years before the summit, President Macron commissioned Senegalese thinker and economist Fewline Sarr and French art historian Bénédicte Savoy to conduct research and reflect on the conditions for restitution, within the next 5 years, of African cultural heritage stolen or forcefully taken during colonization and now imprisoned in French museums, art galleries, and other cultural institutions (Sarr and Savoy 2018). Like the Mbembe report for the Montpellier summit, Sarr and Savoy's restitution report drew a lot of media attention and sparked controversy. But as the French saying goes, the mountain has given birth to a mouse; the media show associated with the publication of the earlier report has had very few practical implications. Expectations were pinned not on the report per se, for which everyone knew the outcome, but rather on its implementation. This is

why the Mbembe report and the 28th FranceAfrique Montpellier summit felt like déjà vu.

Mbembe and Sarr (2017) were also the conveners of a series of “workshops of thought” that gathered nearly 30 scholars and thinkers from Africa and its diasporas to renew, according to the organizers, French Afro-diasporic thought. But as one of the audience members, soccer player Ruddy Lillian Thuram, lamented at one of the meetings at the French Institute in Dakar, “I feel like I’m in Paris.” ³ In making that statement, Thuram blasted the setting and language of the workshops, which sounded decolonial in rhetoric but were eminently colonial in practice. In doing so, he caused a profound malaise among the audience.

Another audience member asked about the applicability of these thoughts on the ground. Sarr retorted, “Society pays some people, and tells them, do the job of thinking. . . . If we succeed, we will improve your well-being, therefore, let us think for God’s sake.” ⁴ This seems inspired by the imperial universalizing epistemology of knowledge production and more specifically by the cogito ergo sum of René Descartes from the seventeenth century, which elevated thought and the creatures who supposedly practiced it over those who did not. These ideas were instrumental in the development of the discriminatory ideologies of the Enlightenment and its corollaries, including racialization and the enslavement of Black people, viewed at once as unable to think and only good at laboring (Blakey 2020).

Thinkers of the caliber of Mbembe and Sarr have extraordinary mastery of the colonial library, which they deconstruct with enviable ease using decolonial rhetoric. But, as Isaac Kamola (2017) pointed out, many scholars who draw upon the colonial library to reflect on our current political imaginaries participate insidiously in the perpetuation of structures of the European imperial state and its art of life. This raises major methodological challenges, deeply rooted in the universalizing epistemology of academia. Liberatory and decolonizing methodologies have the potential to tease out that epistemology, and they do so by yielding more space for intentional and practical engagement that attends to the political, cultural, and historical sensibilities of all research participants.

Jean Copans (2019) has argued that it is one thing to “think” Africa and another one to know it, reiterating the dire need to ground our assertions in concrete evidence rather than abstract thinking. While I contend that evidence matters, one of the most urgent needs, perhaps, is to dismantle the boundaries between academic and nonacademic work by opening up to what Sylvia Wynter (1994) called liminal modes of knowing. It is also critical that we remain attentive to the ways in which research is designed and practiced and its results disseminated, consumed, and digested. It is on that terrain that colonial anthropology is the most flawed, grounded as it is in social, political, and economic inequity and injustice (Blakey 2020).

The political sovereignty of France's former African colonies did not end the pernicious teaching that "colonization was a necessary evil," allegedly attributed to Senegal's first president, Leopold Sédar Senghor. Colonial memorial discourses continue to populate Senegalese streets, public places, and educational institutions. The inscription under the statue of Governor Faidherbe in Saint Louis, which was unbolted in 2020 following the assassination of George Floyd, reads, "To its Governor L. Faidherbe, Senegal is grateful." The statue and the inscription are reproduced in the Center for Research and Documentation of Saint Louis (CRDS) and its museum.⁵ Hence the troubling question asked by one of our research interlocutors in Saint Louis: "When will independence end?" (Ly and Thiaw 2021). It all sounds like, "the more things change, the more they remain the same." This implies that if independence means the kind of continuities that we see in anthropological practices teleguided by neocolonial politics, which are insensitive and uncaring about the pain, needs, and aspirations of those it helped disenfranchise and marginalize, then it is certainly time to put an end to it.

In light of this discussion, the anthropological community in Senegal and in most of the former French colonies is fractious. While largely marginalized at the universities where resources and professional anthropologists are scarce, anthropology receives considerable attention and is an incredible force for action, informing colonial and neocolonial governance and policies. It has been insidiously practiced by

the post–World War II French development agencies that mutated after the wave of African independences in the 1960s, under new denominations that peeled off the colonial veil. These include the Office of Scientific and Technical Research, which became the French Institute of Scientific Research for Development in Cooperation in 1988 and the Institute of Research for Development in 1998. Under the umbrella of research and development, France continues devoutly to collect a massive quantity of anthropological data on African cultures to inform its capitalist interventions on the continent.

Through anthropological praxis, France works at maintaining an imagined community of fate with its former colonies, under the jargon of FranceAfrique. Rather than being fixed, the FranceAfrique community of fate is constantly reinvented, recontextualized, and readapted to maintain French hegemonic ambitions. It is a pernicious system that instrumentalizes anthropology and has insidiously penetrated the art de vivre, the language, and the educational system of the formerly colonized. Resistance to it was voiced from multifaceted ideologies inspired by pan-Africanism and Black solidarities, indigeneity, decoloniality/postcoloniality, religion (e.g., the Muslim brotherhood), and civil society movements such as the Front for a Popular and Pan-African Anti-Imperialist Revolution in Senegal; France Get Out; the Republic of the Indigènes in France; and the Collective for African Renewal. Despite growing resistance, France, like the

Borg nation, entertains the conviction that “resistance is futile; you will be assimilated,” no matter what.

The Anthropology We Want for the Future

Decoloniality entails practices that foster novel forms of anthropological engagement informed by a sense of social justice, care, and repair. It is first and before all a praxis that redirects our goals, audiences, vocabulary, and languages for a more inclusive anthropological approach that is attentive to the worldviews, demands, and aspirations of Indigenous communities. The anthropology we want is not simply an anthropology that listens, but more fundamentally, one that can hear other voices calling for justice and learn to feel and heal others' pain and attend to the needy. The anthropology we want is not only reflexive but also values difference. It is a problem-solving anthropology, an anthropology of repair that is committed to finding, along with communities, credible and sustainable solutions to the past and present problems of our time. The transformations we advocate for are not directed at a mere reorientation or a change of polarity in theoretical debates that would shift colonial categories and hierarchies from one side to the other and that might lead to reverse inequalities and other forms of injustice. Instead, they are part of much bigger, macrostructural changes that will allow us to rethink the social and political role of anthropology as practiced in the twenty-first century and beyond. This will require greater responsibility, sensibility, and care when it comes to the impact of our work.

Footnotes

1.
<https://din.today/decolonizing-the-mind-research-network/>;
<https://din.today/claude-alvares-universities-as-we-know-them-should-not-and-shall-not-exist-in-the-future-we-need-multiversities/>.
2.
<https://din.today/claude-alvares-universities-as-we-know-them-should-not-and-shall-not-exist-in-the-future-we-need-multiversities/>.
3.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPSYHtvkvs0>.
4.
«La société, elle paie de gens, elle leur dit, faite le métier de penser.... Si on réussit, nous allons améliorer votre bien être, donc laissez, nous pensez de grâce.» In <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPSYHtvkvs0>.
5.
CRDS was the former Centre IFAN for Saint Louis and Mauritania. Now CRDS is affiliated with the Gaston Berger University of Saint Louis.

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THE PAST(S) AND FUTURE(S) OF SOUTH AFRICAN ANTHROPOLOGY



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My discussion of South African anthropology starts with the history of the discipline's involvement with settler colonialism. This relates, on the one hand, to how the concerns of Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid shaped (part of) the anthropological community. On the other hand, it relates to the South African anthropological community's involvement in the British Empire. I furthermore show the contradictions and conflicts around gender and, particularly, racial inclusion in the South African anthropological

community. Finally, I address the centrality of debates on decolonization and different approaches to it.

Trajectories of South African Anthropology

South African anthropology has been well-established for the past century, with academic teaching departments, professional associations, and academic journals. Two circumstances, however, are important for a consideration of the discipline's history. First, South African anthropology of the twentieth century was firmly entrenched within the academic politics of local settler colonialism and (British) empire. The contradictions and conflicts of South African settler colonialism indeed had historically strong repercussions within the anthropological community. Second, the trajectories of South African anthropology have been embedded in a political economy of racial capitalism and extractivism.

Beginnings: The “Native Question”

South Africa's first anthropology program was formally established in 1921, under A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, at the University of Cape Town (UCT). UCT was founded in the British tradition and had an almost exclusively white student body until the 1990s. UCT's anthropology program started following calls from the European settler population and government administrators for “scientific” attention to “the native question.” The establishment of anthropology programs at South African universities responded to these

policy concerns and the political economy context decisively shaped by industrialization and particularly the mining industry.

Those seeking to establish anthropology in South Africa saw it as a tool for understanding and managing the imposition of modernity and industrial labor on Indigenous South Africans. This characteristic of South African anthropology defined the framework of local anthropologists, despite occasional protestations that their discipline was a distanced “science” of social and cultural diversity for its own sake. Regardless of their varying political and epistemological orientations, South African anthropologists have been driven in their work by the political-economic context in which they found themselves.

The origins of South African anthropology are found in both empire and a settler colonial society. But from early on, some South African anthropologists, including the locally and internationally influential cohort who came of age in the 1930s (especially Isaac Schapera, Max Gluckman, Monica [Hunter] Wilson, Hilda [Beemer] Kuper, and Ellen Hellmann), shared a vision of social service and, in some cases, a more radical reinterpretation of a South African single-society perspective that contested the segregationist narratives.

Gluckman played a leading role in this endeavour. Although he never taught at a South African university, his radicalization of Radcliffe-Brown’s earlier assertion (during the latter’s inaugural lecture at UCT in 1922) remained

influential. Radcliffe-Brown had argued that South Africa had to be studied as a single system, with Blacks and whites as component parts. No culture could be studied as a separate entity. Gluckman and a few others went further, with their emphasis that African societies could not be understood outside the history of colonial conquest and a racist society.

This perspective differed profoundly from that of another anthropological community that was shaped by a section of South African settler colonial society. This becomes evident from the trajectories of the discipline in the Afrikaans-medium universities.

Volkekunde

For much of the twentieth century, anthropology in South Africa was marked by the discernible division between social anthropology, which was closely connected to its British counterpart, and *volkekunde*, the nationalist Afrikaner version of the discipline.

There can be no doubt that the *volkekunde* approach was overtly shaped by ethno-nationalist and racist implications, with the aim of separating South Africans along racial and cultural lines. The historical auto-ethnography of C.S. (Kees) van der Waal (2015) revisits this political and intellectual trajectory in an exemplary manner. Drawing on his experience as a student of and lecturer in *volkekunde* in the 1960s and 1970s, van der Waal illuminates the emphatically

authoritarian structures at Afrikaans-medium universities. Critical thinking, even just wider reading, was discouraged.

Research focused on the documentation of Indigenous law, which *volkekunde* professors saw as their contribution to the strengthening of traditional authorities in the Bantustans, and thus the apartheid project. Control and formality dominated the ways in which research was conducted. Deep immersion during fieldwork was discouraged. Instead, “their mode of fieldwork often entailed formal interviews in tribal offices where designated old men would present the indigenous legal system, based on a research schedule that had been developed for the replication of several projects” (Van der Waal 2015:223).

Conceptually, the Afrikaner-nationalist anthropologists presented the discipline as a study of singular, unified, and historically persistent groups of people and their distinctive cultures. *Volkekunde* emphasized that humans were members of culturally separate peoples, and that each of these lived according to their culture in an integrated ethnos. Each ethnos was demarcated with clear boundaries, and members of each new generation were enculturated into it. Culture contact with others in the wider South African social context was regarded as an immense danger to naturalized, deep cultural differences between people, classified in terms of race, language and culture.

With the end of the apartheid dispensation, *volkekunde* quickly faded. Today one would be hard-pressed to find any anthropologist in South Africa who would self-identify as a *volkekundige*.

Social Anthropology

The social anthropologists would not have liked to hear of it, but what they taught in South African English-medium universities for many years bore distinctive similarities to *volkekunde*. The structural-functionalist approach that took root after Radcliffe-Brown's appointment at UCT emphasized static models of African lives, ostensibly determined through membership within timeless, bounded cultural units. Social anthropology, too, regarded culture contact between Europeans and Africans as disrupting the "natural state," resulting in the deplorable "detribalized native."

However, unlike in the monolithic *volkekunde*, this conservative approach was challenged by social anthropologists, who ascribed to critical or even radical interpretations of the discipline. Already in the 1940s, some social anthropologists stopped worrying about detribalization. This was particularly evident in the pronouncements of South African anthropologists who were associated with the Rhodes-Livingstone-Institute (RLI) in Northern Rhodesia (today's Zambia), where research focused on the broader political and economic structures of changing African lives. This period lasted through to the 1960s, when

Gluckman directed RLI and famously pronounced that, basta, “an African townsman is a townsman, an African miner is a miner” (Gluckman 1960:57).

During the late apartheid years, a political economy approach became even more influential, from the late 1970s onwards. The strongest foothold of Marxist approaches in social anthropology was at UCT, where a generation of lecturers and students turned their interests to the devastating consequences of racial capitalism and apartheid, with a focus on mass relocations.

While *volkekunde* was dedicated to the building of the ethno-nationalist apartheid project, South African anthropologists of the social anthropology school were influential in the international development of the discipline in the anglophone Global North. South African anthropologists played a big part in the development of British social anthropology in the mid-twentieth century. This included Schapera, Gluckman, and Meyer Fortes, who all moved to Britain; Kuper, who moved to the U.S.; and anthropologists who worked out of South African universities—notably Wilson, and Philip and Iona Mayer. While some among them were critical of segregationist policies, their work was still tied up closely with the national, and wider, regional Southern African political economy of racial capitalism and empire.

Contradictions and Identities of South African Anthropologists

With very few exceptions until the final apartheid years, practicing anthropologists and students in both social anthropology and *volkekunde* belonged to the white settler population. However, not-insignificant differences of gender and ethnicity must be noted between the different disciplinary orientations.

Volkekundiges were generally male and of upper-middle-class Afrikaner background. In the social anthropology tradition, however, women anthropologists, many born to first-generation Jewish immigrants, played a major role from early on. Wilson, Hellmann, Kuper, Winifred Hoernle, and Eileen Krige all contributed remarkable ethnographies during the 1930s and 1940s.

Although until recently the discipline remained overwhelmingly white, a few Black intellectuals trained in social anthropology from the 1940s onwards. Most prominently among the first generation of Black anthropologists was Z.K. (Zachariah Keodirelang) Matthews, who was appointed in 1936 as a lecturer in “Social Anthropology and Native Law and Administration” at the University of Fort Hare. In 1944, he was promoted to professor and became head of Fort Hare’s Department of African Studies, where he was joined by Monica Wilson. They became close colleagues and friends, a relationship that continued throughout their lives. Ultimately, Matthews was exiled and died as Botswana’s ambassador to the U.S. in 1968.

Matthews and Wilson trained a small cohort of Black South African anthropologists in the 1940s. These included, among others, Livingstone Mqotsi and Godfrey Pitje. The political situation of the time, however, precluded any of them from pursuing a professional career in anthropology, and they, like the somewhat younger generation of Bernard Magubane and Archie Mafeje, were forced into exile. Mafeje's experience is particularly poignant. In 1968, in the process of completing his PhD at Cambridge University, he was appointed to a senior lecturer position in social anthropology at UCT. But then, following government pressure, the university rescinded the offer. Mafeje eventually took up a series of appointments in African and European universities and became known for his critique of anthropology. In the decade before his death in 2007, however, he participated in vibrant discussions held among African anthropologists about the future of the discipline on the continent.

Very few Black South Africans entered postgraduate programs in anthropology before the 1990s. In postapartheid South Africa, however, the disciplinary community has significantly expanded and diversified. Today, many anthropology programs train postgraduate students of diverse backgrounds, including many research students at some historically Black universities. Nonetheless, the racial and class demographics of the anthropology student population remain uneven across universities.

Debates on Decolonization

Questions about decolonization and the politics of knowledge were compellingly put on the agenda of the South African academy, and of anthropology, by massive student movements that rocked the country in 2015 and 2016. The uprising started in March 2015 with a forceful campaign at UCT, dubbed #RhodesMustFall, with the aim to have the statue of British colonialist and mining magnate Cecil John Rhodes removed. The activists succeeded, and the statue, which had been sitting on the university grounds for 80 years, was removed just a month later. The movement spread quickly to other universities, initially mostly the historically white, English-medium institutions with deep roots in British colonialism. The reason was put forward that these universities' institutional cultures still alienate Black students.

Later in 2015, the protests extended further and included the historically Black universities. At these universities, which are today mostly attended by Black working-class students, pressing financial issues (e.g., tuition fees), often provided the trigger for protests. Protests against financial exclusion had already occurred at some historically Black universities during the preceding years. In the end, though, discussions about academic canons and the racial composition of the professoriate took root across the spectrum, with pervasive calls for free education. In addition to demanding the abolition of tuition fees, the students also insisted on a full intellectual and political decolonization of the postapartheid society, which they perceived to be still profoundly racist.

The challenges of anthropology in the contemporary South African university are inevitably framed by the transformation that happened in the post-1994 academic environment. During the first two decades of postapartheid South Africa, the emphasis in efforts to transform the academy was to increase of Black students' enrollment. While some progress was made in terms of desegregation and access to higher learning for previously excluded sections of the population, neocolonial structures and the rise of the neoliberal university under conditions of austerity typified the conditions of postapartheid South African universities. Critical engagement with knowledge production and pedagogy was shoved to the margins of the higher education sector. This changed in 2015 and 2016.

Decolonizing Anthropology

At universities across South Africa, groups were formed to debate decolonization and epistemic disobedience. At least at some universities, anthropology students and faculty took the lead in these endeavors. Mostly, but not exclusively, younger and Black anthropologists joined students in putting relevant questions on Anthropology Southern Africa's annual conference agendas and in its journal, as well as in institutional and classroom discussions.

Most South African-based anthropologists nowadays agree on the discipline's colonial legacy. Central to the critique of colonial (and neocolonial) anthropologies have been the

ostensible social—and especially racial—differences between observers and knowledge producers (anthropologists) and the observed (African) subjects.

The epistemological inequalities of “knowers” and “subjects” continue to reverberate in South African anthropology. This was expressed more than a decade ago by Francis Nyamnjoh, a Cameroon-born professor of social anthropology at UCT. It comes as no surprise that controversies tend to follow roughly lines between those who study “their own” and those who study “the other.”

As a solution to this conundrum, some anthropologists from marginalized backgrounds have promoted doing anthropology at home. Some proponents of this approach argue that Black anthropologists’ studies have a profoundly different outlook from those of white researchers. There is no doubt about the importance of writing against colonial anthropology’s powerful legacy of othering. However, this line of argument also leans toward a problematic notion of nativism and hypernationalism. The African-nationalist school of thought has garnered some support among postgraduate students in anthropology, yet little among teaching academics.

Regarding curriculum reform, critical debates have focused on whether changes should primarily entail Africanization, i.e., the addition to or possibly replacement of the established canon of anthropology that has been taught in South Africa

since the demise of *volkekunde*, mostly in the British social anthropology tradition, with works by African and/or Black scholars.

A different perspective on decolonizing knowledge production addresses questions about how social and cultural anthropology from the African continent can help shape a new perspective on the world in the twenty-first century. This perspective does not start from African-nationalist perceptions but from listening to the voices that have emerged out of grassroots movements around the world and questioning how decolonization, critique, and anthropology shape each other.

This alternative approach to decolonization calls for the rethinking of the critical ethnographic project. It goes beyond the paradigm of Africanization and the suggestion that Africans should conduct, exclusively, ethnographies of “their own” people. Instead, it suggests intensive engagement with forms and ways of knowing from different parts of the Global South, with the aim of challenging African-Western binaries.

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This collection of short essays is part of that same endeavor and hopefully will become a source of inspiration at a moment when anthropologists are engaging in a new round of rethinking the discipline by discussing, once more, the possibility of its decolonization. This project calls for assessments and a discussion of prospects. Whether in our local, regional, national, or international professional settings, we need to define our own pathways to anthropological futures.

(Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, Professor, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana and Professor Emeritus, Universidade de Brasília)

... an exciting project and conversation among anthropologists working and living in different contexts. This project takes us a big step forward in thinking through diverse anthropological practices while attempting to think through ways in which we can collectively enable genuinely cosmopolitan horizons of a transformative anthropological commons.

(Professor Heike Becker, Chair, Department of Anthropology, University of the Western Cape, South Africa)

... anyone interested in the future of anthropology—which should be all of us—will benefit from these essays.

(Danilyn Rutherford, President, Wenner-Gren Foundation)