

## Editorial

### A Giant Has Moved On

This 12th General Assembly is taking place exactly one year and nine months after the death of an illustrious member of CODESRIA, one most committed to the problematic of the public sphere in Africa. Wednesday 28 March 2007 will go down as a sad day among social researchers all over Africa and beyond. It was the day Professor Archibald Monwabisi Mafeje (fondly known among friends, colleagues and admirers as Archie) passed away in Pretoria, in what was a most quiet exit that has left very many of us whom he touched directly or indirectly, in a state of sadness and anger.

Archie Mafeje, the quintessential personality of science and one of the most versatile, extraordinary minds to emerge from Africa was, in his days, a living legend in every sense. His knowledge and grasp of issues – almost all issues – was breathtaking. His discourses transcended disciplinary boundaries and were characterised by a spirit of combative engagement underpinned by a commitment to social transformation. As an academic sojourner conscious of the history of Africa over the last six centuries, he rallied his colleagues to resist the intellectual servitude on which all forms of foreign domination thrive. He was intransigent in his call for the liberation of our collective imaginations as the foundation stone for continental liberation. In all of this, he also distinguished himself by his insistence on scientific rigour and originality. It was his trade mark to be uncompromisingly severe with fellow scientists who were mediocre in their analyses. The power of his pen and the passion of his interventions always went hand-in-hand with a uniquely polemical style hardly meant for those who were not sure-footed in their scholarship. This, then, was the Mafeje who left us on 28 March 2007, to join the other departed heroes and heroines of the African social research community. A great pan-African, an outstanding scientist, a first rate debater, a frontline partisan in the struggle for social justice, and a gentleman of great humanitarian principles, Archie was laid to rest on Saturday 7 April 2007 in Umtata, South Africa.

Professor Archie Mafeje, South African by birth, completed his undergraduate studies and began his career as a scholar at the University of Cape Town, but like many other South Africans, he was soon forced by the apartheid regime to go into exile where he spent the better part of his life. He obtained a PhD in Anthropology and Rural Sociology from University of Cambridge in 1966. In 1973, at the age of 34, he was appointed Professor of Anthropology and Sociology of Development at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague by an Act of Parliament and with the approval of all the Dutch universities, becoming the first African scholar to be so distinguished in The Netherlands. That appointment bestowed on him the honour of being a Queen Juliana Professor and one of her Lords. His name appears in the prestigious blue pages of the Dutch National Directorate.

Archie Mafeje's professional career spanned four decades and covered three continents. From 1969 to 1971 he was Head of the

Sociology Department at the University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania before moving to The Hague as a Visiting Professor of Social Anthropology of Development and Chairman of the Rural Development, Urban Development and Labour Studies Programme at the Institute of Social Studies from 1972 to 1975. It was here that he met his wife and life-long companion, the Egyptian scholar and activist, Dr Shahida El Baz. In 1979, he joined the American University, in Cairo, as Professor of Sociology. Thereafter, he took up the post of Professor of Sociology and Anthropology and Director of the Multidisciplinary Research Centre at the University of Namibia from 1992 to 1994. Mafeje was also a senior fellow and visiting or guest professor at several other universities and research institutions in Africa, Europe and North America. He is the author of many books, monographs and journal articles. His critique of the concept of tribalism and his works on anthropology are widely cited as key reference materials. He also did path-breaking work on the land and agrarian question in Africa.

Mafeje returned to South Africa several years after the end of apartheid where he was appointed a Research Fellow by the National Research Foundation (NRF) working at the African Renaissance Centre at the University of South Africa (UNISA). In 2001, Archie Mafeje became a member of the Scientific Committee of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and in 2003 was awarded the Honorary Life Membership of this Council. In 2005, Professor Mafeje was appointed a CODESRIA Distinguished Fellow in conjunction with the Africa Institute of South Africa, in Pretoria.

#### **An Incarnation of Africa's Intellectual Ideals and Struggles**

Archie Mafeje was in many regards an epitome of the intellectual ideals that engineered the creation of CODESRIA in 1973, and that has fuelled and propelled the Council for the past thirty-five years. To Issa Shivji, he was a man of "great intellectual rigour and integrity" who did not compromise on ideas, and "whose ideas were so powerful that you instinctively felt you had known the man from time immemorial." He was a rigorous and thorough researcher who, already in the early 1960s, impressed his professor and supervisor – Monica Wilson – with the quality and depth of his masterly ethnography in Langa (John Sharp). But, as his daughter, Dana, rightly remarked in reaction to the outpouring of tributes following his death, Mafeje was more than just an intellectual giant. He was above all a human being. "My father was critical but humane, fierce but compassionate, sarcastic but gentle, silly but brilliant, stubborn but loyal, but most of all, he was passionate."

Indeed, it was this passion and compassion, this humanness that made him both appreciated and contested, leaving few indifferent in the face of his sharp, incisive, critical mindedness and love for debate in which he, metaphorically, did not hesitate

to cross swords or draw blood. His debates with fellow African intellectuals in the pages of the *CODESRIA Bulletin* – which we have reproduced in this special tribute issue – were, in the words of Ali Mazrui (one of his intellectual adversaries), “brutal – almost no holds barred!” Ali Mazrui, whose idea of ‘inter-African colonisation’ Archie Mafeje viciously savaged as an attempt at facilitating Europe’s recolonisation of Africa, regrets not having had “a formal intellectual reconciliation” with Mafeje before his passing away (Ali Mazrui). His utter forthrightness, razor-sharpness, brilliant turn of phrase, cynicism, polemical style, unwavering stances, and penchant for pushing arguments to, and even beyond their logical conclusions, made Mafeje to come across sometimes as “deeply embittered”.

However, there was reason enough to be embittered and saddened for someone at war against the intellectual hegemony of those who proclaim universal truth and wisdom, regardless of time or space, on a continent where many of his colleagues continue to embellish their references with irrelevant writers from the global North to prove their intellectualness (cf. Issa Shivji, Jimi Adesina). There was reason for bitterness and sadness for someone outstandingly critical of double-speak and other shortcomings of the African political and intellectual elite (Kwesi Prah), to realise that such dissemblance was far more deep-rooted and resilient than he initially imagined. And there indeed was reason for embitterment and sadness to be persuaded to return “home” to a post-apartheid South Africa where little in effect is post anything, and where, instead of closing ranks to win the battle of ideas, many are the black intellectuals who continue to be induced from academe into government, the corporate world and NGOs, where bureaucracy and making money matter more than knowledge production, social justice, truth and reconciliation (Eddy Maloka).

Despite his immense generosity of spirit and capacity to see the other side even when he disagreed with it, Archie felt more in exile back home in South Africa than he ever felt away from South Africa. According to Jimi Adesina, the relative intimacy he enjoyed within CODESRIA circles was brought home to Mafeje through the pain of his intellectual isolation in South Africa. “The tragedy for all of us,” Jimi Adesina writes, “is that Archie did not die of natural causes – he died of intellectual neglect and isolation. In spite of the enormous love of his family and loyal life-long friends, Archie’s oxygen was vigorous intellectual engagement. He lived on serious, rigorous and relevant scholarship. Starved of that, he simply withered.” Yet, as Maloka argues, instead of succumbing to embitterment and sadness, Mafeje should have used “his towering intellectual stature and his ‘straight-shooting’ approach” to help “make the case for a very vibrant, strong and independent black intelligentsia as a force to reckon with in confronting the enduring legacy of apartheid.” His age was taking a heavy toll on him, Maloka admits, but if he had asked Mafeje, the latter would probably have repeated what he said at the CODESRIA 30th anniversary conference in Dakar in December 2003: “You don’t make knowledge alone”.

Archie Mafeje would die before reconciliation with the University of Cape Town (UCT) – his alma mater – the intellectual community within which he began his knowledge making – which in 1968 rescinded its decision to appoint him senior lecturer in Social Anthropology (or right to make and help make

knowledge) because he was black in the apartheid eyes of the Minister of National Education, despite his being the best candidate for the position. It could always be argued that if Mafeje had reason to be angry and bitter vis-à-vis the UCT authorities for having succumbed too easily to government pressure, he should have taken heart to reintegrate himself at the end of apartheid in the 1990s from the fact that the National Union of South African Students protested the violation of his academic freedom through mass demonstrations within UCT and in other university campuses, including a sit-in that lasted for nine days (Lungisile Ntsebeza). He was relevant to students in the 1960s just as he was in exile, and within the CODESRIA networks where he served as resource person and mentor to younger scholars; and would certainly have been relevant to students in South Africa as well, after the 1990s, with some mutual forgiving and forgetting.

### **UCT and the Game of Reconciliation: Too Little, Too Late**

Following the end of apartheid in the early 1990s, instead of things getting better in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, relations between UCT and Mafeje only worsened, despite several attempts by Mafeje to return to UCT, including as the AC Jordan Chair in African Studies. Mafeje felt insulted and in certain cases described as “most demeaning” the reactions of the authorities of UCT to his efforts to return to his alma mater as professor. When it was announced to him that another candidate had been offered the AC Jordan Chair to which he, Mafeje, had not even been invited for an interview, Mafeje wrote: “In 1968 it was an honour to be offered a post at UCT but in 1994 it is a heavy burden which only the politically naïve or the unimaginative can face, without some uneasy doubts. I might be wrong, but only time will tell.” From then on Mafeje treated with disdain various overtures by UCT, including the proposed award of an honorary doctorate and a formal apology in 2003. Only in August 2008, almost two years after his death, did UCT bring together 11 members of the Mafeje family at a symposium where a second apology was issued and an honorary doctorate awarded him posthumously. The Mafeje family agreed to overrule Archie Mafeje and accept the apology on his behalf, an apology in which UCT recognises that it “did not do nearly enough in the 1990s to make it possible for Professor Mafeje to return to UCT, and that this remained an obstacle to his reconciliation with his alma mater” (Lungisile Ntsebeza).

Whatever the reasons for his rejection of overtures of reconciliation and recognition by UCT, Mafeje was seldom comfortable with honours, especially in his life time. In December 2003 when CODESRIA, on the occasion of its 30th anniversary celebrations, decided to honour him with a Life Long Membership of CODESRIA in recognition of his lifetime contribution to scholarship, Mafeje was grateful but full of misgivings. “It might be that you are wishing me not a soon death, but death alright. When you honour people, you usually honour them after their deaths, and the glory comes after their death. But this glory comes before death,” he told the special panel CODESRIA had put together to celebrate him (Ebrima Sall). The challenge is thus for UCT to prove that its posthumous recognition of Archie Mafeje would bring glory enough to be recognised even by the late Mafeje, a man who was not comfortable with honours, and who had every reason to be bitter towards an institution that

had yielded too easily to the pressures of apartheid in his regard, and that did not appear keen to make him part and parcel of its post-apartheid identity in knowledge production and academic freedom (Lungisile Ntsebeza; Teboho Lebakeng).

### A Staunch Critic of Intellectual Colonialism

Archie Mafeje's bitter critiques of Ali Mazrui's Africa's self-colonisation and Achille Mbembe's "African Modes of Self-writing" are only fully understood in the light of his deep intellectual and political commitment to the total emancipation of Africa as a symbol of the pan-African ideals he shared and fought for in his scholarship, activities and pronouncements. Through his sustained critique of African anthropology as a handmaiden of colonialism and call for social history to replace it as a discipline, surfaces Archie Mafeje's total discomfort with the epistemology of alterity and exogenously generated and contextually irrelevant knowledge produced with ambitions of dominance, especially when such knowledge is passively internalised and reproduced by the very people whose ontology and experiences have been carefully scripted out (sometimes even as fellow scholars – see the Archie Mafeje versus Sally Falk Moore debate) of this knowledge by misrepresentations informed by hierarchies of humanity structured, inter alia, on race, place, class, gender and age (Jimi Adesina, Helmi Sharawy, Dani Nabudere, Samir Amin, Teboho Lebakeng).

As John Sharp argues below, what Archie Mafeje objected to about anthropology which he once described as his 'calling', "was not its methods of research or the evidence that could be produced by careful participant observation. Even at his most critical he took care to endorse the value of this form of inquiry relative to others." He remained faithful to the fact "that any attempt to understand the circumstances of people in Africa required firsthand inquiry into what they made of these circumstances themselves." What he objected to therefore, "was an anthropology in which particular epistemological assumptions... were allowed to overwhelm whatever it was that people on the ground had to say about the conditions in which they found themselves." If Mafeje objected to this kind of anthropology, it was "because anthropology was the discipline he knew best – the one he had said was his 'calling' at the outset of his professional career. Had he had cause to express himself with equal fervour in respect of other disciplines, he would no doubt have found the epistemological premises of their liberal versions as objectionable as those of liberal anthropology" (John Sharp).

Fred Hendricks notes that Mafeje was committed "to combating the distorted images produced and reproduced about Africa from the outside", and sometimes uncritically internalised and reproduced by Africans trained to mimic but not to question (Issa Shivji). Mafeje spent the best part of his life and scholarship contesting the racialised epistemological underpinnings of a system of social knowledge production into which Africans have been co-opted and schooled as passive consumers without voice even on matters pertaining to their very own realities and existence. In this regard, Mafeje's unwavering pan-Africanism has always resonated with CODESRIA's mission of increased visibility for African scholars, African scholarship and African perspectives on African and global issues. Yet, his call for the valorisation of Africanity, its creativity and innovations has not meant easy endorsement for all that claims to be afro-centric. He has been especially critical of well-meaning but

poorly conceived and even more poorly articulated attempts at affirming Africanity such as "African renaissance" (Eddy Maloka). The extent to which African scholars buy these aspirations in principle and in practice would determine the degree to which Mafeje and CODESRIA have succeeded in making these battles and lofty heights truly collective and pan-African beyond rhetoric.

Achille Mbembe, in a highly erroneous post-modern monologue – 'African Modes of Self-Writing', lumps Archie Mafeje together with those he dismisses as "nativists", in opposition to his own supposed "cosmopolitan" experience, outlook and scholarship (Jimi Adesina). Fred Hendricks and others have also challenged Mafeje for freezing his intellectual gaze narrowly on sub-Saharan Africa, and for inadvertently reproducing ideas about "a disaggregated and dismembered Africa" in a pan-Africanism that had little real room for North Africa beyond the fact of his considerably long period of stay in Cairo and being married to Shahida El Baz, an Egyptian and mother of his daughter Dana. But such criticism could be countered by the fact that he did not necessarily have to study Egypt or North Africa in order to consider the region as part of his pan-African project. In the absence of personal scholarship, Mafeje used other indicators to affirm his belonging to North-Africa and esteem the region in his pan-Africanism. He probably felt more at home in Egypt than he ever did in South Africa, especially following his return under the post-apartheid dispensation, where he increasingly felt isolated and lonely, and indeed, where he died unattended (Jimi Adesina, Eddy Maloka). Was it a premonition of this lack of warm relationships in the land of his birth that made Mafeje less than enthusiastic about returning home to South Africa after 1994, preferring instead to stay on in Namibia as director of the newly established Multidisciplinary Research Centre at the University of Namibia, even if he did not last long in the latter position (Kwesi Prah, Eddy Maloka)?

Whatever be the answer to this and similar questions, to measure the fullness of Mafeje's Africanity and pan-Africanism, it is appropriate to go beyond scholarly declarations and appreciate the social relationships he forged and entertained in his life in and away from a place called home, motherland or fatherland. According to Kwesi Prah, Archie Mafeje exuded an "effortless worldliness" that gave him a rare "vibrant and sublime cosmopolitanism"; and as a veritable cosmopolitan African, he was used to describing himself as "South African by birth, Dutch by citizenship and Egyptian by domicile". Kwesi Prah writes of Mafeje's impressive familiarity with Western literature, Dutch art, "sophisticated and totally uncommon knowledge of European wines", and culinary skills and accomplishments. Just as "his often placid exterior belied a stridently combative spirit and expression" in debates, Archie Mafeje's committed pronouncement and writings on pan-Africanism and the importance of decolonising the social sciences, often took attention away from the cosmopolitan that he was – leading to misrepresentations even by fellow African intellectuals. Far from being essentialist, Mafeje was a person to whom belonging was always work in progress to be constantly enriched with new encounters and new relationships, and never to be confined by geography or boundaries, political or disciplinary. His deep embitterment came and/or was exacerbated when those claiming him failed to demonstrate the nuances and sophistication that made of him the cosmopolitan intellectual and African that he was. As Jimi

Adesina reminds us, the meaning of Archie Mafeje for three generations of African scholars and social scientists is about encounters and the relationships that resulted from those encounters. To John Sharp, Archie Mafeje will be remembered as a scholar who spoke truth, unfailingly, to power; and who over the years carefully worked out how best to support his political convictions by means of the research he did. In speaking truth to power, he had come to master the art of hard and uncompromising intellectual argument, without having to resort to personal animosity or the denial of respect for those with whom he came to argue.

Archie Mafeje has fought the battle and run the race successfully. We will surely miss his thoughtful insights, his strident rebukes, his loyal friendship, his companionship, and – yes, his wit, humour and expert culinary skills that included an incompa-

rable knowledge of foods and wines from all corners of the world. For those he has left behind, especially those of us whom he inspired, the challenge before us is clear: Keep the Mafeje spirit alive by investing ourselves with dedication to the quest for the knowledge we need in order to transform our societies – and the human condition for the better. The timely call by Mahmood Mamdani, for CODESRIA to take a formal decision to commit resources to gathering Archie Mafeje's papers, with a view to deciding whether they should be archived at CODESRIA or are substantial enough to be archived in a library, most likely in South Africa, with the understanding that these would be available to all scholars, is precisely what CODESRIA is actively pursuing. This special issue of the *CODESRIA Bulletin*, and the 12th General Assembly panel in honour of Mafeje are part of a package of measures aimed at memorializing his substantial contribution to the development of knowledge on the African continent.

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## Archie Mafeje

I came across Archie Mafeje's name and fame in the late 1960s during my student days at the University of Dar es Salaam, then a college of the University of East Africa. I do not remember having met him personally then. My memory may be failing and, regrettably, Archie is no longer with us to confirm. But Archie's ideas were so powerful that you instinctively felt you knew the man from time immemorial.

The first thing I remember of Archie Mafeje is a story, then making the rounds of the student body and young tutorial assistants. Archie was the head of the Department of Sociology. He was the supervisor of one of the first PhD students in that department. The student went on to become the Head of Sociology in the 1970s and was an influential person in the corridors of power at the university. Archie failed him. The thesis, Archie said, without mincing words, was not passable. He stood by his decision in spite of the usual pressures. So long as Archie was in the department, the man did not get his doctorate. I came to learn later that the thesis was passed after Archie left the university. The students told and retold this story with great admiration. For us, then, Archie's stand symbolised his great intellectual rigour and integrity. On ideas, he would not compromise.

Personally, I adore and respect Archie for his great and incisive intellectual insights, his uncompromising stand on matters of principle and his steadfastness on rigour and unwavering commitment to national liberation and social emancipation. He refused to be taken in by the fashions and fads among intellectuals – usually spawned by Western academia and mimicked by us in Africa. I marvelled at and enjoyed his think pieces in the *CODESRIA Bulletin*. I read and zealously circulated his sharp rejoinders to Achille Mbembe's postmodernist writings on Africanity. I quote and requote his excellent piece reviewing the debate on democracy between Thandika Mkandawire and Anyang' Nyong'o. He did not pull punches in his analysis of his colleagues whom he nevertheless respected and engaged with. Little did I realise before I read this piece that Archie had read my short

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piece on the debate. Even while agreeing with my basic thesis, Archie did not spare me for my loose formulations. He deployed his usual razor-sharpness. I will quote him extensively because it illustrates all I am saying about Archie's style, rigour, theoretical sweep and utter forthrightness. Using Gramsci's idea of the 'philosophy of praxis' as a peg on which to hang his arguments, Mafeje says:

From the point of view of 'philosophy of praxis', there is always an underlying tension between determinism and voluntarism. Intended or not, this manifested itself in the exchange between Shivji and Mandaza (1990). Mandaza was inclined to accuse Shivji of determinism or 'waiting for Godot' in his academic and theoretical tower (unkind words, perhaps communicated as a sign of respect and appreciation), while not only reserving the latter for himself but advocating it for others on the basis of his experience in Zimbabwe, without acknowledging that it is a mixed one. He also chastised Shivji for 'caricaturism'. Perhaps Shivji deserves what he got. He trivialised his own problematique by presenting it in a Charlie Chaplain fashion. (One wonders why but also one recalls that in his prison notes Gramsci affected certain verbal postures; so it could be with anybody.) But, as is known, Charlie Chaplin's message was always very profound to the disquiet of the Americans who found it necessary to deport him back to his native England.

Irrespective of the reaction Shivji elicited from his colleagues (irritation from Mandaza and disgust from Anyang' Nyong'o if only with his 'hackneyed terms'), his diagnosis is more correct than most and, theoretically, is better founded than that of his detractors. For instance, on liberalism and imperialism or 'fashionable bandwagons' of the West, his observations are valid

and Mandaza could not help granting this. His concept of 'compradorial democracy' might be etymologically vulgar and theoretically undeveloped but, as a shorthand for what is happening or likely to happen in Africa under the current *pax Americana*, it hits the nail on the head.<sup>1</sup>

This wonderful piece, tantalisingly subtitled 'Breaking Bread with my Fellow-travellers', was written sometime in 1992, during the transition in Africa from the one-party to multi-party. It stood out as a singularly enlightening piece and an incisive review of the debate on democracy among African intellectuals. In my view, it remains so to this day. Almost fifteen years into the so-called multi-party democracy, we are now in a better position to understand and appreciate Archie Mafeje's great insights and analysis of the struggle for democracy. I would like to invite my fellow African intellectuals to revisit that debate and Archie's great contribution.

Archie's remarks cut sharply, but I never felt the pangs of hurt. Rather, my respect and admiration for him increased. Archie read his fellow African intellectuals, took them seriously, and engaged with them without being patronising. Unlike many of our colleagues, who embellish their references with writers from the global North, to prove their intellectualness, Archie's references were African, rooted in Africa yet fully aware and critically appreciative of intellectual discourses elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> He refused intellectual hegemones, in particular those that proclaim universal truth and wisdom regardless of time or space. He detested racism but appreciated the 'anti-racism' (Senghor's phrase) of African nationalism as an assertion of African humanity against centuries of oppression and humiliation. He was clear of the bourgeois nature of anti-colonial and post-independence African nationalism but appreciated and celebrated the historical role of national independence as 'the greatest political achievement by Africans'. He called it 'an unprecedented collective fulfilment'.<sup>3</sup>

As a person, Archie was modest but proud. In relation to those with whom he disagreed, he did not bicker behind their

backs but told them to their face. I occasionally met him at Thandika's place in Dakar. It was a great intellectual treat. From Thandika you got intellectual provocations, references to great progressive movies, tips on the use of a computer. From Archie you got controversies and heresies accompanied by choice wines. One could never predict Archie's position on intellectual and political controversies. But one could always be sure that it would be from the class standpoint of the oppressed and exploited. Archie was not ashamed of his Marxist outlook. Even during the heyday of neo-liberalism when many former African Marxist scholars uncritically turned postmodernists or subalterns or culturalists, Archie indefatiga-

bly defended historical materialism and used it with great originality to understand the burning issues of the continent.

Archie's oral and written interventions were short, simple, sharp, witty and pithy but never 'sweet' in the sense of being flattery. He rarely called a spade a spade or an instrument to cut with but used it to illustrate its sharpness. Reading him, you could never fail to recognise a spade when you saw one. I always wished I could emulate his style, at least the brevity and clarity, if not the sharpness, but never succeeded.

In memory of Archie Mafeje, the giant of an African intellectual, I keep this tribute short.

## Notes

1. 'Theory of Democracy and the African Discourse; Breaking Bread with my Fellow-travellers', in Chole, Eshetu and Jibrin Ibrahim (eds) (1995). *Democratisation Processes in Africa: Problems and Prospects*, Dakar: CODESRIA.
2. Out of curiosity, I counted the author entries in Archie Mafeje's 1992 book of essays (*In Search of An Alternative: A Collection of Essays on Revolutionary Theory and Politics*, Harare: SAPES) and unsurprisingly found three-fourth of the entries were African.
2. 'African Philosophical Projections and Prospects for the Indigenisation of Political and Intellectual Discourse', in 'In Search of an Alternative', pp. 9-10.

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## Archibald Monwabisi Mafeje: A Vignette

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### Introduction

Mafeje will be remembered by those who knew him for a million and one things, and those of us who had the privilege of knowing him in different situations and climes for three to four decades and more will recognize in his character a vibrant and sublime cosmopolitanism that was rare. It was not a feature of his make-up that jumped into the face of the observer. Indeed, it could easily be missed or underestimated. But any close and careful appreciation of the personality would not have failed to perceive his almost effortless worldliness. Most people knew him as Archie. Only few knew his second name Monwabisi (literally, one who makes others happy).

I would like to understand a cosmopolitan to be a 'citizen of the world' in the core meaning of the idea as expressed by the classical Greek cynic, Diogenes, in the 4th century BC. 'I am a citizen of the world' were his words. He was making this pronouncement in a world in which Greeks saw themselves as the centre of all things. From the fifteenth century onwards with the European voyages of expansion and the early beginnings of globalization, the world became increasingly one unit, with the West as the centre.

Cosmopolitanism has for long been seen as largely a western sentiment. Too

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CASAS  
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smugly and too easily this heritage of expansion has been translated as 'we discovered the world'. That glib, self-adulatory assumption and all that it carries in train has provided an unspoken fillip for those who will argue that without appreciating where we all are and what we all have to offer, it is difficult to see how we can be world citizens. Can you be part of a world you do not know? Only by submitting yourself to a universalist morality and ethos – a cultural openness which celebrates all.

This moral dimension of cosmopolitanism has been eloquently and superbly argued by Kwame Anthony Appiah in his *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006). Today, it is as James Morris somewhere writes, 'contemporary orthodoxy. There are many who will argue that *Ubuntu* represents a localized traditional African expression of this ethos by those who, like Aimé Césaire, say: 'Hurrah for those who never invented anything, who never explored anything, who never discovered anything.' For Marx the opening up of societies by ex-

panding international capital has been crucial for the emergence of modern cosmopolitanism. Twentieth-century fascists associated cosmopolitanism with internationalism and hated every bit of it. Internationalism for them was anathema and a cruel term of abuse.

I met Mafeje during the opening of the 1970s when he was teaching at the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. I was at that point based in Amsterdam but commuting to Heidelberg every fortnight to teach. We were, I believe, introduced by Ernst Feder who was a colleague of Archie's. After telephonic contact, Mafeje agreed to visit me in Amsterdam.

The rendezvous was *Reinders*, a so-called 'brown café' (a traditional looking wooden interior-décor Dutch café) in the heart of Amsterdam; on the Leidseplein to be exact. It was a popular haunt of the arty set and their regular meeting and 'watering hole'. My memory tells me that all the big names in the Amsterdam art world including Harry Mullisch the writer, Robert Jasper Grootveld the high priest of the anti-establishmentarian anarchist Provo Movement, Jan Telting the painter, Piet Leeuwaarden the arch-hippie, Art Veldhoon the painter and many others made it a regular stop in town. If you wanted to know 'the scene', you 'hung around'. It was a very cosmopolitan and 'free' place. These were years following

the heady 1960s when Amsterdam was regarded as the most libertarian city in Europe and when the old description of migrant Jews fleeing from the excesses of the Spanish inquisition in the closing decade of the fifteenth century found a new meaning in our times as *Mokkum* or 'Jerusalem of the North'.

It was a late summer afternoon, and I was sitting and waiting at the front of *Reinders*, looking in the direction of the tram-stop, which was within view and barely a few metres away. I did not have to wait too long. Almost at the appointed time a tallish, gaunt but ramrod African, carrying his head aloft, stepped out of one of the trams coming from the direction of the Central Station. He rolled forward with an easy and steady gait. I was looking in his direction, and he appeared to inquire from a newspaper seller the location of *Reinders*, because the two swung in our direction and the newspaper man pointed to *Reinders*. I immediately assumed that this was Mafeje, and I stood up to meet him. He had calmly penetrating and appraising eyes. He wore a vague straggling beard and had enough self-possession to carry a beautifully crafted handbag. The air about him was not macho but also not effeminate.

We exchanged greetings and initial pleasantries and took seats on the patio of the café. By his own account, Archie had settled well in The Hague but was not altogether happy about some of the attitudes he encountered at the institute. When the conversation drifted to the fact that we were literally a stone's throw from the Rijksmuseum he strongly expressed the wish to visit the museum in the not too distant future and went on to extol the excellence of the Dutch Masters. We also discussed the Van Gogh Museum and the eccentricities or rather madness of Van Gogh. It distinctly occurred to me that there were not many African academics who were at home in such subjects.

On another occasion, elsewhere, he displayed a sophisticated and totally uncommon knowledge of European wines. I am myself quite at home with such knowledge, but in the social science circles of Africa I have not come across anyone who could rival Archie in this respect. Archie's knowledge of the Western clas-

sical literature was equally not inconsiderable, although he hardly made a show of this.

In the Netherlands, I remember that I was invited to his rooms for dinner in The Hague with the Kenyan Paul Adhu Awiti. It was superb. I suspect that this culinary skill was one of Archie's accomplishments that not many people knew about. I have been informed that in his home in Cairo he was very often and easily in charge of the kitchen.

His robust intellect was particularly observable in debates where his often placid exterior belied a stridently combative spirit and expression. Sometimes this polemically acute approach came across as abrasive, but it was an abrasiveness that was measured and hardly licentious.

I was instrumental in getting Archie to Namibia during the very early years of Namibia's independence to work in developing an implementational strategy for the research wings of the new University of Namibia. I had, as a consultant for the new Vice Chancellor's office, produced the structural concepts and theoretical designations for the research wings of the university. However, I left shortly before he arrived. For some reason he could not hit it off with the interests on the ground and in the ensuing differences that emerged he was in some cases a casualty. Many of the interests on the ground in the then University of Namibia were not very welcoming to an African of Archie's calibre, and considerations they had, I suspect, for consultancies and other things probably made them fearful of a new and senior African presence in their midst. Archie returned to Cairo.

Later, after the collapse of apartheid in South Africa, he applied to be appointed to the new A.C. Jordan Chair at the University of Cape Town. Again, interests fearful of transformation and, I am recently informed, partly linked to elements from the Namibian scene, colluded to bar his entrance into the university. I had written a reference, on his request, which was politely acknowledged but carried little effective weight in the corridors of power and influence in the university. This was the second time the establishment of the University of Cape Town had visited shabby treatment on him. The first time

was during the 1960s, when they refused to offer him a lectureship.

Mafeje was a very kind and considerate person. He had a lively sense of humour, but his normal quietness often masked this quality. His kindness was equally matched by loyalty to his friends. He valued friendship and stood by his friends, but he did not suffer fools. Archie's cosmopolitanism was matched by a fervent Africanism, which was worn unobtrusively but staunchly. He was also outstandingly critical of political double-speak and other shortcomings of the African political elite. This did not endear him to many elements in the African National Congress of South Africa. His original political home had been in the Unity Movement in the Cape. It was from the philosophical inclinations of this grouping that his early appreciation of political Marxism and the intellectual rudiments of cosmopolitanism were possibly acquired.

All these multifaceted dimensions of his personality contributed to giving him a cosmopolitan make-up. He grew up in the Cape, in South Africa, and spent a good part of his life in Cairo. Our mutual friend, Helmi Sharawy, informed me that Archie held his own in the super-chaotic traffic of Cairo, in word and deed. I am not sure if Cecil Rhodes would have counted the successful migration of a 'native' from Cape Town to Cairo as part of his Cape to Cairo project, but Archie achieved much of Rhodes's project in more ways than one, and had a roaring family life in Cairo with his partner Shahida and daughter.

I was in Cairo when the news of his death arrived and had the opportunity to attend his funeral in the *Omar Makram* mosque in the heart of the city. It was extraordinarily moving to observe the wonderful crop of the Cairene intellectual class assembled to honour and pay homage to his life. They included Tayeb Saleh, the well-known Sudanese-Egyptian writer; Kamal Bahaa Eldeen, former Minister of Education; Prof. Hussam Issa, Politbureau Member of the Nasserist Party; A.G. Shukr, Politbureau Member of the Progressive Party; Ragaa el Naqash, critic of Arabic literature; Prof. I. el Esawy and Prof. Helmi Sharawy. Archie managed successfully to pack all these different strands and impulses into his life and character.

## Archie Mafeje and the Social Sciences in Africa

The death of Archie Mafeje in March 2007 was a great shock to many African scholars and political activists. There is no doubt that Mafeje was one of the leading African social scientists who tried to deconstruct anthropology while trying to construct a new research methodology that was free from these colonially inspired disciplines within wider social science discourses to explain the African context. On the political side, there is also no doubt that Mafeje was a committed pan-Africanist who was dedicated to African emancipation and liberation, and a great teacher and crusader for African political, intellectual and cultural freedom. His achievements remain great landmarks upon which young African scholars can build to establish that new approach that he fought to set in motion in African knowledge production, intellectual freedom and social responsibility.

I met Archie Mafeje in the heyday of the struggle for African liberation at the University of Dar es Salaam, where he was a professor of sociology, from 1969 and later in Harare. At each of these places, he was a vibrant progressive debater and a defender of the interests of the working people. He did not take an open political position in favour of any political party or liberation movement in South Africa, the country of his birth, although he was known to take a Trotskyite activist position that operated under the Unity Movement of South Africa, which had a number of student organisations. But in academia, he took a broad position, which enabled him to maintain contact with the general intellectual community.

Mafeje's early contribution as a young anthropologist was a path-breaking article he wrote in 1970 for the *Journal of Modern African Studies* entitled 'The Ideology of Tribalism', which stimulated wide-ranging debate challenging the anthropological concept of 'a dual economy' and the alleged static nature of African society that the concepts of 'tribe' and 'tribalism' implied. Throughout this early period, Mafeje argued that African society was composed of social classes just like any other society by introducing Marxist concepts of class and class formation. He became one of the African

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anthropologists who challenged the discipline of colonial anthropology, which was regarded as the 'handmaiden of colonialism.' At the eighth General Assembly of CODESRIA held in Dakar, Senegal, in 1995, he even dared to declare anthropology a 'dead' discipline in Africa. Indeed, he went ahead to write a monograph, which CODESRIA published as Monograph Series 4/96, to make good his claims and to give his African fellow-anthropologists an opportunity to 'disabuse' him.<sup>1</sup>

Mafeje went further to demonstrate that the ultimate concern for writing his essay was to interrogate anthropology as a discipline and challenge its credentials for claiming to study 'the other' as a 'thing of the past' as well as its claim to deal with the present 'without making invidious distinction between the Third World subjects and those of the imperialist countries' (Mafeje 1996:1). The problematic he set for himself in the essay was to explore the deconstruction of anthropology 'with reference to the ex-colonial world' and as this emanated from the North and place the deconstruction debate within the African context. This enabled him to commit himself 'irrevocably' to adopting a different paradigm in the application of ethnography in Africa. He did so with the writing of his book: *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations: The Case of the Interlacustrine Kingdoms*, which he wrote in 1986 but which was published in 1991. Indeed, this book can be taken as Mafeje's *magnus opus* in that it laid out the research approach that he recommended for Africa, and therefore his contribution has to be judged from here.

Mafeje explains that he used the interlacustrine 'social formation' both as a synthesis of his previous theoretical and ideological explorations and as a testing ground for his deconstructionist ideas, first by moving a way from the concept 'culture' as an analytical category that was used in anthropology. The reason he

did this was that the concept had no boundaries because it was widely diffused in space, especially in conditions of improved communication; and for this reason it could not be used as a designating category in social analysis. Secondly, he also declined to use the concept 'society' for the same reasons in developing the theory of analysing interlacustrine kingdoms of East Africa because there could be 'societies' within societies.

In many ways, therefore, it can be said that Prof. Mafeje made a real break with the anthropological past in writing this book for it enabled him to problematise both anthropological and Marxist concepts in trying to develop a new understanding of analysing dynamic changes in African 'social formations'. His analysis of the ethnography of the interlacustrine kingdoms established a theory of 'social formations' of these kingdoms by relying on a discursive method that built on local histories with a strong interpretive force emanating from the local peoples' epistemologies and 'hidden knowledge'. Based on this theory, he argued that the pastoralists in the ten kingdoms of the interlacustrine region, which had both segmentary and centralising tendencies, challenged the notion that these kingdoms were 'invaded' by the empire-building Hamitic pastoralists from pre-dynastic Egypt. Instead he reconstructed a history of their 'social formation' that built on local processes of political action based on a detailed ethnography in which both the pastoralists and sedentary communities converged (Mafeje, 1991:20).<sup>2</sup>

From this, Professor Mafeje was able to challenge the whole notion of a particular pastoral community that came down from the north with longhorn cattle associated with the Hima/Tutsi people as a racial group with any special political characteristics for introducing a new political system. His research proved that such cattle could be found in Sierra Leone, and along the River Niger and as far south as Namibia. He pointed out that the indigenous Bantu agriculturalists and the Nilotic Babiito peoples had a pastoral history and therefore the process of state formation in the Bunyoro Empire could

only be understood in terms of dialectical social relations and interactions, which evolved between the two modes of production and existence. He pointed out:

The Bairu provided the agricultural base and services and the pastoralists, relieved of any onerous duties but in control of prestige goods, indulged themselves, turned the latter into a mechanism for political control and ritual mystification. This phenomenon, involving the same social categories, got repeated in five other kingdoms in the interlacustrine regions of Ankore, Burundi, Rwanda, Buhaya and Buzinza (Mafeje 1991:22).

The British anthropologist John Beattie had argued that when the Babiito dynasty took over from the Chwezi dynasty in the Bunyoro Kitara empire, these new rulers 'appeared strange and uncouth to the inhabitants' and had to be instructed in the manners appropriate to rulers of cattle-keeping and milk drinking. From the ethnographical evidence he collected from the people, Mafeje found that the Babiito were by tradition pastoralists and could not have been 'ignorant of cattle-keeping' although it was likely that they were 'ignorant of the kingship institutions, which in Bunyoro centred on sacred herds and milk diet for the kings'.

Mafeje's analysis and that of Peter Rigby, who investigated the Masaai of Tanzania using a phenomenological Marxist approach, demonstrated that the organic relationship between people of different modes of existence and culture must inform any analysis of society as a dialectical process of social and economic relationships. The social formation that arises historically must be demonstrated to arise out of these organic social relations and political actions. This can only be arrived at by use of a detailed ethnographic investigation instead of hypothetical *a priori* constructions based on one's ideological convictions.

In arriving at this method of conceptualisation, Mafeje tried to discard old anthropological concepts as well as polishing Marxist concepts by choosing 'social formation' as his unit of analysis and discarding the concepts 'culture' and 'society'. By interrogating the use of the concept 'ethnography' by the Comaroffs,<sup>3</sup> he adopted 'social formation' and his own notion of 'ethnography' as 'key concepts' in writing his book. In doing this, he departed from Balibar and Samir Amin

in their use of 'social formation' as meaning an 'articulation of modes of production'. Instead he preferred the use of 'social formation' as meaning 'the articulation of the economic instance and the instance of power'.

The counter-argument for this departure was that one could not use an articulation of an abstract concept such as 'mode of production' to designate 'the same concrete social reality they are meant to explain'. The other counter-argument was that Balibar's and Amin's use of the concept 'mode of production' had an organisational referent in which economics and politics were determinant, which could be subsumed under the concept of 'power'. Therefore in order to 'balance' the Marxist concept of economic instance: 'I invented what would have been "power instance"' but this proved, according to Mafeje, to be too awkward linguistically. So, instead he settled for the 'instance of power', which was actually inconsistent with the Marxist demarcation between 'structure' and 'superstructure'. Having made up his mind, he adopted 'social formation' as his unit of analysis *par excellence*. This is how the study of the interlacustrine kingdoms, became a series of 'social formations-in-the-making', which interbred with each other in such a way that the study explained how these independent kingdoms would have become one social formation or state had it not been for the colonial intervention. This proved that 'social formations', according to Mafeje, had 'extendable instances depending on the nature of intervening social and political forces whether internal or external'.

Professor Mafeje continued to develop his theory and ethnography of African social formations by clarifying that as units of analysis his 'social formations' were not defined according to their ethnography but according to their 'modes of organisation', so it did not matter which people belonged to a particular social formation, but rather 'what they were actually doing in their attempts to assert themselves':

It struck me that in the ensuing social struggles people try to justify themselves and not so much their causes which remain hidden. They do this by authoring particular texts which give them and others certain identities which in turn become the grammar of the same texts, the rules of the game, or, if you like, the *modus operandi*, in a social discourse in which individu-

als by virtue of their ascribed identities are assigned categorical statuses and roles (Ibid.).

Having clarified his second 'key concept' of 'ethnography', Mafeje declared it to be 'radically different from that of the Northern theorists or conventional anthropologists'. Referring to the results of his investigation of the interlacustrine kingdoms, he states:

It is these texts that I refer to as ethnography. They are socially and historically determined, i.e. they can be authored and altered by the same people over time or similar ones could be authored by people with a different cultural background under similar conditions. Therefore 'context' is most critical for their codification (Mafeje 1996:34).

If Professor Mafeje is therefore to be credited or discredited with the claim of having made a leap from the discipline of anthropology as a 'handmaiden of colonialism' to 'ethnography' as defined by him above, it is in the attempt he made in developing a thesis based on these 'texts' as an approach that was suitable for explaining African conditions. Mafeje sums up this attempt when he concludes:

The final methodological lesson that can be drawn from the study is that detailed ethnographic knowledge helps us to avoid mechanistic interpretations. Far from opening the way to relativism or particularism, it enables us to decode what might strike us at first sight as so many different things and, thus, puts us in a position where we can discover hidden unities. For instance, we discovered that 'tribal' names were used, not to identify tribes, but to designate status-categories in non-tribal formations, for example, 'Bairu', 'Batutsi'. Furthermore, ethnographic detail showed that contrary to stereotypes that pastoralists were the founders of the kingdoms in the interlacustrine region, neither the pastoralists nor the agriculturalists can take credit for this. Likewise ethnographic detail forbids us to treat pastoralism and cultivation as things apart. The kingdoms were a result of a dynamic synthesis of social elements that were drawn from both traditions and the prevailing modes of existence within them served as politically controlled alternatives. ... These discoveries enable us to generate more objective codes and to put into proper perspective the his-

torical and ethnographic intricacies of African societies. (Mafeje 1991:128–9)

Mafeje's claim here is epistemic, if indeed it is true, for it destroys the way colonial anthropology and imperial ethnology were used to classify human societies according to their basic characteristics. These approaches denied the colonised 'objects' knowledge of themselves since they were regarded as 'primitive' and 'backward'. On the other hand, 'ethnography' as used by Mafeje here was an end product of social texts that were authored by the people themselves as knowledge-makers. In this approach, all that a scholar does is to study the peoples' texts so that he/she can decode them and make them understandable to other scholars as systemised interpretations of existing but 'hidden knowledge'. According to Mafeje, his approach 'marked a definite break with the European epistemology of subject/object'.

So with Mafeje's approach, we have achieved a philosophic break with the

dualistic 'dialectical opposites' inherent in colonial anthropology, so that instead of the 'subject/object' epistemology of the coloniser, 'us' and 'them', we have a 'synthesis' or a 'convergence' of social elements that are drawn, in the case of the interlacustrine kingdoms, from both traditions of the pastoralists and agriculturalists, into an interrelated whole expressed in the existence of the kingdom. This means Mafeje had discovered a new epistemology behind the 'hidden knowledge', which he was able to retrieve through the 'ethnological' approach or what he calls 'ethnological knowledge' of the colonial 'object' who now becomes the subject.

But Mafeje operates as a neutral researcher or scholar standing outside the new epistemology because he informs us that in discarding the old concepts and approaches he also adopted a 'discursive method', which was not predicated on any epistemology but was 'reflective of a certain style of thinking'. It is with this 'style of thinking' that he is able to study

the peoples' texts so that he can decode them and make them understandable to the other scholars as systemised interpretations of existing but 'hidden knowledge'. But in such a case how different is he from the colonial scholar who claims to be 'neutral' and 'objective'? This is perhaps the legacy that young scholars must grapple with. But it is clear that Professor Mafeje made a definite contribution in his lifetime in developing a new social science and philosophy in discarding colonial anthropology.

#### Notes

1. A. Mafeje (1996), *Anthropology and Independent Africans: Suicide or End of an Era?* CODESRIA Monograph Series 4/96, Dakar: CODESRIA.
2. A. Mafeje (1998), *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations: The Case of the Interlacustrine Kingdoms*, Dakar: CODESRIA. 3 J. & J. Comaroff (1972), *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, Boulder: Westview Press,

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## Debating Archie Mafeje and Wole Soyinka: Can Africa Colonize Itself?

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My most famous debates with fellow African intellectuals were, firstly, with Wole Soyinka, the Nobel Laureate in Literature and, secondly, with Archie Mafeje, the eminent South African anthropologist. The debates with both intellectual adversaries were brutal – almost no hods barred!

My personal relationship with Wole Soyinka was substantially mended when I invited him to a conference on my campus in Binghamton, New York, and he agreed to come unconditionally. I had also invited General Yakubu Gowon, former Head of State in Nigeria, who had once imprisoned Wole Soyinka during the Nigerian civil war. Both the General and the Nobel Laureate came to Binghamton, and we mended our fences.

With regard to my personal relationship with Archie Mafeje, we never really had a formal intellectual reconciliation. But I would like to believe that my tribute to him in my presentation at the CODESRIA conference on 'Pan Africanism and the Intellectuals', in December 2003, was at least an olive branch from me.

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But what did my two major debates with Wole Soyinka have in common with my single debate with Archie Mafeje? My first debate with Soyinka was conducted in the columns of *Transition* magazine (originally founded in Kampala but more recently based at Harvard under the editorship of Henry Louis Gates Jr). My single public debate with Archie Mafeje was conducted in the pages of *CODESRIA Bulletin*, based in Dakar, Senegal.

My first debate with Soyinka arose out of his misinterpretation of my television series, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (BBC/PBS, 1986). Basically, Wole Soyinka interpreted my concept of 'Africa's triple heritage' as an attempt to facilitate or legitimize a kind of Muslim colonization of Africa.

On the other hand, Archie Mafeje interpreted my concept of 'Africa's self-colonization' as an attempt on my part to facilitate Europe's recolonization of Africa. Soyinka regarded my 'triple heritage' as a Trojan Horse for a Muslim colonization of Africa. Mafeje denounced my concept of Africa's recolonization of its own failed states as a Trojan Horse for the return of Pax Britannica and related European intrusions.

In reality, my concept of Africa's triple heritage was about a convergence of three civilizations in contemporary African experience – Africanity, the penetration of Islam and the impact of Western civilization. In spite of Soyinka himself, Nigeria already had more Muslims than any Arab country. The size of the Nigerian population that was already Muslim was larger than the Muslim population of Egypt. My television series was trying to understand this triple heritage, rather than promoting it.

In fact, far from emphasizing the Islamic part of Nigeria when I issued invitations for my Binghamton conference on 'Glo-

balization and Dialogue of Civilizations', in 2002, my most distinguished Nigerians were General Yakubu Gowon and Wole Soyinka, both of them of Christian African upbringing.

Although Archie Mafeje had spent a number of years in Egypt, and had even shown me around Cairo on one of my visits in the past, his quarrel with me had almost nothing to do with Islam in Africa. Partly through Egyptian newspapers, he had discovered that I was championing the recolonization of Africa. He wrongly assumed that I was urging the return of European colonial powers. He was therefore understandably outraged. In reality I was urging that stronger African states should temporarily 'recolonize' failed African neighbours, the way Tanganyika 'colonized' neighbouring Zanzibar in 1964 (permanently) or the way Tanzania occupied Idi Amin's Uganda (temporarily) in 1979–80.

I do not think I came even close to convincing Archie Mafeje that inter-African colonization could ever be either benevolent (benefiting the weaker state more than the stronger), or *benign* (causing no harm on either side). Mafeje regarded any kind of colonization as decidedly *malignant* (beneficial mainly to the interventionist power).

I, on the other hand, regarded Tanzania's ouster of Idi Amin from Uganda in 1979 as benevolent inter-African occupation – while Tanganyika's union with Zanzibar in 1964 as a case of inter-African annexation that was more benign than malignant. It was more benign because, on balance, the terms of the union were disproportionately to the advantage of Zanzibar. The union was indeed a forced marriage – but the bride wealth to Zanzibar was truly generous in the powers allocated.

Archie Mafeje died before Ethiopia invaded Somalia in 2007 in the name of the so-called 'war on terror'. Somalia was indeed a failed state and would have gained from inter-African benevolent intervention in the interest of the Somali people. Unfortunately Ethiopia and Somalia had a long record of mutual hostility with periodic conflicts. Ethiopia's motives for intervening in Somalia were inevitably suspect. Indeed, there was evidence that Ethiopia did it at the behest of the United States as part of America's own war on terror. My own conclusion is that, while Ethiopia's military role in Somalia does indeed include elements of *benevolence*,

this particular kind of inter-African military occupation was on balance *malignant*.

I suspect the American connection would have aroused comparable suspicions in Archie Mafeje. While Archie did indeed misunderstand my own belief that inter-African colonization could at times be *benign* or even *benevolent*,<sup>2</sup> he and I were united in our distrust of *Pax Americana*. Ethiopia's participation as an ally of the United States in its 'war on terror' was bound to transform Ethiopia's military intervention in Somalia into a case of *negative* occupation of one African country by another. I suspect Archie Mafeje would have shared my sense of outrage.

Archie would also have been outraged by the reported participation of Ethiopia, Egypt and Kenya in America's scheme of *extraordinary rendition*. Egypt and Ethiopia are accused by human rights groups of accepting 'terror suspects' arrested or identified by the United States. Egypt and Ethiopia are Africa's oldest states, with at least a thousand years of experience in forceful interrogation – otherwise known today as torture. The United States seems to have exploited that millennium of African forceful interrogation. Mwai Kibaki's government in Kenya has been accused of exporting its own Muslim citizens for torture in Addis Ababa. These accusations have been made not only in the Kenyan media, but also on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) in the United States. Since Archie Mafeje had spent so many years in Egypt, he would not have been surprised by allegations of torture in Egypt either for local reasons or at the behest of the United States.

While my own debate with Wole Soyinka in *Transition* was partly about Arab and Muslim factors in Africa's triple heritage, my second debate with Soyinka was on the Internet following the showing of another television series about Africa – *Wonders of the African World* by Henry Louis Gates Jr (Skip Gates) of Harvard University, who also happened to be the latest editor of *Transition*. I was a critic of *Wonders of the African World*, partly because this television series blamed the Atlantic slave trade on Africans themselves. Henry Louis Gates virtually declared the white slaver as being off the hook, and got a series of Africans interviewed in West Africa to confess that the Atlantic slave trade was supply-driven

rather than demand-driven, and would not have occurred but for the collaboration of African kingdoms like Ashanti.

Henry Louis Gates Jr is a very distinguished African American scholar and public intellectual. Why did Wole Soyinka defend him? Partly because Gates was Wole's student at Cambridge University in England, and partly because Wole believed I was disqualified from criticizing a rival television series when I had produced an earlier TV series of my own. It was as if Wole Soyinka was arguing that anybody who had written a book on a particular topic was thereby disqualified from reviewing a book on the same subject by anybody else. Of course, I regarded such an argument as intellectually ridiculous, which made Wole Soyinka even angrier.

What did this second Soyinka–Mazrui debate have in common with the Mafeje–Mazrui debate? My disagreement with Mafeje was about whether Africans could colonize each other in the future if conditions were favourable and legitimate. My disagreement with Skip Gates and Wole Soyinka was about whether Africans had enslaved each other in the past when conditions were favourable and profitable. Mafeje and I debated prospects of Africa's self-colonization in the future. Gates, Soyinka and I debated about whether there was a record of Africa's self-enslavement in the past.

I happen to believe that inter-African colonization could be benign or even benevolent if the circumstances are self-fulfilling. But I do not believe inter-African enslavement during the Atlantic slave trade could ever have been either benign or benevolent. Whether Africans collaborated in enslaving each other, or were merely victims of European-instigated slave raids, the ultimate outcome was malignant and evil.

On the issue of Africa's self-colonization I can try to understand why Archie Mafeje was angry with me. But on the issue of whether Africa was guilty of self-enslavement, I continue to be puzzled as to why Wole Soyinka was more angry with me than with his former student, Henry Louis Gates Jr.

However, I am relieved that Wole Soyinka and I are on our way towards intellectual reconciliation. I also hope Archie Mafeje is at last at peace with me wherever he is. Amen.

## Homage to Archie Mafeje

In this paper intended to pay homage to our late friend and comrade Archie Mafeje, I would like to cite two of his most recent contributions:

- (i) The book titled *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations: The Case of the Interlacustrine Kingdoms*, Dakar: CODESRIA, 1991, translated into Arabic by AARC, Cairo, 2005;
- (ii) the paper titled *The Agrarian Question: Access to Land and Peasant Responses in Sub Saharan Africa*, UNRISD Papers, 2004.

I consider these two contributions to be quite exceptional in terms of the quality of information provided and the rigour of their analysis. They provide passionate reading, and I believe it is essential they be known by whoever is seriously interested in understanding the region surveyed (the Great Lakes), in particular and rural and sub-Saharan Africa in general.

I believe my judgment is not biased by my strong sympathy for the method and theories advocated by the author. I therefore want it known that I share the same line of thought in terms of how you join economy and politics; in other words, the reading of historical materialism, which some of us share in common (cf. Preface to Mafeje's book), but not all who would claim to be Marxists. The method, notably the author's criticism of the economy-world, which makes an abusive use of analogy instead of concept-deepening (cf. Introduction, and compare with my article 'Capitalisme et système Monde', *Sociologie et Sociétés*, Montréal University, XXIV, 2, 1992). I, of course, particularly appreciated his discussion of the tributary mode of production theory that I proposed and the validity of its use to understand the region surveyed by the author. I personally learnt a lot from it about this region.

On my side, I wish to cite:

- (i) my book, commented on by Mafeje, *Classe et Nation*, Paris: Minuit, 1979, and 'L' Eurocentrisme', *Anthropos*, 1988, but also a book to be published by Paragon, titled *Modernité, Reli-*

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*gion, Démocratie, Critique de l'eurocentrisme, critique des culturalismes.*

- (ii) my article 'Les réformes des régimes fonciers souhaitables en Afrique et en Asie', which was presented at the Conference of African Farmers' Organisation, Dakar Agricole, 2005, to be published in India under the English title *Desirable Land Tenure Reforms in Africa and Asia*.

Both of us have followed parallel paths and as a result, our dialogue, both oral and written, has always been fruitful. Our divergences if any have always incited me to deepen my reflection, and I believe the same applies to Mafeje.

We were to pursue this dialogue in the coming months on the issue of the future of African peasantry that both of us deemed fundamental. Our primary conclusions coincided; in other words, first we both acknowledged that the way to enter the global capitalist system, inevitably as a periphery of the centre, was a dead end; and secondly, that accordingly the only way to offer African peoples a better future was through a national and popular reconstruction within the long view of twenty-first century socialism.

Alas, since the voice of our friend is never to be heard again, and the dialogue has become a monologue. I nonetheless want to pay deserved homage to Mafeje for his intellectual and political contribution.

1. However, I think it is important for me to indicate that I did not base the tributary mode production of theory on the African Great Lakes societies nor on sub-Saharan Africa in general, but first on my reflection on the societies that I believe I know best, those of Egypt and the Arab and Islamic world. I then focused my attention on the history of the most advanced oriental societies (China, in particular) and the ethnography of Tropical Africa, through systematic readings. Like

Mafeje, I believe in scientific rigour but neither in learnedness nor empiricism. Indeed, it appears to me that the history of the Arab and Islamic world is quite badly comprehended by the Arabs themselves, caught in the shackles of religious mythologies about nature and the role of Islam in their history or nationalistic mythologies. The lack of a genuine critical bourgeois thought in our region – whether it has remained embryonic or nipped in the bud, notably by nationalistic populism – is certainly responsible for the dire poverty of not only Arab and Muslim historiography but the common dogmatic nature of dominant Marxism as well. This is certainly the reason why a different reading, which departs from the prevailing dominant mythologies (and even reinforced by the decline of rational and critical thinking of the past few decades), is often unwelcome when understood.

The theory that I named the tributary mode of production was suggested to me by a few of the major conclusions that I drew from my reinterpretation of the history of Ancient Orient and the Arab and Islamic world. It was later further confirmed by my readings on China and a few other societies. I then felt comfortable enough to make a different reading of European history, freed from dominant Eurocentrism and capable of placing feudal specificity within the context of the general evolution of tributary forms.

The critical reading of the Africanist ethnography that I was leading in parallel helped me considerably in understanding the genesis of this tributary mode of production, the general form of pre-capitalistic advanced class formations. I did say genesis because it is clear that the society of classes was preceded by a very long period when neither those classes nor the exploitation associated with them existed. I therefore described that period as a 'community' era without reducing it at any time to a single form but instead underscoring the diversity of these organisational modes while looking for their common denominator. I believe this should be found in the dominance of 'the parenthood ideology', the basis for diversity in the organisation of social power

(as distinct from the state). Going from there, it is easy to grasp the extremely slow pace of evolution of the passage to tributary formations. In the case of many societies of Tropical Africa, it seems I could detect some of the mechanisms of the long transition; and I sensed intuitively that it was at quite an advanced stage in the societies of the Great Lakes region of East Africa. The reading of Mafeje's work confirmed my intuition and taught me much on the subject.

In fact, Mafeje demonstrated that the societies in question were in transition to the tributary mode of production, which made my theory on the issue appear generally user-friendly to him. I therefore need not repeat here what Mafeje wrote on that subject, regarding economic-political articulation in the societies surveyed, rejecting – as I did – the theories put forth by some Marxists who were mindful of describing as exploitation and classes all forms of hierarchy and inequality – putting the emphasis on political domination to the very exclusion of any form of economic exploitation or coagulation of social classes. Please refer to the extraordinarily clear-sighted elaboration of these issues (pages 39, 42, 58, 60–3, 67–9, 72–9 and subsequently pages 87, 119 and 120 of his book).

**2.** My proposal in which the capitalist mode is opposed to the tributary mode, the general form of all pre-capitalistic advanced class societies, is clearly expressed, in my opinion, by the contrast between the predominance of the economy in the former ('wealth is a source of power') and of politics in the latter ('power is a source of wealth'). This radical inversion reflects a qualitative transformation of the system, which does not allow an analysis of the infrastructure/superstructure relationship using the same method in both systems.

Incidentally, I believe this fundamental distinction later erased by common Marxism to be the very base of Marx's analysis of capitalism specificity (merchandising). Identified by Karl Polanyi, who insisted on this qualitative difference opposing all pre-capitalistic formations to capitalism, this distinction has, however, often been overlooked in many analyses of Africa (and elsewhere) by historians or Marxist ethnologists.

Mafeje shares my view on this issue, which I believe to be a cardinal one, and expressed it in very clear terms. I person-

ally drew a few conclusions on the differences between the mechanisms commanding the development of productive forces in capitalism (viz. that this development is the result of an in-built and immanent economic law in the capitalist mode) as opposed to those explaining progress in anterior societies (which is not commanded by an economic law immanent in the system). And yet, this progress is a reality, even if precisely as I explained it, it has always been slow, making these systems to appear as 'stagnating'. I then suggested several plausible explanatory hypotheses including class struggle or the greed of dominant classes on which examples abound. Mafeje has expressed reservations about these hypotheses (pages 95-96 and 113 of his book).

**3.** My description of feudalism as 'peripheral' follows the same logic. The predominance of the political realm in the tributary mode (which Mafeje admits) implies that the 'central' (elaborate) or 'peripheral' (non-elaborate) character of this social form should be measured by the strength of this realm. In this sense, the dispersion of power in European feudalism justifies my description of it by comparison to centralisation, which is found, for example, in China, Byzantium or the Muslim Caliphate, which then constituted elaborate tributary forms. On the other hand, the predominance of the economy implies, in capitalism, that the central-peripheral opposition should be founded precisely based on considerations pertaining to this realm ('central capitalist economies' and 'peripheral capitalist economies').

I explain this peripheral nature of feudalism by the fact that medieval Europe was formed by grafting barbaric community societies on to the Roman tributary empire. From this distinction between the elaborate tributary forms and its peripheral feudal form, I drew a few conclusions that I believe to be important.

The first one is that the centre/periphery contrast, which is marked in the political realm, is not necessarily so at the economic base level, which was not less developed in the European Middle Ages than it was, for example, in the Arab world.

The second conclusion is that precisely this peripheral nature of feudalism explains the 'European miracle', that is, the precocious birth of capitalism on the

ground. Rejecting the Eurocentric explanations attributing this miracle to cultural specificities, acknowledging that the similar contradictions at work in all tributary systems (no matter whether they are central or peripheral) can only be solved through shifting to capitalism (thereby restoring the universal dimension of history), I can observe that the peripheral nature of feudalism gave it some degree of elasticity leading to a rapid passage to capitalism, while the power of the tributary political realm in the central forms represented an obstacle slowing down this evolution.

The third conclusion relates to the issue of the ideological forms accompanying the tributary mode. It was on this subject that I spoke of state religions, which replace here the parenthood ideology specific to anterior community modes, and clashes with the economist alienation ideology specific to subsequent capitalism. Which ever way you look at it, in my opinion this general theory appears to be the only one that can explain why Christianity in medieval Europe and Islam played the same role but through different means: in Europe, the Church substitutes for the shortcomings of the state (which then and later, when it grew stronger in parallel with the birth of capitalism, during the mercantilist era, distanced itself from the Church and even sometimes opposed it); in the Islamic world, religion remains submitted to power. This distinction, which is factually unquestionable, is generally attributed in the Muslim world to the 'in-built characters' specific to each of the religions. The struggle in which I engage, to explain that the problem does not lie there but rather in the social use of religions, is still unwelcome to those who cannot rid themselves of the religious mythologies that I mentioned earlier on.

**4.** In his book, Mafeje studied the pre- and post-colonial history of the Great Lakes region. I must confess that I am perfectly and completely convinced by what he says on these subjects.

My opinion is that Mafeje's theories on these issues are strengthened by the fact that the societies of the region surveyed were, prior to colonisation, still in transition to the tributary mode. These are embryonic forms of the tributary mode (beware: the term 'embryonic' should not be confused with the term 'peripheral'). Mafeje provided clear proofs in this mat-

ter and highlighted them very convincingly; he analysed using these terms the persistence of a kinship ideology to point out that it is dulled and does not confer on the societies in question a 'tribal' character as alleged by ethnography (the bad one); he noted in parallel that there was no religious phenomenon similar to the one I mentioned regarding tributary societies (cf. pages 97–101, 120–4 of his book). What does this mean if not that the societies in question were in transition from community forms to those of a tributary mode?

The nuances and perhaps divergences in views should be put back into context, that of the confusions created in some cases by the possible telescoping of pre- and post-colonial periods.

5. Mafeje also proposes in his book a different reading of the changes that colonisation inflicted upon the organisational forms of the region and an interpretation of the conflict between what he called the 'small bourgeoisie' of independent Africa (which I prefer to call compradore state-bourgeoisie) and the 'aristocracy' of the old regime. I am convinced altogether by these brilliant developments (cf. notably page 131 and subsequent pages of the book) and, like Mafeje, I never considered that a 'bourgeoisie revolution' could have developed in the region (or anywhere else in the peripheral capitalist world). Like Mafeje, I have always believed that it was essential to make a distinction between the capitalist revolution and integration into the global capitalist system.

Neither Mafeje nor I have ever considered the 'unavoidable necessity of going through the capitalist stage', but have always advocated a socialist approach to development as the only way to pull African peoples out of destitution.

I claimed that all advanced tributary systems, *before being colonised* by capitalist Europe and submitted to the imperialist expansion logic, could find a solution to their contradiction only by moving towards an invention of capitalism and subsequently some forms of ownership that it requires to develop. Of course, this proposition is questionable and Mafeje may not have shared the same view. Alas, he is no longer around to answer this question that I intended to ask him. But I have always written that the formation of

the global capitalist system and the capitalist peripherisation of the formations submitted to its expansion had modified this problematic root and branch. Today in the countries concerned, the capitalist approach can no longer be but that of a peripheral capitalism. As a result, a new approach is necessary, and on this Mafeje and I totally agree.

6. I think Mafeje's criticism of 'the articulation of modes of production' theory should be somewhat put into perspective.

I agree with Mafeje's definition of social formations as a bloc covering the economic and political realms (p. 16). But it does not fully and necessarily substitute for the structuring of specific and differing modes of production. Mafeje and I are both critical of the abuses that have been committed in the use of this modes of production theory (p. 127). I personally limited its significance by making three clarifications:

- (i) not 'all modes' and any modes can be structured in a complex formation. However, this does not exclude co-existence, for example in capitalism, of a small merchant production mode (which is frequent in agriculture and service economies) and the capitalist mode;
- (ii) in this case (when distinct modes can actually be identified), their structure plays out through predominance over the other. In the previous example, the small merchant mode is submitted to the logic of accumulation (specific to the capitalist mode), which dominates the social formation in question as a whole. There are even submitted modes that have been actually 'fabricated' by the predominant mode. As an example, I cited slavery in America, at the service of mercantilist capitalism, which was neither original nor specific to the previous conquered systems but was established by the conquerors.
- (iii) articulation-submission is not the only form characteristic of complex formations. The distortion of pre-capitalist forms (whether tributary or communal) through their submission is more frequent and marks all societies of peripheral capitalism. Mafeje, by the way, said nothing different on this

point and brilliantly illustrated it in the case he was studying (p. 147).

7. The question about the future of African peasantries is at the core of the cited two papers by Mafeje and me. In my view, these two papers complement each other in a very happy way, and the conclusions that both of us draw from our analyses coincide.

In my view – which is also Mafeje's – not only colonisation (and the post-colonial system so far) perfectly 'adjusted' to 'the absence' of private land ownership in most of sub-Saharan Africa but even reaped some additional benefit from it. We both share the view that integration into global capitalism does not necessarily require the adoption, in the dominated peripheries, of capitalist organisational forms of production.

But what does the situation look like today? My proposed theory is that in the prospect of the expansion of contemporary imperialistic capitalism the question about land privatisation has now to be raised. My paper is sufficiently explicit on this point so it is not necessary to explain it any further. Fractions – though a minority but politically powerful – of the African peasantry are now playing this game. The majority of the peasants are resisting. Mafeje, who put the focus on these forms of resistance, has made a useful contribution. On my side, I tried to analyse the different possible and necessary resistance strategies at work under many and various extreme conditions, from that perspective, from one region to another in the South, since in many of the Asian and Latin American regions land privatisation is already a *fait accompli* (which is not the case in sub-Saharan Africa or otherwise an exception), and in Asian countries where a socialist revolution occurred (China and Vietnam), access to land ownership is still managed by the state and the peasant communities without privatisation.

It is now more necessary than ever to pursue the discussion of alternative strategies for pulling out of the dead end reached by globalised capitalism. In the absence of late Archie Mafeje, let us live up to the challenge. This is the best way to pay him homage.

# The End of Anthropology: The African Debate on the Universality of Social Research and its 'Indigenization'

## *A Study Dedicated to Archie Mafeje*

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### About a Special Relationship with Archie Mafeje

Cairo became acquainted with Archie Mafeje almost four decades ago, first as a young political militant in the leadership of the Unity Movement, one of the liberation movements in South Africa, then as a prominent Professor of Sociology in the American University in Cairo in the 1980s. I made his personal acquaintance as a political militant, when I was myself the coordinator of African liberation movements in the 1960s and 1970s. Then I became a friend and an associate in the Arab African Research Center (AARC) in 1995. All through his career, he was appreciated by Egyptian social circles as a critical intellectual and an astute observer of society. He always commanded a special social status as the husband of a prominent Egyptian researcher, Professor Shahida El-Baz, and the father of a promising young daughter, Dana Mafeje.

I had the pleasure of taking part in the session held in his honor in Dakar by the Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA), as one of the prominent researchers in Africa, of the stature of J. Ki-Zerbo, A. Mazrui and I. Shivji. During that meeting much was said about his extensive career as a pioneer in laying the foundations of African

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Ethnography and Anthropology, since his master's thesis in the University of Cape Town, back in 1962, about local African society. We also noted how UCT, under the influence of apartheid, refused to appoint him as a staff member, which triggered numerous demonstrations of protest on the part of students of many universities. Such persecution forced him into self-exile, to gain his PhD from Cambridge in 1966, followed by a long trek among the universities of Holland, Botswana, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Egypt and Namibia, to rest at last in the African Institute in Pretoria, in collaboration with the young scholars of the new South Africa, where he coaches the holders of scholarships in a program of higher education named after him, the 'Archie Mafeje Programme'.

In this brief introduction, we cannot review the extensive scientific contributions of Mafeje to the body of African Studies. I can personally name at least ten books,

apart from the scores of published studies and articles in Africa and abroad. However, Archie Mafeje must be read in the original to appreciate his debates over Colonial Anthropology, and the liberation of African Social Sciences. One should also read his analysis of modes of production in the African context, the economic, agricultural and social effects of colonialism in the African South, the ethnography of the agrarian question, the discourse of African intellectuals in the Continent and the Diaspora and the devastating effects of Structural Adjustment Programs. We can never ignore the great efforts of Mafeje in the UN Economic Commission for Africa, in CODESRIA, in FAO, and other bodies in search of an 'Alternative Development for Africa', and his close examination of social protest movements from Soweto to the Great Lakes, and elsewhere.

I personally took part in translating his book on *African Social Formations*, which was published in Arabic in 2006, a few months before he passed away. I wrote the introduction to that book in Arabic, and would like to present here that introduction, in English, for the benefit of his students and friends in Africa and elsewhere, as a token of my great esteem for this distinguished scholar.

## The End of Anthropology: *To the late Archie Mafeje*

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### Introduction

The cry proclaiming the Death of Anthropology came several decades ago, from the European camp that saw the inception of this epistemological order under the name of 'Colonial Anthropology'. P. Worsley (of Britain) was the first, presenting his paper entitled 'The End of Anthropology' to the anthropological congress in 1966. This concept was again discussed in an African congress in Dakar in 1991, where A. Mafeje announced the death of Anthropology in Africa. He reiterated this concept in an important

study where he announced that Anthropology had committed suicide, and that a new beginning of this science was to be heralded.

Anthropology is one of the social sciences most attached to the world political and economic order, as it was closely linked to colonialism, and the expansion of industrial then financial capitalism beyond the European boundaries. Thus the anthropologist became a vulnerable colonialist, as James Hawker once said (1963), as Anthropology was created by the colonial administration as a means to

'enhance' its effectiveness. Some young American anthropologists even considered it an imperialist science as it was closely connected to the American wars of the 1960s. Such an assessment has meant different approaches to this science from the French school (of the *Annales*) on one hand, and the Marxist school or that of Historical Materialism on the other.

Such a varied outlook to this science may explain why its African protagonists declared its 'death' in their Dakar congress in 1991, or in Mafeje's studies, in pursuit

of a new birth on new foundations for its methodological and theoretical basis, and aiming at new social objectives.

From such considerations we proceed to study the following aspects of Anthropology:

- I. The main criticisms addressed to the objectives and methods of Anthropology;
- II. The attempts to reconstruct Anthropology as a support for development in the post-independence state;
- III. The efforts to transform the theoretical concepts and methodology after the declaration of the end of the old Anthropology, then trying to indigenize it in the context of African realities.

This means debating the doctrine of the universality of the social sciences when applied to African societies, meaning the need to fragment epistemological disciplines for the benefit of globalizing holistic scientific values. In such a pursuit, various African parties look out for new traits of African Anthropology, or Ethnography as constructed by Archie Mafeje.

### The Critical Standpoint

Some critics of Anthropology lay stress on the functional role of the anthropologist rather than on the methodology of this science. This may explain the abundance of debate around the scientific personalities that contributed to anthropological research, such as Edward Evans-Pritchard, Charles Seligman, Nadel, Malinowski, and others. However, their connections with colonial and imperial administrations were always mentioned with regret, as a mark on their scientific activity. Such a position led P. Rigby to point out that Evans-Pritchard's son helped the US forces in Vietnam in the 1960s as a continuation of his father's role in the Sudan with the British forces! We also note Malinowski's studies on acculturation in South Africa as a theoretical basis for the ideologies of apartheid there.

However, Critical Anthropology went further to more advanced critical perspectives, although it remained reformist within the old framework. In this connection, there are several trends, such as:

- The Apologetic Stand: this continues the conservative position by maintaining that the anthropologist was a 'colonialist against his will', and that

many of them enjoyed their work, and were fond of the people they worked upon. Such a standpoint was taken to the extreme by Talal Asad (1973), who maintained that considering the old anthropology as simply 'colonial' was both arbitrary and naïve. In contrast, both Mafeje and Rigby considered such conservative criticism as a sort of self-defence, or protection of the scope of employment, and one that does not offer a theoretical or epistemological correction. Thus they conclude by declaring the death of the science to give place to a new epistemological order;

- Some researchers considered that 'renovation', if any, still came from the North, which means that African Anthropology is void of substance as the African contributions are next to nothing, despite the efforts of the Nigerian Bassey Andah and the Ghanaian Kwesi Prah. Thus African Anthropology still claims no African anthropologists. In the West, however, there appeared some real innovations, as in *Reinventing Anthropology*, by Dell Hymes (1972) and *Writing Culture* by James Clifford and George Marcus (1986);
- What is common between the new Northern renovation and the new epistemological order is that both pursue the school of modernism and postmodernism. Thus the claim that the old Anthropology was functional, or functional/structural such as to lead to fragmentation of epistemological methodology, and rejection of inclusive studies of society and state, also applies to the postmodernistic school, which tends to study local cultures and minorities, or fragmented themes of linguistics, literature or rationalities. Some noted that the North pointed its criticism toward Anglo-Saxon functionalism, trying to reform it, while the Francophone scholars did not resort to functional anthropology, as they had adopted the policy of integration, which produced a sort of cultural imperialism that leads to a call of cultural dialogue, and not getting rid of Anthropology;
- The critics of Anthropology could not approach any of the schools of historical materialism, political economy or social historiography. They would not even approach sociology despite their claims of interdisciplinary methods. The Afrikaner and Afro-Ameri-

can intellectuals in particular played a negative role in devising a Critical Anthropology, either through the romanticism of some, the developmentalism of others, or the involvement of still others in the imperialist anthropological institution.

Hence came the attack of Archie Mafeje and Ben Magubane on the old Anthropology, and declaration of its demise, in order to put up the basis for a new African Ethnography. Such an attack was motivated by the abuse of the Apartheid system, of the so-called 'Apartheid Ethnology' to establish racial segregation, and it was only normal for South African scholars to proceed with such an attack.

### The Attempt to Reconstruct Anthropology

African politicians played a role, directly or indirectly, in the attempts for 'self-emanicipation' from Anthropology by refusing to create studies of this discipline in the new universities in the post-independence states. This came about owing to the direct experience of some of them (Kenyatta, Nkrumah, etc.), or because of the conditions of building the modern state/nation, and the need for developmental sociology, and evading the fragmenting Anthropology of tribalism and racism. The Anglo-Saxon anthropologists tried to save their reputation when they adopted the theme of 'Social Change' in their congress in Kampala (1959), but to no avail. The counterattack came from African anthropologists in their congress in Yaoundé (1989), and in Dakar (1991). In these congresses the Africans raised the slogan 'Post Anthropology', while some of them went to the extent of declaring the Death of Anthropology. Yet the historians of these attempts consider such moves for renaissance, or constructing development anthropology, to be still in the pragmatic stage, and as not constituting a negation of the old epistemological order, on the road to creating a new African Ethnography.

In this connection we would point out to the pragmatic stand of Kwesi Prah (in Dakar, 1991), who noted that British Anthropology insisted on functionalism as a non-historic order rooted in 'European Culture'. He concluded by urging Africans, likewise, to study 'African Culture' within the framework of national construction, and delve deep into self-study, while constructing an African Anthropology as an interdisciplinary system that might

make use of Marxist methodology in social analysis of the salient social phenomena (CODESRIA, 1991).

To stigmatize the pragmatic stand, Mafeje pointed out the position of A. Bujera (Kenya), who highlighted the role of Anthropology in development as being a recent trend in the USA, where investors planned to develop Africa with the help of the anthropologists. He contended that this field must not be left wide open to the Westerners by themselves while they lacked comprehension of African culture and ethnography.

Some opposed this developmental trend as bereft of a theoretical basis, and accused its protagonists of presenting a new imperialist form of the old anthropology (E. Leach), or at the best, trying to utilize Anthropology as a mechanism for projects that the local bureaucracy cannot manage. Ifi Amadiume proposed to the Dakar congress the liquidation of Anthropology, to be replaced by African Social History, or Sociological Historiography, which was a sure indication of her being influenced by Francophony and the French *Annales* school of social history, and the reliance on Oral History, Folklore and other popular arts as a source for the interpretation of society. The influence of the school of Cheikh Anta Diop on the anthropologists of francophone West Africa was evident by the inclusion of the 'situation of women' as a new topic for Anthropology.

Dr Abdel Ghafar Ahmed (Sudan) took part in the debate about Anthropology in his contribution to Talal Asad's book (1973), followed by a number of sociological anthropological studies on Sudan from a critical viewpoint. Yet Mafeje considered him a vulnerable developmentalist 'against his will', despite his open criticism of Colonial Anthropology and traditional functionalism. Ahmed collected his contributions on the subject in *Anthropology in the Sudan* (2003), building on the premise that the old anthropologist was indeed colonialist against his will, because of the context and political environment in which he worked. The developmental approach, however, came in the context of the total society in the modern state, rather than the previous fragmented society. This change in approach was applied to his studies on unity and diversity in Sudanese society. Thus, Ahmed made his theoretical and field contribution on the theme of the disintegration of

the authority of the tribe, and assessing the authority of the elite on a political and class basis, and as the foundation for the hierarchy in society as a whole, and not the tribe as an isolated entity as in traditional Anthropology.

Therefore, Ahmed's studies reflected his efforts to develop Anthropology rather than declare its demise or negation. Thus, the titles of his various contributions – *Unity and Diversity*, *The Changing Systems in Rural Areas*, and *Anthropology and Development Planning in the Sudan* – point to the possibility of transforming the role of Anthropology in the social context of the Sudan.

### What End to Anthropology?

Talking about the 'End' of Anthropology does not mean its complete negation, but rather the negation of its functional non-historical legacy, and its methodology, which refused any historical approach to, let alone the social history of, the total social edifice. While the rejection was aimed at Colonial Anthropology as mentioned above, the attempts at its transformation came from the 'North' in the form of modernistic or postmodern methods that led to the reference to 'postanthropology'.

Such attempts led in turn, to the fear that 'Imperialist Anthropology' would come to replace the old 'Colonial Anthropology', as propounded by the French and Marxist schools. However, most African scholars consider all such attempts as 'Northern' efforts at reproduction of the old theme under new global conditions.

Here, stress was laid on the necessity to indigenize social sciences in the African anthropology congresses (Hountondji in 1993, and Mafeje in 1996). They refused to accept the holistic European advance while refusing such totality for African society, or that European postmodernism could lead to the old colonialist fragmented empirical outlook to be applied to Africa and the Third World alone while Western society would benefit alone from globalization (Mafeje 1996). Samir Amin also reiterates this theme when he writes: 'The capitalist society of the Center, based on Rationality, is now exporting Irrationality only to our World in the South.'

### Reconstructing the Old Concepts

Such refusal came first as a rejection of the old concepts of traditional Anthropology. This was the work of young African anthropologists who rejected the

concepts of 'Tribalism' and 'The Characteristics of Human Races', and others, which they attributed to colonialism and its lackeys. We shall review in brief some such contributions.

P. Rigby denounces such attempts in his *African Images* under the title: 'The Racist Ideology Creates the Legend of the Hamites', where he denounces the extravagance in extolling their social ascendancy over their neighbors owing to their Caucasian ancestry, etc. He points out the discourse about the peoples of East and Central Africa, where some colonial anthropologists like Hinde proposed the utilizing of some such groups to dominate other groups for the benefit of the colonial power. The claim was that this group (the Massai) were superior as Hamites over their neighbors of the Nilotes as the anthropological studies asserted.

The same 'theory' of racial superiority of the Hamites was also extended to Rwanda and Burundi where the Tutsi were utilized to dominate the Hutu in accordance with the recommendation of another anthropologist. Such claims called for a special assessment of the physical, psychological and mental characteristics of the Tutsi to explain the continued discrimination to their benefit, and their domination of the Hutu, and even explain the post-independence struggles and colonialist interventions. Here we find Rigby tracing Hamite legend:

in the 19th century, as J.H. Speke applied it in 1865, for the first time, on the studies about East Africa. The anthropologists adopted this legend once more in the 20th century till 1950, in the form 'Hamite Nilotes'. This last form was applied in 1953, in the ethnographic survey of Africa under the direction of Galvier and his wife. This survey tried to establish the 'inferiority of the Negro Race' by claiming that the history of East Africa cannot be explained except by an invasion by Caucasian Whites!

Mafeje and Southall and others – according to Rigby – refuted the Hamite legend, but it continued as popular mythology in the historiography of East Africa. Cheikh Anta Diop also refuted the mythology of the Hamites, by stating that the claim that the Dinka, the Shiluk, the Nuer or the Maasai had a Caucasian origin was tantamount to claiming that the Greeks were not White! Such claims amount to saying

that any civilized group in Africa has a non-African origin, meaning that the Dinka or the Maasai were different from the 'primitive' masses around them. Indeed, such groups have a very long history in Africa.

This was also a denial of Seligman's school that claims that the pastoral Hamites came in waves of migration from the Caucasus, passing through North Africa and the Nile valley. This school reached such conclusions after the study of the animistic tribes in Nilotic Sudan, and the claim that the intermingling between these superior immigrants and the local Negroes produced the Maasai and the Baganda, and later, the Bahima Nkule, and so on. Such claims – according to Rigby – were passed on by the followers and colleagues of Seligman, such as Malinowski and Evans-Pritchard.

The contribution of Mafeje in challenging the colonial anthropological concepts appeared first in his study on the ideology of tribalism (1972), followed by the study of the ethnography of the region of the Great Lakes (1991). He considered that it was not easy to separate social sciences from ideology, and that had the Africans written their history, the results would have been different. Thus we should look for the motivation behind such writings.

In this connection, Mafeje makes the following analysis, in which he notes that the Western system of concepts leads to the occurrence of the term 'tribalism' in any study, using the colonial European terminology about Africa. Even a century later, European ideology still stuck to the term tribalism to describe African society. The British insisted on the use of the term and their students in East Africa and the South used it after them, despite the fact that the Southerners never used this term, but referred to the 'nation', the 'people' and the 'clan', or sometimes to the 'land' (of the person). Anglo-Saxon anthropology always looked for the pure tribalism that fitted the policy of indirect rule advocated by Lord Lugard, and Sir Donald Cameron. Some anthropologists thought such policies helped conserve social consistency and stability. Later when these anthropologists started studying urban societies, they attributed some folkloric phenomena penetrating urban society, such as dancing of rural origin, as an indication of persistence of tribalism in an

urban context (e.g. Mitchell's study on the dance of the Kalela in the Copper Belt), to evade any reference to social or class distinction in the towns.

When anthropologists started the study of social change, they again referred to tribal resistance to change, rather than its disintegration or loss of stability. Watson even refers to tribal stability in conditions of monetary economy. Here we find a divergence between politicians and anthropologists, the former attributing the failure of attempts at modernization to tribalism, while the latter think tribalism lies behind the success or failure of modernization, as the case may be.

It remains to answer the query whether tribalism may exist without tribes. If we accept the classic definition that 'Tribes are self-sustained groups with little or no external trade', then anthropologists will have to explain whether all African political entities are tribes. What about the large kingdoms such as the Lwabola or the Zulu? Or shall we accept calling them super tribes as some anthropologists do?

Schapiro tried to evade the discrepancy by calling the tribes 'separate political groups' that administer their affairs without foreign intervention... thus the tribe is considered as being above all known forms of human organization. Culture as a criterion of assessing the tribe was only introduced with the advent of modernism, and the contributions of political and social studies (J. C. Mitchell, M.G. Smith).

According to Mafeje, the anthropologists' concept of the tribe, large or small, may be acceptable for pre-colonial societies, where the tribe lived in relative isolation as an entity defined in time and locality, and living a subsistence economy. Such a definition cannot, however, be applied after the intrusion of European colonialism, and their inclusion within the capitalist monetary system and the world market. The new division of labor, and the new modes of production and distribution, gave African societies a radically different basis. Thus it is no more a question of scope, but rather qualitative changes of the social and economic order. One cannot totally deny the role of the tribe in Africa, but we must differentiate between resorting to one's tribe as a token of integrity and self-esteem, and using it as a means to remain in power, in the capital of the modern state, or exploit-

ing one's tribesmen in the context of a modern society.

To simplify Mafeje: tribalism becomes an ideology with no objective existence as claimed. It becomes some sort of false consciousness of the so-called members of the tribe, and an aberration that the elite resorts to while exploiting their 'tribesmen'. It is ideology in the Marxist sense, but also ideology for the Africans who share the Western ideology with their colleagues in the West.

With social change, people often belong to the region rather than the tribe, such as the Transkei in South Africa, or the immigrants in Cape Town. Thus the concept of region comes before that of the tribe, as has the criterion of culture that the British anthropologists ignored because they were isolated from structuralism. In South Africa, Xhosa speakers share a common culture over a very wide region, even though they belong to different political entities. Culture is utilized in South Africa to attain a higher social status, so can we also call this tribalism? Indeed, some still call it tribalism!

Why maintain the concept of tribalism so much in an urban context and a market economy? First, because it helps embroil the nature of the economy, and the power relations between the Africans, and between them and the capitalist world, as the concept of feudalism was used in Latin America to cover up imperialist capitalist relations.

Mafeje introduces the concept of 'Regional Characteristics' in order to facilitate situating the cultural elements in a wider society, as well as understanding the class transformations in that society. He maintains that anthropologists need to use a concept that may be generalized to cover human societies, and that tribalism cannot be such a concept.

In his book on the theory of ethnography (1991), Mafeje states that the first generation of European ethnographers in Africa contributed a considerable body of material that became the classics in the field. He also believes they adopted certain fixed concepts such as the tribe, the clan and the lineage etc. They also resorted to opposing categories for classification such as acephalous states in contrast with centralized ones, patriarchal societies in contrast with matriarchal ones, pastoral versus agricultural socie-

ties, etc. All such classifications were looked down upon with disdain by the British anthropologist Edmund Leach who named such methods 'Butterfly Collecting'. Apart from the clearly organic outlook of the functional structural anthropology, all such classifications are of an empirical and even static nature, trying to crowd various objects into a tight bag. They also create working modes of thinking that lead directly to an ahistoric stand. We note here that in biology, such methods of classification were abandoned for the more dynamic reactions of biochemistry that we meet in all forms of life. In human societies, some social phenomena may seem as various types, but in the last analysis they are found to be different manifestations, or permutations of the same phenomenon, such as types of existence or social classifications. All this makes us wary of falling into the snare of evolutionism or historicism.

Such studies may add to our acquired knowledge, but they have little effect on the classic ideological systems, as they use the same classified categories to reach almost the same results. Moreover, ethnographic description or theorizing is far from their center of attention.

However, such criticism does not by necessity include all historians of African societies. As we find in *Modes of Production in Africa*, edited by D. Grumme and C.C. Stewart (1981), a great effort by the authors to theorize African history. They tried to apply the concepts of historical materialism to the pre-colonial African history, using accepted epistemological concepts and arrays of Marxist concepts such as 'modes of production', 'classes', 'surplus value' and 'capitalist production relations', to explain that history. They made a serious effort to allure English-speaking historians away from their empiricism, without showing a similar will to learn from African ethnography except to extract the greatest amount of historical 'facts' and explain them by pre-accepted standards and classifications.

Mafeje says (1991) that he intentionally tried to evade all such generalizations. He took African ethnography as a standard by which to assess all previous concepts that he did not take for granted. Using such a method, some epistemological hypotheses per se, including Marxism, became subject to doubt, and must be subjected to cultural discussion, as Y. Tandon remarks. Instead of being

swamped by theoretical theses, Mafeje took one fundamental thesis and subjected it to his method of doubt and examination. He applied this system to S. Amin's thesis on the 'Tributary Modes of Production' whose history was different from that of the perspective of European history, and as such must be judged by its own terms.

I agree with Mafeje that the main aim of Mafeje's study was to establish a conceptual formulation of some of the phenomena and social relations in Black Africa, which had been examined in a biased manner by non-Africans for a long time. The aim was to show that most of these concepts were misrepresented to prove the lack of correlation between the universal language of social sciences based on the European historical experience and the local language as understood by the Imperialists.

The problem, as we see it, is the authenticity of social sciences, as some of their texts have no historical context, and in order to grasp them fully we must comprehend their historic context. The point here is not that social formations are governed by the related ethnography, but that the latter explains social classification, and codes of social conduct, and the ideological reproduction. A given social stratum need not behave in a certain manner anywhere in the world. African capitalists may set aside the possibility of doubling the surplus value, for reasons of kinship. In Buganda the proprietor chiefs will gain more value from making political dependants than from squeezing their labour force. To evaluate these development aspirations, all such ideas are relevant and credible, and even objective. We must keep in mind that all local dialects, as well as all languages, can mislead, and what may guide the analyst is the context. When we read local tongues, we do not face an object that is clear per se, and this is exactly the error of both the empiricists and the globalists. The deciphering of the symbol usually means an expert translation of an ambiguous language to make it more lucid. Thus when we insist on comprehension of local dialects, we have no intention of discarding the current scientific social language; rather we insist on a clear understanding of local experience, hence better credibility and objectivity. From the point of view of social theories this implies a thorough process of examination, classification and rearrangement.

Speaking on the liberation of the discipline, Mafeje recalled that among those who showed interest in developing a radical social theory in Africa and anywhere else, Samir Amin occupied a distinguished place. Although he cannot be considered among those who decline details, and go forward to present issues of forgone conclusions, yet he will always be consulted for his critical thinking and seeking out of new ideas. Although such ideas may not always be fundamental, they generally present logical conclusions.

Hence Archie Mafeje does not uphold the idea of the End of Anthropology in order to liquidate an epistemological order, but rather to put in its place a more appropriate alternative to the concept, which, in his opinion, leads to anthropological theorizing of another kind.

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## Archie Mafeje, the African Intellectual and the Anti-imperialism in Social Science

**A**rchie Mafeje was a man marked from the beginning by the struggle against imperialism and all forms of injustice in which he was caught by birth and because of his convictions of being a free man and someone who also has to bring the flame of freedom to his people. A man well-versed in the social sciences, in flesh and in spirit, he embodied the aspirations of his people. He was involved in their sufferings while also sharing their dream for freedom.

Born during the spring of apartheid in South Africa, he later became one of its first intellectual victims and positioned himself on the frontline of the struggle against it, constantly supplying new intellectual weaponry to the freedom fighters at a time when others his age or even older engaged in armed struggle against the most horrible regime of oppression.

For Mafeje, apartheid was first and foremost an oppression ideology, and there was no more powerful weapon against the system than the weapon of intellectual reasoning. The system of apartheid was essentially that of repressing the minds, and the emancipation of the latter was a *sine qua non* condition for the total freedom claimed by millions of men and women. For the regime and the apartheid mechanism, this black intellectual was eventually one of the brains who must be combated at all costs if not physically taken out. He championed the academic and intellectual freedom that characterised his whole intellectual and scientific activity. Any intellectual conversation with him turned stormy. He had an incredible thrust of ideas and a convincing power while leaving his interlocutors the freedom and choice to think otherwise. Archie Mafeje was unquestionably one of the icons of African social science, adulated by some and hated by others but respected by all at home and abroad.

Meeting Mafeje and spending time with him was a privilege for people of my age. He wrote extensively and reflected on a wide range of themes, and one may even state that none of the subjects of concern to his generation and people left him untouched.

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It is impossible to summarise an intellectual work spanning four decades, but if there is a word constantly repeated in his writings and thought, just like in that of one of his friends, Issa Shivji, who retired recently and lost that retirement shortly after, it was probably the term ‘imperialism’. Mafeje considered ‘imperialism’ to be an evil, which must be combated at all costs in every domain including the social sciences. Claude Ake, another departed icon, noted that ‘imperialism’ did not spare the social sciences at all – as thought and transmitted to us from Europe – to the extent that it could also become or used as a vehicle of imperialism (Ake 1979).

My first meeting with Archie Mafeje was more ‘intellectual’ than physical. It dated back to the early 1990s and was largely facilitated by CODESRIA. In 1994 I was an Assistant in the Department of Public Law at the Law Faculty of the University of Kinshasa in what was then still called Republic of Zaire. For the first time, I learnt of the existence of CODESRIA through a poster calling for applications for the Summer Institute on Democratic Governance. I decided to try my luck. The fact that my candidacy was retained among the fifteen who were selected was certainly one of the best surprises ever in my intellectual and scientific career. I thus found myself in Dakar from August to September 1994. Luc Sindjoun and Peter Kagwanja were among my fellow participants at the Institute. It was during my various reading visits to the CODESRIA Library that I came across the writings of Archie Mafeje.

Two years later, I experienced my first shock with the scholar. It was through the *CODESRIA Bulletin* published in 1995 and 1996. Ali Mazrui, this other giant of African social science, had submitted his ideas on the *Pax Africana*. Faced with the risk of ‘disintegration’ threatening many African regions, Mazrui sug-

gested that the *Pax Africana* was going through a ‘self-colonisation’ or rather through a ‘mild colonisation’ of the African states in decaying or ‘disintegrating’ states like Somalia, Sierra Leone and Zaïre (Mazrui 1995). Mazrui felt that ‘key states’ like South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Egypt and Ethiopia could be charged with ‘re-colonising’ those in a disintegrating state. Colonisation by some African states would be a form of ‘self-colonisation’ not affected by the vices associated with ‘conventional’ colonisation.

Ali Mazrui probably knew that his idea of colonisation whether mild or not, which is in-built in the imperialism ideology, was provocative and would not pass. The forceful reaction of Archie Mafeje was a tit-for-tat as he denounced ‘sly spirits at the service of imperialism’ (Mafeje 1995). The debate was thus ignited and involved all CODESRIA members. We wondered whether we should take the floor in the face of these two giants, who practically intimidated everyone, who keep silent for fear of being crushed on the battleground where the two wild cats of African social science were confronting each other cordially.

But I might have asked Shivji this question: between imperialism and anti-imperialism, do we really have the choice to remain silent? I then decided to sound my little voice even though it could not resonate in the middle of the heated exchanges and finesse shots between the two giants, all the more so as the debate was open to all (Mangu 1996). This was how I introduced myself to Archie Mafeje.

In 2001, I found myself teaching at the University of the North in South Africa, his home country. Five years had elapsed. Mafeje was invited to give a lecture at the university, and I was very happy to see him physically. He had a terrific memory: just mentioning the name of André Mbata was enough to remind him of the young and daring gentleman from former Zaire who then was ‘bold’ enough to intervene during his heated exchange with Mazrui. In 2003, I was a Professor at the College of Law, University of South Africa and Mafeje

was also there as a researcher emeritus. Since then, we met regularly and I continued benefiting from his relevant analyses. My lasting memory is that he was a model senior scholar, somewhat radical and not always conciliatory about certain ideas, a rigorous and non-complacent scientist who opposed any compromise solution.

He so much loved this Africa extending from Cairo, where he lived as a ‘refugee’, to Cape Town, where his appointment as the first black lecturer in a whites-only university, in accordance with the very logic of apartheid, had provoked a general outcry on the part of the racist government of Pretoria to the extent of

forcing him into exile forty years ago. He always dreamed of the greatness of the continent, which required mastering social science and challenging imperialism in all its forms insofar as it constituted a negation of the dream shared by several generations of CODESRIA members.

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## Against Alterity – The Pursuit of Endogeneity: Breaking Bread with Archie Mafeje

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### Introduction

The passing away of Professor Archibald Monwabisi Mafeje on 28 March 2007 was a great shock to so many within the African social science community and beyond. At a personal level, it was particularly shocking: Archie, as we fondly refer to him, was to be with us at Rhodes University (Grahamstown-iRhini) for Thandika Mkandawire’s DLitt graduation ceremony and we had worked frantically to finalise Archie’s travel arrangements just the Friday before he died. He was to return to Grahamstown in May for an audio-visual interview that I was to have with him, exploring his biography and scholarship; I had sent him the questions and he was keen on the project. Scholarship is biographical, and it is even more so in Archie’s case. It was going to be a time to break bread with this most engaging of scholars; elegant in thoughts and taste. I had wanted to test out some of my hypotheses regarding the contours of his works and life with him; ‘sort out’ a few nagging issues in his works. Although he had been in poor health for a few years, when we sat down to what turned out to be our last dinner in Pretoria in February 2007, he was in the best shape in which I had seen him since 2002. He had spent December 2006 and January 2007 in the Transkei (South Africa), among family members. He had received herbal treatment, he said, which proved quite helpful. His hands (especially the fingers) were much improved, and he was going back to Mthatha (in the Transkei) on Tuesday 27 March as part of the arrangement to resettle in the Transkei by mid-year. Walter Sisulu University in Mthatha had agreed to provide him a place to work and reflect; and he would be able to continue

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his treatment. I thought we would have him around for many years to come.

All these reflections are anecdotal, and as with anecdotes there will be as many as the number of individuals who encountered Archie. By themselves, they may be of limited intellectual significance. In this instance, it is in the personal that I seek the scholarly. The loss of someone like Archie pushes us to search for meaning that is both deeply personal and intellectual.

### Meanings and Encounters

The meaning of Archie Mafeje for three generations of African scholars and social scientists is about encounters. For some it would have been personal, for others it was through his works, and for most in the community the encounter via scholarly works became personal and intimate. And Archie reciprocated more than most. Babatunde Zack-Williams, in an intervention at a February 2006 conference in Pretoria, spoke glowingly regarding the impact that Archie’s ‘The Ideology of “Tribalism”’ (Mafeje 1971) had on him. Tunde wondered aloud why Archie was absent from a conference in a city of his residence on how to reinvigorate the study of Africa. The impact that Tunde referred to is shared by many, but I missed that by some five years. My encounter was through his ‘The Problem of Anthropology in Historical Perspective’ (Mafeje

1976). I was a first-year undergraduate student at Ibadan, and I had been rummaging through the journal section in the basement of the University of Ibadan Library. I came across a new issue of the *Canadian Journal of African Studies* and pulled the copy off the shelf. I suspect it was the name *Mafeje* in the contents page that drew my attention. I had never heard of him, which might be forgiven in a fresh undergraduate. I started nibbling through the article. By the time I got to the third page, I was hooked. I took the journal to the sitting area and buried my head in it. It was so elegantly written, with incredible detailed knowledge of the field and the debates from various parts of the world. His conceptual handle on the debate so rigorous and velvet, it was incredibly exhilarating. While taking no prisoners, he did not mind taking himself a prisoner too. Kathleen Gough had charged Anthropology with being ‘a child of Western Imperialism’ (Gough 1968), which I found delightful. In response, Raymond Firth (Firth 1972) rebuked Gough and others like her; quite the contrary, Firth insisted, Anthropology was a ‘child of Enlightenment’. Mafeje’s response in the 1976 article was: ‘What’s the point of dispute, folks? Imperialism is the child of Enlightenment, anyway’. It was so detailed and elegantly argued I walked on air for days afterwards.

I was not to meet Archie Mafeje in person until 1992, at the CODESRIA General Assembly in Dakar. It was an incredibly engaging experience, and I got a copy of his *Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations* (Mafeje 1991). He autographed my copy with the words: *With pleasant memories after a most vigorous encounter with the irreverent but a wel-*

come sense of rebellion – Dakar 15/2/92. The ‘irreverence’ was around the debate we kicked off at the assembly on ‘icons’. I had argued that a viable intellectual community develops around iconic individuals, events and/or ideas. I told Archie that we won’t act like the Orthodox Church; we won’t polish our icons and put them on a pedestal. When we disagree with them, ‘we will kick their butts’. He was quite tickled by it. Jibrin Ibrahim would later take a dip at being iconoclastic in an article, ‘History as Iconoclast: Left Stardom and the Debate on Democracy’ (Ibrahim 1993). The problem is when you denounce Issa Shivji for ‘manichean vituperations’, as Jibrin did, you should expect to have your feathers plucked; and plucked his feathers were. The ‘icons’ were not going to roll over and die or rock in their chairs watching the sun set (Amin 1993; Mafeje 1993). Even so, Archie and Samir were as gentle as one could expect of them in the circumstances. Issa stayed out of it. Archie’s focus was on conceptual rigour as a prelude to political action as well as empirical misrepresentations of what the iconic ‘Left stars’ did or did not do. He probably thought Jibrin was mistaken but not an ‘enemy’.

My take on the idea of ‘icon’ and iconic ideas was quite different from Jibrin’s. It was about constructing our intellectual community rooted in ideas firmly grounded in our conditions and drawing critical scholarly inspirations from those who went before; not in squeamish adulation but critical engagement. But to return to Archie, the *Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations* is another example of what Mahmood Mamdani called Archie’s ‘artisanal’ approach to intellectual work: painstaking and rigorously argued.

The 1992 encounter speaks to what many people confuse as intellectual arrogance and a gladiatorial stance in Archie Mafeje. He demanded of you a rigorous engagement with your field, extensive depth of knowledge, and knowing your onions inside out. But even the most brilliant mind is not infallible; Archie knew that. He lived on rigorous intellectual engagements and a willingness to engage with you if you thought he had not finely tuned his ideas. But ideas were not just esoteric things for their own sake. They are important because they mean so much one way or another to the lives of millions on our

continent. That is why he comes across as fierce on ‘dangerous’ ideas – as in his contentions against Ali Mazrui – or those who subsist on ‘the epistemology of alterity’ (Mafeje 1997b:5). It would equally explain why he chose not to have a public spat with Ruth First after her response (First 1978) to his article on the Soweto Uprising (Mafeje 1978b). Ruth First was a comrade even though they inhabited different points in the anti-Apartheid struggle.

### Against Alterity

If there is a common thread tying all of Archie Mafeje’s professional writings, as distinct from his more political writings, it will be the relentless contestation of the epistemology of alterity and the pursuit of endogeneity. Endogeneity, in this specific case, refers to an intellectual standpoint derived from a rootedness in African conditions; a centring of African ontological discourses and experiences as the basis of one’s intellectual work. ‘To evolve lasting meanings’, Mafeje (2000:66) noted, ‘we must be “rooted” in something. Central to endogeneity is averting what Hountondji (1990) referred to as ‘extroversion’. In spite of the claims of being nomothetic in aspiration, social analysis is deeply idiographic. Those who exercise undue anxiety about being ‘cosmopolitan’ or universalist fail to grasp this about much of what is considered nomothetic in the dominant strands of Western ‘theories’. All knowledge is first local: “‘universal knowledge’ can only exist in contradiction’ (Mafeje 2000:67). It is precisely because Max Weber spoke distinctly to the European context of his time, as Michel Foucault did for his that guaranteed the efficacy of their discourses. ‘If what we say and do has relevance for our humanity, its international relevance is guaranteed’ (Mafeje 2000:67).<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I will limit my focus to this aspect of Mafeje’s works.

While ‘The Ideology of “Tribalism”’ is often cited as the launching of Mafeje’s<sup>3</sup> attack on alterity, the drive for the centring of the African ‘self-knowing’ is evident in *Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township* (Wilson and Mafeje 1963), co-published with Monica Wilson, his supervisor at the University of Cape Town. The preference for the research subjects’ own self-definition – e.g., ‘homeboys’ rather than ‘tribesmen’ – in the book presaged his 1971 paper. A

similar mode of writing, which proceeds from the subject’s perspective, is evident in two of his other works published in the 1960s: ‘The Chief Visits Town’ (Mafeje 1963) and ‘The Role of the Bard in a Contemporary African Community’ (Mafeje 1967). However, in contrast to the muted negation of alterity in these earlier works, ‘The Ideology of “Tribalism”’ was a more self-conscious critique of the continued use of ‘tribe’ and ‘tribalism’.

While Mafeje’s paper was not new or alone in contesting the concept of ‘tribe’ and ‘tribalism’ – cf. Vilakazi (1965), Magubane’s 1968 paper (republished in 2000:1–26) and Onoge’s 1971 paper (published 1977) – that much Mafeje (1971:12; 1996:260–1) himself specifically mentioned.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, Mafeje’s intervention was a focused ‘deconstruction’ (Mafeje 1996, 2001) of the categories on conceptual and empirical grounds. Empirically, Mafeje argued, the word ‘tribe’ did not exist in any of the indigenous South African languages – or, to the best of my knowledge, any that I know. Conceptually, those deploying the concept are unable to sustain it on the basis of their own definitions of tribe(s) (hence tribalism). It is a method of critique that defines Mafeje’s scholarship, anchored on conceptual rigour or its absence.

‘Classical anthropology’, Mafeje noted (quoting Fortes’ and Evans-Pritchard’s 1940 *African Political Systems*) defined tribes as ‘self-contained, autonomous communities practicing subsistence economy with no or limited external trade’ (Mafeje 1971:257). Others (citing Schapera’s 1956 *Government and Politics in Tribal Societies*) would define tribes as a group of people who claim ‘exclusive rights to a given territory’ and manage ‘its affairs independently of external control’ (Mafeje 1971:257). In this sense, tribes are defined by subsistence economy, territoriality and rule by chiefs and/or elders. Anthropologists and others who persisted in using ‘tribe’ and ‘tribalism’ as their framework for analysing Africa were violating their own rules. Territorial boundedness, political and economic isolation, and subsistence economy no longer apply under the conditions of colonialism. To argue, as Gulliver did (in the 1969 edited volume *Tradition and Transition in East Africa*) that they continue to use ‘tribe’ not out of ‘defiance’ but because Africans themselves use it when speaking in English (Mafeje 1971:253–4) would be woolly-

headed. Mafeje did not ‘ deny the existence of tribal ideology and sentiment in Africa...The fact that it works ...is no proof that “ tribes” or “ tribalism” exists in any objective sense’ (1971:25–9). The persistence of ‘ tribalism’ in such context is ‘ a mark of *false consciousness*’ (Mafeje 1971:259, emphasis in original). More importantly, that cultural affinity (what he called ‘ cultural links’ ) is deployed in securing ‘ a more comfortable place’ is no evidence of ‘ tribalism’ . More forces may be at work than ‘ tribal’ identity, including occupational and class identities. Mafeje cited Mitchell’s 1956 monograph, *The Kalela Dance* and Epstein’s *Politics in an Urban African Community*, which both point to such alternative explanations.<sup>5</sup>

At the heart of Mafeje’s argument is Anthropology’s conceptual conundrum. The categories might have been valid once, Mafeje argued, but not any more because the colonial encounter ended the territorial and political isolation of the ‘ tribes’ and their subsistence economies. Further, the ‘ territoriality’ that was supposed to be the conceptual basis of ‘ tribes’ did not exist in Mafeje’s reference group, the AmaXhosa; they were never organised under a single political unit even when found in the same region. This is a theme Mafeje returned to in his 1991 book in the case of the Great Lake Region of East Africa. In spite of these, anthropologists who studied sociational dynamics outside the ‘ tribal homelands’ persisted in deploying the categories. It is this invariant commitment to the categories that Mafeje called ‘ tribal ideology’ or the ‘ ideology of tribalism’ . It was no longer scholarship but ideology – not that Mafeje thought scholarship could be non-ideological.

The new army of political scientists tramping into Africa in the periods immediately before and after ‘ independence’ would go on to deploy the same mode of writing and thinking. If the anthropologist could be excused because the study of ‘ tribes’ is his/her *raison d’être* the Africanist political scientist had no such excuse (Mafeje 1971:257). The result is that similar phenomena in other parts of the world are ‘ explained’ differently – with ‘ tribe’ or primitivity being Africa’s explanatory category. The tribal categories are used simultaneously to explain ‘ pattern maintenance and persistence’ and the failure of ‘ modernity’ !

Much in the same way that Magubane’s vigorous critique of the Manchester School (Magubane 1971) was liberating for many African students studying Anthropology or Sociology in the United States at the time, Mafeje’s paper, of the same year, had similar edifying effects on the same cohort of African students studying in the UK or Anglophone Africa, as Zack-Williams has noted.<sup>6</sup>

Mafeje pursued his line of thought at the expense of conceding that the category might have been valid at an earlier time (Mafeje 1971:258). Not only does Anthropology deal with its objects of inquiry outside history, it is ill equipped to address the issues of history. The ‘ isolation’ (political and economic) and territoriality that were supposed to define the African communities before the colonial encounter hardly stand up to scrutiny when approached from the perspectives of History and Archaeology. Neither about Africa, Asia or the Americas, is it possible to sustain the claims of territoriality and isolation. None of the groups in West Africa that are still routinely referred to as ‘ tribes’ would fit the definition hundreds of years before the first intrepid anthropologist arrived on their doorsteps. Further, the very act of naming and labelling requires encounter. ‘ Germanic tribes’ , as a label, is only feasible in the encounter with the Greek or Roman ‘ Superior Other’ who does the naming and the labelling. Isolation is thus unimaginable. *Alterity rather than any conceptual validity is foundational to labelling one community of people a ‘tribe’, another a nation.* The Germanic tribal Other is immediately the ‘ Barbarian’ : an inferior Other. The appropriation of such alterity by the labelled is one of the legacies of colonisation, such that it is still possible for Africans themselves to speak of their local potentates as ‘ tribal authority’ ! What is required at the level of scholarship and everyday discourse is the complete extirpation of the category of ‘ tribe’ – evident in Mafeje’s works from 1963 to 2004, but insufficiently extirpated, conceptually, in 1971.

The same extirpation cannot be said for the category of ‘ Bantu-speakers’ (Mafeje 1967, 1991), which he used as a shorthand for speakers of ‘ Bantu languages’ (2000:67). Even if it is possible to categorise the 681 languages referred to by linguists as belonging to the ‘ Bantoid’ subset of the 961 languages in the Benue–

Congo group – itself a ‘ sub-family of the Niger–Congo phylum’ <sup>7</sup> – labelling the languages as ‘ Bantu’ is the ultimate in extroversion and alterity. While the languages may share linguistic characteristics and *Bantu* generally means ‘ people’ (*Abantu* in IsiXhosa), none of the groups is self-referentially ‘ Bantu’ . The labelling is rooted in European alterity, which found its apogee in the Apartheid racist group classification, with all Africans designated ‘ *Bantu*’ – hence Bantu education, etc. A geographic classification, similar to ‘ Niger–Congo’ rather than Bantu, might be less eviscerating. Even if one were to accept the singularity of classification involved – ‘ 961 languages’ as so linguistically close as to be given a name – it does not explain why Africans have to absorb the alterity. What is more, other linguists consider Malcolm Guthrie’s method, which is the source of the classification, as deeply flawed. The role of missionaries in inventing the fragmentation of African languages and then scripting exclusive ethnic identities on the back of such fragmentation is widely known (Chimhundu 1992). Undoing this fragmentation has been the essence of Kwesi Prah’s Centre for the Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) in Cape Town. The idea of ‘ Bantu-speakers’ is an aspect of the inadequate ‘ negation of negation’ (Mafeje 2000:66) that I had hoped to explore with him in the audio-visual interview planned for May 2007. It is a task that we must take upon ourselves as surviving African scholars.

### Negation of Negation: Mafeje on Anthropology

Mafeje’s (2000) *Africanity: A Combative Ontology* is perhaps his most eloquent and elegant enunciation of the twinned agenda of the ‘ determined negation of negation’ (ibid., p.66) and the pursuit of endogeneity. The former requires an uncompromising refutation of the epistemology of alterity that has shaped modes of gazing and writing about Africa and Africans. Such negation of alterity is the beginning of the journey to affirmation: a method of scholarship rooted in the collective Self and speaking to it without the anxiety regarding what the western Other has to say or think about us. In its specific sense, the two write-ups (2001, Mafeje 2000) were in reaction to the ‘ cosmopolitan’ anxieties of the postmodern monologue that Achille Mbembe sought to foist on the CODESRIA community. The

year 2000 marked the reappropriation of the institution from the intellectual misuse to which it had been subjected.<sup>8</sup> Mafeje's pieces were an ode to a recovered patrimony. However, Mafeje's 'determined negation of negation' goes back much further, and its object was the discipline of Anthropology as the epitome of alterity.

'The Problem of Anthropology...' (Mafeje 1976) was an intervention in the debates between different factions of anthropologists: on the one hand, the new generation of anthropologists with a radical orientation, and on the other, an older generation of 'mainstream' anthropologists. Kathleen Gough represented the former and Raymond Firth, the latter.<sup>9</sup> While Mafeje mentioned Magubane (1968) as one of the new generation repudiating mainstream Anthropology, Magubane was never an anthropologist; he trained at the University of Natal as a sociologist.

As mentioned earlier, 'The Problem of Anthropology...' was elegantly written – in the best tradition of Mafeje's scholarship. Elegant erudition aside, Mafeje's contention was that Anthropology had passed its 'sell-by' date, and it was time to move on to something different. 'Among the social sciences', Mafeje argued, 'anthropology is the only discipline which is specifically associated with colonialism and dissociated with metropolitan societies' (1976:317). The alterity associated with Anthropology is not accidental or temporal; it is immanent. If, as Raymond Firth (1972) claimed, Anthropology is 'the legitimate child of Enlightenment', the leading intellectuals of the Enlightenment, unlike latter-day anthropologists, were preoccupied with accounting for 'the moral, genetic and historical unity of mankind' and 'had little regard for exotic customs' (Mafeje 1976:310). However, insofar as the scholarship of the Enlightenment 'sought to make its own anthropological viewpoint universal' (ibid.) it inspired a 'civilising mission' in relation to non-European peoples – a pseudonym for pillage and imperialism. Anthropology, as a discipline, is rooted in this venture; it is in this sense that, contrary to Firth's claim, Anthropology is a child of imperialism, and a foster-child (if not grandchild) of Enlightenment. English socialists like Beatrice Webb, for instance, did not think it strange to talk of East Asians as savages (Chang 2008); Christian missionaries took such labelling for granted: a pervasive conception of Africa and Africans that

has received a renewed impetus. Anthropology is one discipline founded on such inferior othering of its 'objects' of study.

Unlike Gough and others who sought to reform Anthropology, Mafeje's contention is that epistemic 'othering' is so *immanent* to Anthropology as to be its *raison d'être*. The point is not to reform it but to extirpate it. Mafeje uses 'anthropology' in at least two senses: anthropology as a conceptual concern with ontological discourses (Mafeje 1997a:7), and Anthropology as an epistemology of alterity. While Mafeje associates the latter with the discipline, it is equally as much a mode of thinking and writing that considers the 'object' as the inferior or the exotic Other. It is the latter that one would classify as the 'anthropologised' reasoning about Africa – a discursive mode that persists and what I consider the *curse of anthropology* in the study of Africa. As a discipline, however, Mafeje was careful to distinguish between the works of Colonial Anthropology (most emblematic of British Anthropology) and works of practitioners such as Maurice Godelier and Claude Meillassoux. The former is more foundationally associated with Anthropology 'as a study of "primitive" societies' (Mafeje 1997a:6); the latter, Mafeje insisted, must be taken seriously: 'their deep idiographic knowledge, far from diminishing their capacity to produce nomothetic propositions, has helped them to generate new concepts' (Mafeje 1991:10). They approached the African societies on their own terms – without alterity.

Anthropologists may claim they are no longer concerned with 'tribes', but alterity remains their *raison d'être*. The study of the 'exotic Other' is only a dimension of alterity; often the 'less-than-equal Other'. As an undergraduate, I had the good fortune of studying in a university that insisted from the early 1960s to eliminate Anthropology. Even so, my first-year teachers included social anthropologists who came with Anthropology's mode of native gazing, which struck me then as the 'Sociology of the primitive Other'. It was probably the reason why Mafeje's 'The Problem of Anthropology...' resonated so much with me when I first read it. The claims by contemporary anthropologists that they are committed to the wellbeing of their research subjects or that field method defines their discipline are rather lame. Even the most racist colonial anthropologists made similar claims

of adhesion to 'their tribes'. We will address this further later in this paper.

Further, ethnography is no more unique to Anthropology than quantitative method is to Economics. The methodological opaqueness of the anthropologist's 'field method' quite easily gives way to methodological licence. Since the function of anthropologists is to 'explain' exotic, foreign cultures, and strange customs to their compatriots, methodological licence and the erroneous coding of the 'objects' of Anthropology are taking on the same instrumentalism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century's new age of Empire as applied Anthropology did under colonialism. Closely associated with the epistemology of alterity is erasure, which becomes distinctly imperial at inter-personal levels; and those attempting erasure tend to employ derision and intellectual bullying.

In response to Mafeje's (Mafeje 1996, 1997b) critical review of Sally Moore's book (Moore 1996: 22), Moore sought to deride his claim that he 'might have prevailed on Monica Wilson not to [use the tribal categories] in *Langa*' (Mafeje 1997b:12). Moore's response was that while Mafeje might have been responsible for the fieldwork, Wilson produced the manuscript, an assertion that hardly reflects well on her own understanding of the process of producing a manuscript. Authorship, if that is what this confers on Monica Wilson, does not mean exclusivity of even the most seminal ideas in a manuscript. Significantly, Moore confused 'detrivialisation' used earlier by the Wilsons for a rejection of the category of 'tribe' or 'tribalism'. Conversely, Moore failed to account for the recurrence of this rejection of alterity in two other publications by Mafeje (Mafeje 1963, 1967) in the same period. She might simply never have bothered to read them.

In response to Mafeje's observation that she failed to account for the works of African scholars in her book with the lone exception of Valentin Mudimbe, a distinct form of erasure, Sally Moore's response was twofold. First, that she left out the works of African scholars like Magubane and Mafeje because she concentrated on books and monographs not journal articles (Moore 1996:22). Second, that she cited many more other African scholars. On both accounts, she was less than candid. The sources she used are profuse with journal articles – German, French,

English, etc. (Moore 1994:135–60). Several of these are American anthropology journals, including *Current Anthropology* in which Magubane's piece appeared. It is difficult to imagine that Moore was unaware of Magubane's 1971 paper at the time it was published given the uproar it generated and her seniority – she was Chair of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Southern California at the time.

On the second charge, Moore's response was that she did nothing of the sort and listed several African scholars she claimed she cited. Other than Mudimbe, she engaged with none of the others. When she did, if one can call it engagement, they were part of general citation rather than an engagement with their ideas. The two references to Onwuka Dike (Moore 1994:11, 15) were from his obituary on Melville Herskovits. You would hardly know that Dike founded the famous Ibadan School of History. The references to Jomo Kenyatta were either incidental to Moore's discussion of Malinowski or an oblique reference to Africans publishing 'ethnographic monographs of their own peoples' or 'emigration' (Moore 1994:32–3). In the latter, Kenyatta was part of five Africans grouped together, but the reader will have no idea what exactly they wrote. The reference to Paulin Hountondji was second-hand, and part of African intellectuals who 'rail against what they see as the misreading of outsiders' (Moore 1994:84): hardly an evidence of intellectual courtesy.

The only African scholar she discussed with any degree of 'seriousness' was Valentin Mudimbe, and even so, it was in a remarkably derisive and imperial manner. She referred to him as 'a Zairean who lives in the United States', like he did not belong. Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa* was dismissed as 'complex, indigestible, and highly opinionated' (Moore 1994:84), without any apparent awareness that to label someone opinionated is to be opinionated. If one were to look for the enduring tendency to treat Africans and their intellectuals as children one need go no further than read Moore. She would make similarly condescending remarks about Mafeje in a later article (Moore 1998), labelling his work as driven by 'polemic strategy', 'noises', 'diatribe', etc. As before, Moore failed to engage with a range of Mafeje's works or even the 'Anthropology and Independent Af-

ricans' (Mafeje 1998) to which she claimed she was responding. Again, you might be forgiven for thinking she was talking to a two-year-old! How, for instance, is the crisis of funding that African universities face an answer to the alterity immanent to Anthropology? It was as if Africans will have to choose between alterity and generous funding. Yet the high point of the rejection of alterity was when research funding was readily available *within* the universities themselves. The University of Ibadan (Nigeria) rejected the idea of a Department of Anthropology in the early 1960s when it did not have any problem of research funding and its staff had no need to seek external funding. The researches undertaken by Kayode Adesogan<sup>10</sup> in organic chemistry were funded entirely from grants from the university (Adesogan 1987). It led to his contributing more than twenty new compounds to the lexicon of chemistry, precisely because his scholarship was rooted in endogeneity (Adesina 2006:137). The same can be said of the diverse schools of History in Africa – from Dar-es-Salaam to Ibadan and Dakar. They flourished in the periods *before* the funding crisis. What they shared in common was an uncompromising rejection of the colonial racist historiography (Adesina 2005, 2006). The difference in chemistry and history is that alterity is not immanent to them. History did not originate in the study of the 'primitive' Other nor was reserved for it. It was, therefore, amenable to epistemic challenge on its own terms. The same cannot be said for Anthropology!

Mafeje was fundamentally right in seeing through this in his review of Moore's book. He ended the review by saying he did not mind the candour of those who write about Africa as:

Simply a continent of savages (read 'tribes') and venomous beasts...As a matter of fact, I like black mambas lethal as they are and wish Africans could learn from them. Perhaps, in the circumstances their continent would cease to be a playground for knowers of absolute knowledge and they in turn would lose their absolute alterity. (1997b:14)

It was a 'call to arms' that many failed to heed. The debate in *African Sociological Review* 2(1), 1998, is interesting for the persistent claims by the professional anthropologists that Mafeje's critique

was 'passé' (Laville 1998). If Anthropology has transcended its alterity, why do so many anthropologists persist in exoticising their 'objects' of inquiries? When the professional anthropologists transcend alterity, how will the result be different from Sociology? If, as Nkwi (Nkwi 1998:62) argued, 'the trend in African Anthropology is towards the interdisciplinary approach' is the 'discipline' still a discipline? Nkwi is right in arguing that more Africans were engaged in active objections to Anthropology than Mafeje acknowledged: Mafeje mentioned himself and Magubane. A case in point is Omafume Onoge at Ibadan. But Mafeje was referring to focused dissembling of Anthropology's epistemology of alterity, not the 'narcissism of minor differences' within the camp (cf. Ntarangwi, Mills and Babiker 2006) that the deliberations of the African anthropologists he was critiquing represented. Most Africans simply walked away from the discipline rather than dissipate their energies in arguing with the 'owners' of the discipline. Central to this is the inherently racist nature of its discourse – alterity. I recognised the racist epistemology in my first term as an undergraduate; Mafeje (1976) only confirmed what I knew. More than thirty years later, we have African students expressing similar feelings within a few days of being in their first-year Anthropology class at Rhodes University. It is either the discipline has overcome its epistemology of alterity or it has not. Clearly it has not, precisely because whatever the negotiations around the 'protective belt' of the discipline's core discourse, the core remains rooted in alterity.

The claim to field method (ethnography) as a defining aspect of Anthropology is equally intriguing. Ethnographic technique was used before the rise of Anthropology and is used in other disciplines beyond Anthropology. As Mafeje (1996) noted, he did not have to be an anthropologist to write *The Theory and Ethnography of African Social Formations*. I made extensive use of ethnographic technique in my doctoral study of a Nigerian refinery (Adesina 1988); I did it as a sociologist. A discipline's claim to being mono-methodological is hardly a positive reflection on its credibility. Research problems suggest the research techniques to adopt, not the discipline; most research issues would require multiple research techniques, not being wedded to a particular one.

Anthropology was born of a European intellectual division of labour. When they stayed home and studied their own people, they did Sociology; when they went abroad to study other people, ate strange food and learnt strange customs and languages, they did Anthropology (Adesina 2006). The idea of a 'native anthropologist', as Onoge noted, is a contradiction. In spite of protestations to the contrary, Anthropology is still more oriented towards the study of the 'exotic Other' than not. When they write about their own societies most still write as if they are outsiders. In 2007, it is still possible to come across a manuscript written by a Yoruba medical anthropologist with a title that reads in part: '... of the Yoruba of South-western Nigeria'. It is the kind of extroversion that Hountondji (1990, 1997) warned against. Clearly, if the audience was conceived as Yoruba such exoticisation would not be necessary.

Those who wish to study non-Western societies in the tradition of Godelier and Meillassoux should get beyond casting these societies as exotic objects that need coding for the 'non-Native' audience and broaden their methodological scope; in other words, move over to doing Sociology.

### Against Disciplinarity and Epistemology?

However, two issues that I have argued with Mafeje about and would have discussed at the planned interview are his repudiation of 'disciplines' in the social sciences and 'epistemology'. Given his ill-health in the four years before his death, I thought it would be taking undue advantage of his health condition to raise these issues on the pages of the *CODESRIA Bulletin*. In an intellectual appreciation such as this one these concerns are worth flagging. Mafeje's rejection of disciplines, I suspect, derives from his recognition that to develop a robust analysis of any social phenomenon you need the analytical skill drawn from a diversity of disciplines. Nevertheless, to reject disciplinarity on such grounds is to confuse issues of *pedagogy* with those of *research*. While knowledge production is inherently inter-disciplinary, inter-disciplinarity works *because each discipline brings its strength to the table* of knowledge production. We address the broad scope of knowledge essential to rigorous analysis by offering 'liberal arts education', but in the context of discipli-

nary anchor. From the point of pedagogy, transdisciplinarity is a recipe for epistemic disaster: you end up with people who are neither conceptually rigorous nor methodologically proficient. They are more likely to regurgitate than be profound. Mafeje's own profundity comes from fusing his trainings in Biology, Sociology, Social Anthropology, Philosophy and Economics rather their absence.

Mafeje's rejection of 'epistemology' is rooted in his aversion for dogmatism, but that is hardly the same as epistemology, which as any dictionary will attest is 'the branch of philosophy that studies the nature of knowledge, its presuppositions and foundations, and its extent and validity'. The study of specific epistemic standpoints – from positivism to Marxism and postmodernism – is the business of epistemology. The crisis of dogmatic adhesion to an epistemic standpoint can hardly be construed as a crisis of epistemology. Postmodernism's pretension to being against grand narratives ended up erecting a grand narrative of its own. What it had to say that was brilliant was not new, and what was new was not brilliant. We deconstruct postmodernism's deconstructionist claims precisely from the standpoint of epistemology – accounting for a paradigm's presuppositions, foundations, claims to knowledge production, extent and validity, as the dictionary says.

### The Pursuit of Endogeneity

Right from the start of his intellectual career, Mafeje's rejection of alterity was not simply a matter of rebellion; it was immediately about affirmation. It is instructive, for instance, that not one of those who purported to contend with him in the *ASR* 'debate' showed an awareness of anything Mafeje wrote before 1991. As mentioned earlier, the idea of endogeneity is about scholarship 'derived from within', and that is not simply a matter of ethnography. Rather than works of anthropology, Mafeje's sole-authored works in the 1960s (Mafeje 1963, 1967) are works of profound 'endogeny'. They reflect a strong sociological mindset, combining fine field-craft with analytical rigour. For instance, Mafeje located the *imbongi* or bard in a comparative context, Mafeje (1967:195); he drew comparison with the Celtic bards; an immediate extirpation of alterity that would have marked the *imbongi* as a 'praise singer' of a primitive

culture.<sup>11</sup> He demonstrated their role as social critics who can be withering in their poetic social commentaries. Rather than 'tribe' or 'tribal' Mafeje used the categories of 'South African bard' and 'South African traditional bards'.

The profundity of *The Theory and Ethnography of an African Social Formation* – apart from its artisanal nature and conceptual rigour – derives from Mafeje's effort to understand the interlacustrine kingdoms *on their own terms* – from within and without the burden of fitting them into particular 'universalist' typologies. In the process all manner of intellectual totems were overturned. I suspect that this is what Mafeje meant by his rejection of 'epistemology': the freedom to allow the data to speak to the writer rather than imposing paradigms on them. What such scholarship calls for are authentic interlocutors able to decode local 'vernaculars': the encoded local ontology and modes of comprehension (Mafeje 1991:9–10; 2000:66, 68). Mafeje argued that this is what distinguished Olufemi Taiwo's account of the Yoruba from those of Henry Louis Gate and Kwesi Prah's interlocution of the Akan codes from Anthony Kwame Appiah's. This capacity, as others have demonstrated, does not come simply from being 'anative' (Amadiume 1987; Nzegwu 2005; Ojè wùmí 1997): it requires endogeneity; it requires being authentic interlocutors. The result in the case of the latter has been seminal contributions to African gender scholarship without the anxiety of wanting to be cosmopolitan. The same applies to the diverse African schools of History.<sup>12</sup>

In earlier works, such as his review of Harold Wolpe's *On the Articulation of Modes of Production*, Mafeje (1981) demonstrated such profundity as an interlocutor, decoding the local 'vernacular'. Added to this was a more conceptually rigorous handle on what Etienne Balibar meant by 'social formation' and why Wolpe's idea of 'articulation' is a misreading of Balibar. Similar capacity is evident in his 'Beyond "Dual Theories" of Economic Growth' (Mafeje 1978a:47–73). The village ('traditional' economy) is intricately linked to the 'modern' economy of the cities. Some thirty years after Mafeje's critique of the 'dual economy' thesis, the debate on 'two economies' is going on in South Africa without as much as an acknowledgment of his contribution on these areas. Similarly, the collection of

essays in a special issue of *Africanus*,<sup>13</sup> concerned with a critique of the ‘two economies’ discourse in South Africa and Wolpe’s articulation of modes of production’ as the basis of some of such critiques, did not contain a single reference to Mafeje’s works in these areas.

For Mafeje:

Afrocentrism is nothing more than a legitimate demand that African scholars study their society from inside and cease to be purveyors of an alienated intellectual discourse... when Africans speak for themselves and about themselves, the world will hear the authentic voice, and will be forced to come to terms with it in the long-run... If we are adequately Afrocentric the international implications will not be lost on the others. (2000:66–7)

The resulting product may ‘well lead to polycentrism rather than homogeneity/homogenisation... mutual awareness does not breed universalism’ (Mafeje 2000:67).

## A Return to Intimacy

### Archie, Bitter?

Let me end by returning to the personal. One of the things I have heard said about Archie – apart from the tendency to describe his style of writing as ‘gladiatorial’ – is that he was in the end a bitter man. The same ‘Mafeje scholar’ would claim that he never transcended his being denied the appointment to the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 1968. Archie’s rejection of an honorary doctorate by the university is offered as an illustration of such bitterness and failure to ‘get over’ the 1968 experience. This was a subject that I explored in an interview I had with Archie in the early hours of 28 October 2007 in Pretoria. I asked him for his sense of the 1968 experience – I made no reference to any characterisation of him regarding that experience; just his own sense of the experience. Specifically, I asked for his understanding of the roles of several individuals and the fact that Michael Whisson was the beneficiary of the post he was denied. What struck me in Archie’s response was his immense generosity of spirit towards the individuals who, in his argument, were ‘trapped’ in history – in terms of institutional constraints and the limits of ‘voluntarism’. If there was any trace of bitterness, I could not detect it. It gave me an insight into a style of his writing that I initially found irritating – the

tendency to use third-person pronouns as if he was separate from the processes of history that he was discussing. It is a style that is quite evident in his last works on Anthropology (Mafeje 1997b, 1998, 2001). It was in those early hours of the morning that I realised that it came from his training as a biologist in the 1950s and a style of scholarly writing that separates the ‘scientist’ from ‘the object’ of research. Thinking of Archie as dispassionate may be something of an oxymoron, but it is this capacity to see the other side even when he disagrees with them that I detected; it is one that allows him to relent when he thinks you had a better handle on an idea or issue. It could be argued that what I experienced is an instance of the problem of phenomenological research: the research subject as a knowing subject, telling the researcher what s/he wants to hear; a dissembling key informant.

First, there was no reason for Archie not to express very strong feelings about the subject; he is widely acknowledged as a victim of institutionalised racism. Hours before, we had dined at his preferred restaurant in Arcadia, Pretoria and we had engaged in the usual vigorous discussion of a range of issues. He won a few, but got his white wine wrong! Why would he suddenly go mute on me? The interview was not on record – there were no tapes; there was no reason why this most passionate of intellectuals should suddenly grow reticent. It was one of the ideas that I wanted to explore before we got to the formal, recorded, interviews.

Second, there is independent evidence of such absence of bitterness. A few years after the 1968 incident, Archie collaborated with others in a collection of essays in honour of Monica Wilson (Mafeje 1975). Michael Whisson was a co-editor of the volume. Finally, when in February 2007 he raised the issue of his intellectual isolation over an intimate dinner, at his favourite restaurant in Waterkloof, Pretoria, it was about the disparity in the relative intimacy he enjoyed within the CODESRIA community and his intellectual isolation in South Africa, it was about his returning home to exile, not UCT, and it was expressed more in sadness than bitterness.

What did Archie have to say for his rejection of the honorary degree? The university’s manner of making amends should not be simply about him. In the absence

of an acknowledgment of the injustice done to *all* people of colour who went through the university, as staff or students during the period of Apartheid, accepting the honorary degree would be to individualise what is owed a wider collective. At the individual level, an acknowledgment of what is being atoned ought to *precede* the award, rather than an oblique assumption that it was, *ipso facto*, an act of atonement. Rather than bitterness, Archie’s rejection was based on principle; it was a decision that took him long and was hard to reach. A formal apology was sent posthumously to the Mafeje family in South Africa – in a letter dated 5 April 2007 from Professor Njabulo S. Ndebele, the university’s vice chancellor.

## Generous and Loyal

Archie was as gentle as he was vigorous in debate. Over dinner, with a glass of red wine and steak in tow, he was a ‘master craftsman’, but you need to listen carefully because of his constant reflexivity and the subtlety and nuanced nature of his discourse. Such reflexivity dots his works: a capacity to argue with and dismiss some of his earlier writings (see for instance, Mafeje 1971, 1978a, 2001, 2001). Many of us who have had the privilege of this encounter will attest to how much of his ideas have shaped our scholarship; but that was because he did not expect you to treat him as an oracle. Listen, but engage with equal vigour. The age difference between you and him counted for nothing; he considered you an intellectual colleague, and if you are a comrade, he took you even more seriously and demanded more of you. In his last few years he nibbled at his food rather than ate heartily; the discussions you had seemed to fill him more than the food.

Archie was a man of immense generosity of spirit and loyalty. I would arrive in his apartment outside Pretoria to find that he had neatly made the bed for me in the guest room, with clean towels and toiletries neatly laid out. After a long evening of dining out – and he dined like a Bedouin – he would engage you in discussions into the early hours of the morning; never about trivial matters. He would worry whether you were fine, if you needed coffee or tea. It would be a delight if you shared a glass of red wine, then you got down to serious discussion.

The tragedy for all of us, especially in South Africa, is that Archie did not die of

natural causes – he died of intellectual neglect and isolation. In spite of the enormous love of his family and loyal, lifelong friends, Archie's oxygen was vigorous intellectual engagement. He lived on serious, rigorous and relevant scholarship. Starved of that, he simply withered. After four decades in exile, he returned home in 2002 to exile. Yet the gradual dissipation of our intangible intellectual heritage in South Africa by our failure to nurture the heritage we have in people like him is not limited to him. The twenty-fifth anniversary of Ruth First's assassination in Maputo passed in August 2007 with few national acknowledgments. This I find confounding. If Archie's passing away forces us to rethink how we engage with this heritage we might as yet salvage something for a new generation that desperately needs intellectual role models, not just business tycoons.

### Lessons of Mafeje's Scholarship: Concluding Remarks

The lessons that a new generation of African scholars can take from Mafeje's scholarship are many. I will mention four:

1. Deep familiarity with the literature and subject;
2. writing;
3. Immense theoretical rigour; and
4. An unapologetic and relentless commitment to Africa.

Over time, Mafeje moved from being proto-Trotskyite (in the tradition of South Africa's Non-European Unity Movement) to being Afrocentric,<sup>14</sup> but these were simply the scaffolding for deep social commitment. Noteworthy is that a rejection of dogmatism did not result in eclecticism in Mafeje's hands. You cannot walk away from any of his papers without being struck by his voracious intellectual appetite and deep familiarity with his field, even when he moved into new fields. He took the field craft seriously and was 'artisanal' in connecting the dots. But more significantly, his prodigious intellect was immediately grounded in addressing real-life problems; scholarship (however profound) must find its relevance in engagement. Mafeje's works on agrarian and land issues, development studies, democracy and governance, liberation scholarship, African epistemic standpoints, etc.,

constantly challenged and prodded a new generation to think large and engage in issues around us. The policy implications are enormous. He was uncompromising in demanding that Africans must insist on their own space; be completely unabashed in rejecting every form of domination. But averting alterity is not about being marooned on the tip of criticism; it must move from negation to affirmation.

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- 6 See the comments of the African reviewers to whom Magubane's paper was sent by the editor of *Current Anthropology*. Onoge, who met Magubane in the US, described him as 'the most exciting African sociologist' of the time (Onoge 1977 [1971]).
- 7 Cf. [http://www.powerset.com/explore/semhtml/Bantoid\\_langages](http://www.powerset.com/explore/semhtml/Bantoid_langages). Also see <http://www.ethnologue.org/>.
8. Tiyambe Zeleza has documented his own experience of the silencing of alternative voices to Mbembe's monologue. The institutional dimensions drove CODESRIA to the precipice of extinction. For the relentless protection of our patrimony, generations of African social scientists will owe Mahmood Mamdani, the CODESRIA President at the time, a world of gratitude.
9. This distinction is, of course, relative. Kathleen Gough was born in 1925 while Raymond Firth in 1901. The distinction is more one of relative accretion to 'classical anthropology'.
10. Retired professor of Organic Chemistry, University of Ibadan (Ibadan, Nigeria).
11. The similarity included the mode of self-appointment, being arbiter and conveyer of public opinion, etc. In this Mafeje registered a disagreement with the claim by the eminent linguist, A.C. Jordan, that the *imbongi* has no 'parallel ... in Western poetry'. In the same breadth Mafeje pointed to the non-hereditary nature of the *imbongi* in contrast with the European bards.
12. See Toyin Falola's (2000) collection of J.F. Ade Ajayi's papers for insights into the methodological and epistemological issues that shaped the Ibadan School of History. Onwuka Dike was the founder and inspiration of the school.
13. Volume 37, Number 2, 2007. *Africanus* is a journal of Development Studies published by the UNISA (University of South Africa) Press.
14. My appreciation to Thandika Mkandawire, an enduring *mwilimu*, in this regard.

## Notes

1. Jimi O. Adesina is Professor of Sociology at Rhodes University, South Africa. He is engaged in a research project that explores the works of Archie Mafeje and Bernard Magubane, under the rubrics of *Exile, Endogeneity and Modern Sociology in South Africa*.
2. Quoting Mao Zedong via Kwesi K. Prah.
3. The shift from first-name term of endearment to formal academic reference is also because while the earlier part is personal, this and the following sections are more concerned with breaking academic bread with a progenitor.
4. Much of the claims of taking on Mafeje, especially Sally Moore's, failed to acknowledge this; see further on this later in this paper.
- 5 J.C., Mitchell, *The Kalela Dance* (Rhodes-Livingstone Papers No. 27, Lusaka, 1956);

## Mafeje and Langa: The Start of an Intellectual's Journey

**A**rchie Mafeje's contribution to Monica Wilson's research project in the township of Langa in Cape Town was crucial. Wilson employed Mafeje as the project's field researcher from late 1961 to mid-1962. He worked very hard in this capacity, explaining – in a letter to Wilson – that, particularly in the early part of his field research, he had hardly left Langa before midnight on any of his research days.<sup>1</sup>

Mafeje's long hours in the field provided Wilson with the detailed case studies of life in Langa that had been sorely lacking before he came along. He also provided acute insight into the ways the different categories of residents related to each other, and their views and opinions of each other. He introduced her to the terms – such as 'oosuse me', 'ooMac', and 'iibari' – the residents in these various categories used to refer to each other, providing sensitive explanations of their connotations, and when and where they were used or not used.

### The Langa Project

The Langa project had been in considerable trouble before Mafeje was recruited as field researcher. It had actually commenced as early as 1954, shortly after Wilson's own appointment as Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The project had been conceived as a study of African urbanisation in Cape Town, and it was an interdisciplinary endeavour involving Professor Jack Simons from the School of African Life and Languages and Dr Sheila van der Horst of the university's Department of Economics. Wilson was to contribute an ethnographic study of contemporary urban life, Simons a history of the African presence in the city (with a special focus on the changing legal constraints on this presence), and Van der Horst a study of African industrial workers.<sup>2</sup>

Wilson and her colleagues faced several difficulties with regard to the project in the course of the 1950s. Funding was secured from the state's National Council for Social Research in 1954, but the council insisted that the UCT researchers should link up with a team of University of Stellenbosch researchers that was em-

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barking on a broadly similar project among the so-called 'coloured' inhabitants of the city and its immediate environs.<sup>3</sup> This 'racial' division of labour may not have been uppermost in the researchers' minds at the outset, but it soon came to be accepted that UCT was studying the African population of Cape Town, and Stellenbosch its coloured inhabitants.

The Stellenbosch researchers included Professor R.W. Wilcocks, who was well known for his part in the Carnegie Commission of Inquiry into the so-called 'Poor White Problem' in the 1930s, the sociologists S.P. Cilliers and Erika Theron, and the anthropologist (or *volkekundige*) J.P. Bruwer.<sup>4</sup> There is nothing in the record (in the Wilson papers in the UCT Archive) to suggest that there were any tensions between the two sets of researchers on personal or explicitly political grounds (although the Afrikaner Nationalists had taken over the government in 1948 and were beginning, slowly, to elaborate the policy of apartheid). But there were signs of divergence over objectives and methods of research between the two parties. The UCT researchers saw their endeavours as being of the nature of pure research, and Wilson, in particular, laid great emphasis on the necessity for detailed, qualitative inquiry. The Stellenbosch researchers, on the other hand, seemed more inclined to think in terms of policy research, and to deploy the more rapid research techniques they deemed appropriate to this end.<sup>5</sup>

Wider political circumstances impacted on the project when the National Council for Social Research refused, in 1955, to fund a period of research leave for Jack Simons on the grounds that the National Party government had declared him a 'listed' person (because of his communist sympathies). The UCT researchers were incensed at this obstructionism, but their Stellenbosch counterparts were not

unsympathetic to the difficulties Simons faced, and the council was persuaded to change its decision in 1957 (although by then it was no longer possible for Simons to take the research leave for which he had applied earlier).<sup>6</sup>

Wilson's main difficulty in this period was the Social Research Council's rigid insistence on the submission of regular progress reports as the key to renewed research funding. This insistence evidently drove her close to despair, and she considered throwing in the towel on her portion of the project on several occasions in the late 1950s.<sup>7</sup> The problem was the extraordinary difficulty of finding a suitable researcher to conduct detailed field research in Langa. Wilson may have compounded the difficulty by her apparent insistence that any researcher had to have a Cambridge – or, at a pinch, an Oxford – background in order to qualify as suitable. She managed to employ the Cambridge-trained A.R.W. Crosse-Upcott, who had some experience of fieldwork in rural Tanganyika, for twenty-one months between mid-1955 and the end of 1957.<sup>8</sup> But after he left the project, to take up a permanent position in Tanganyika, Wilson went through a list of potential fieldworkers, only to be disappointed by her failure to engage their services. One of the people she tried, without success, to involve in the project was John Middleton, recently graduated from Oxford, who provided relief-teaching in Anthropology for a period when Wilson was on sabbatical leave.

Wilson was to send Mafeje to Cambridge in 1966, after he had completed a Masters degree in Social Anthropology at UCT under her supervision. In 1961 he was in his final year of a BA degree, with majors in Social Anthropology and Psychology (he already held a BSc degree from UCT). Mafeje passed his Anthropology successfully at the end of 1961, but failed the final examination in Psychology. He told Wilson he was furious at the lack of self-discipline he had shown in approaching this final examination, not least because he was obliged to take time off from the Langa research in order to prepare for the supplementary examination – which he negotiated successfully – early in 1962.<sup>9</sup>

The quality of the information Mafeje acquired in the field is best understood by comparing his findings with those of Crosse-Upcott. In a rather defensive response to a request from UCT's Principal in 1959 for a yet another progress report, Wilson explained that Crosse-Upcott 'disliked town work, and though he worked hard he did not prove as good an urban field worker as he had been in a remote district'. He left her '560 pages of typed notes, reporting his observations and interviews', but she complained that 'the great difficulty in anthropological research is that it is almost impossible for one investigator to make much use of field material collected by someone else'.<sup>10</sup>

The small portion of Crosse-Upcott's tome that I have examined – an eleven-page report on the first nine months of his field research – gives some indication of why Wilson should have come to these conclusions.<sup>11</sup> He appears to have been very tentative in his approach to the residents of Langa, fearing that – aside from the 'leading personalities' with whom he conducted 'private interviews' – they were bound to regard him with animosity. His report referred to the need to avoid 'arousing concerted opposition from potentially hostile quarters', as well as 'publicity that would enable extremists to sabotage the survey'. Why he believed that Langa was peopled by 'extremists' who were necessarily 'hostile' in the mid-1950s is hard to say. Wilson observed later that 'at the time of the investigation what the inhabitants of Langa regarded as a case of corruption by a European (official) was being discussed everywhere', but she gave this as the reason why some of the things people had said to Crosse-Upcott were 'probably libellous', not as a pointer to the fact that they would not speak to him at all.<sup>12</sup>

Crosse-Upcott began his study of social groups in the township by looking at the churches, on the grounds that they were 'strong, friendly, and sophisticated'. His report divided the churches into 'established' and 'independent' categories, and then spent a good deal of time explaining that this 'demarcation is blurred', to such an extent that even the 'ultra-conservative African priesthood of the Anglicans' shared much of the 'nationalistic outlook typical of the "independent" Churches'. This same outlook was also to be found among the leaders of the sporting, recreational, occupational and commercial groups whom he had interviewed (in much

less detail than the church leaders), and he warned that since the leaders of the women's groups he had encountered were 'both articulate and aggressive, investigation of their affairs must proceed with caution'.<sup>13</sup>

### Mafeje's Field Research

Crosse-Upcott may have become less hesitant as he proceeded further with his field research, but Wilson still noted in 1959 that he had 'failed to collect material on various topics (e.g. kinship and the groups of "homeboys") on which I pressed for information'.<sup>14</sup> Mafeje supplied material on these issues in abundance, as shown by the letters he exchanged with Wilson during his field research, and the relevant parts of the eventual book. In my opinion the best part of *Langa* is the one dealing with the 'six "home-boy" groups' (Wilson & Mafeje 1963:56–73), particularly insofar as it was able to compare the histories of these groups on the basis of when their respective members first arrived in Cape Town and the social class they achieved in the city. And I would go further to say that the chapters of the book in which Mafeje's hand is most evident as field worker (such as those on 'Home boys', 'Kinsmen', and 'Arbitration in Disputes') are far more convincing than those that relied largely on Crosse-Upcott's efforts ('Churches' and 'Clubs'). Mafeje was clearly able to give Wilson much more ethnographic detail with which to work than his predecessor had managed.

Mafeje was, of course, an 'insider' in a way Crosse-Upcott could never have been. This was not only because he was a native Xhosa-speaker, like most of the residents of Langa, but also because of his political activism, which one doubts he kept entirely to himself in the field. In the 1950s he had been associated with the Society of Young Africa (SOYA), a youth organisation affiliated to the All-African Convention (AAC), which had been founded in the mid-1930s to mobilise popular opposition to Herzog's segregationist bills (Kayser & Adhikari 2004:8). The AAC had joined forces with other movements in the 1940s to form the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), which positioned itself to the left of the African National Congress (ANC) at the time, insofar as it took an avowedly non-racial stance from the outset, and envisaged a struggle for freedom that would necessarily involve a socialist

revolution in the wake of national liberation (Kayser & Adhikari 2004:5). The Cape Peninsula branch of SOYA had at least a hundred members by the end of the 1950s, drawn from working youth in the city's townships and students at tertiary institutions such as the University of Cape Town (Kayser & Adhikari 2004:9). It is therefore likely that Mafeje was known to some of Langa's younger residents in this capacity, although he may have sought not to draw too much attention to his link to SOYA when dealing with the relatively large number of middle-class, 'oosuse me' people in the township, who were more likely – on the basis of Crosse-Upcott's comments – to have been aligned with the ANC.

On the other hand, this link may have stood him in good stead with the migrant workers in the so-called 'barracks' in the township, and with at least some of the residents of the 'zones' (the intermediate area – between the barracks and the 'respectable' family housing – where many, not-quite-'middle-class' people still retained strong links with the Eastern Cape countryside). In the wake of the Sharpeville shootings, the Langa uprising, and the march on Cape Town by 30,000 people in March 1960, the NEUM constituents decided to launch a new organisation to take advantage of what they regarded as the 'pre-revolutionary' conditions that had arisen in the country. Mafeje was one of the founder members of the African Peoples' Democratic Union of Southern Africa (APDUSA), formed at a secret meeting in the Cape Peninsula in January 1961 (Kayser & Adhikari 2004:5). APDUSA was intended to realise the NEUM's objective of a non-racial struggle to overthrow white supremacy and achieve national liberation as a prelude to a socialist revolution. It sought to forge an alliance between the urban proletariat and the rural 'peasantry' to this end, and therefore made the issue of land redistribution in the countryside central to its programme.

APDUSA's programme was elaborated over time, of course, particularly at and after its first National Conference in 1962 (Kayser & Adhikari 2004:9). This means that, even if he had wanted to do so, Mafeje may not have been in a position to discuss its finer points with the migrant workers and members of the 'home-boy' groups in Langa during his field research in late 1961 and early 1962. Yet the general thrust of the programme, and particu-

larly its focus on migrant workers as the bridge between proletariat and peasantry, seem evident in the interest Mafeje took in the circumstances of the residents of the Langa barracks, and the detailed case histories of the ‘home-boy’ groupings he passed on to Wilson. His careful noting of which of these ‘home boys’ still had access to rural land, even if they had spent a great many years working in the city, may have had a significance for him far beyond what Wilson read into it.

But it is important to bear in mind that, his personal credibility in Langa notwithstanding, Mafeje was also a student who had only just completed his undergraduate studies in Anthropology, as well as a neophyte field researcher working under a professor whom he clearly regarded with considerable respect. At this stage, and for a good many years after this, Mafeje indicated to Wilson that social anthropology was his chosen field and, indeed, his ‘calling’.<sup>15</sup> He also gave evidence of a deep regard, both professional and personal, for his mentor. He wrote, for instance, in response to Wilson’s comments on one of his field reports, that

It is very important for me to hear your comments because, as it happens, out of the many people through whose hands I have gone, you are one of the few I do not only approve of but also have complete faith and trust in. This explains, love for social anthropology aside, the tremendous pleasure I derive in working for you. You might not believe me when I tell you that, at the present moment, there is nothing I enjoy more than working on the Langa study.<sup>16</sup>

Mafeje was 24 years old when he wrote this effusive passage at the start of the 1960s. As another of Wilson’s students (a decade later), I can empathise with the sentiments he expressed in it, sensing that he was responding to the intriguing combination of scholarly erudition, regal bearing and personal vulnerability that was manifested in the way she related to junior colleagues in whom she took an interest. My reference to ‘junior colleagues’ is intentional since, in my experience, Wilson made a point of treating the arguments and observations of students in whom she saw promise with great seriousness, giving them the impression that they had been admitted to an inner circle of fellow professionals (or at least professionals-in-the-making). It is clear, from the correspondence concerning Langa

between them, that she regarded Mafeje in exactly this light, and one may speculate that he was the student on whom she honed her skill in this regard. Wilson certainly let him know how impressed she was with his field reports, but did so in subtle ways, often combining praise with an injunction to expand his interpretation of events or go back to the field to seek further detail.<sup>17</sup> More explicit praise for his efforts, and open acknowledgement that they were vital to her attempt to rescue the Langa project from the doldrums in which it had landed in the late 1950s, she reserved for her communications with other people.<sup>18</sup>

The part of privileged student was not always easy to play. Exactly how much intimacy was being granted by one’s distinguished mentor? This question seems, on occasion, to have exercised Mafeje.

I would be very pleased if you could tell me what you feel about this work and things in general. To be honest, I am anxious to hear from you. Silence from you affects me very unfavourably. The fact that you are my professor cannot be overlooked. I enjoy doing this work only if you are pleased or satisfied with it. I should imagine this would be the attitude of any student. Now, as it were, I am not certain whether one could really speak to one’s professor as I am doing at the moment. Anyway, I hope you will understand my position.<sup>19</sup>

These personal exchanges are, I think, essential background to an appreciation of Mafeje’s response to the manuscript of the *Langa* book, which Wilson gave him for comment prior to its publication. Wilson wrote the text on her own, drawing on the field reports by Crosse-Upcott and Mafeje, but she acknowledged the latter’s contribution by publishing the book as a joint endeavour. Mafeje was forthright in pointing to mistakes in areas – such as the correct spelling and use of Xhosa terms – where his knowledge was clearly superior to hers. He was similarly direct in dealing with her notoriously wayward spelling and syntax in English. The didactic tone he adopted in these instances is self-conscious, and no doubt afforded him more than a little satisfaction.

I found this chapter very weak in punctuation. Adverbial clauses of condition, time, and concession introduced by ‘if’, ‘when’ and ‘though’,

respectively, are often not marked off by a comma from the principal clauses they precede. When a complex sentence is introduced by a relative clause instead of the principal clause, the two clauses are always separated by a comma. ...I found the same thing in the use of ‘but’, introducing an adversative clause or to express mere contrast. ‘But’ introducing the above mentioned clauses is always preceded by a comma unless, by doing so, the writer gets the feeling of ‘overstopping’.<sup>20</sup>

Mafeje was also direct in his response to broad political issues that arose in Wilson’s text. Referring to a passage in the draft of the chapter on ‘Classes and Leaders’ (Chapter 7), Mafeje wrote sharply ‘You describe Noni Jabavu’s book “Drawn in Colour” as admirable. From what point of view is it so? One critic, an African writer and nationalist, remarked that the book is “thoroughly drenched with snobbery” ... I also do not like the tone of the book. It is riddled with sentimentalism, and its condescending attitude is simply nauseating’.<sup>21</sup> What Wilson made of this spirited sally one does not know, but it is noticeable that she made no reference to the ‘admirable’ character of Jabavu’s work in the final text, and mentioned her book only in a footnote.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, at the end of his commentary, Mafeje gave Wilson’s text his unstinting approval.

Other than the few points I have raised, I am satisfied with the exposition of facts in this work. I am also in agreement with the fundamental ideas expressed – that is, at no time did I find myself forced to compromise my ideas. I am particularly pleased about this because I look at this study as purely scientific work which has nothing to do with what white or black nationalists feel or think. It grieves me to think that under present conditions the[re are] certain truths which, though demonstrable, cannot be stated.<sup>23</sup>

Such wholehearted approbation gives pause for thought. In the light of his subsequent, and well-known, reservations about the whole ‘acculturation’ paradigm in anthropology (of which the book on Langa was clearly part), why should he have praised Wilson’s text in this fashion? Why should he have been able to express severe criticism of Jabavu’s con-

descending' views about the thin veneer of 'civilisation' she encountered among the people of Uganda (Jabavu 1960), and yet have overlooked Wilson's notorious conclusion that 'the innumerable associations of the modern African townships (such as Langa) may, indeed, be seen as a school for civilisation', where Africans ostensibly 'gained experience in the organisation of groups which are no longer based on kinship and which are part of a money economy' (Wilson & Mafeje 1963:179)?

The evidence on the relationship between Mafeje and Wilson persuades me that one cannot reasonably ascribe the former's praise for the *Langa* draft to mere dissimulation. I do not think one can say that Mafeje indicated his agreement with 'the fundamental ideas expressed' simply for strategic reasons – in order either to flatter Wilson or to avoid criticising her. Nor do I think it would be fair to either party to suggest that Mafeje sought refuge in the idea that the *Langa* manuscript was 'purely scientific work' that had 'nothing to do with what black nationalists think'. This particular comment was in many ways a straightforward statement of his personal position, since he was never – either then or in his subsequent career – a narrow African nationalist. One of his admirable characteristics was that he remained true, throughout his life, to the principles of the NEUM and the African Peoples' Democratic Union, particularly regarding the importance of non-racialism and the need for the liberation struggle to continue beyond the first phase of national revolution. Fifteen years beyond the end of apartheid in South Africa, his long-standing insistence on these principles looks ever more appealing.

But in the early 1960s, one may venture to suggest, Mafeje had not yet worked out how to bring the principles derived from his political activism to bear on his standing as a beginning anthropologist. His contribution to the *Langa* project through his field research was masterly, but it would take him another decade and more to arrive at a position from which he could use this field research to formulate a convincing counter to Wilson's liberal interpretation of his and Crosse-Upcott's findings. Wilson's argument that the basis of social cohesion among *Langa* residents was undergoing a radical transition from ascription to achievement, and that social groups based on common interest were replacing those grounded in the gen-

eralised solidarity of kinship, was given added weight by the presence of so-called 'middle class' (or 'oosuse me') people in this township in far greater numbers than in other, similar areas with which she and Mafeje were familiar. Moreover many of these people would doubtless have endorsed her liberal insistence that there was nothing, apart from the white government's intransigence, that could have prevented this wholesale transition to 'civilisation' from succeeding.

### Rethinking *Langa*

The flaw in this conviction was easy to identify when confronted with Jabavu's views about faraway Uganda, but it was probably much more difficult for Mafeje, at this early stage, to make his own observations in *Langa* speak to the same objection. He returned explicitly to this issue only in 1975, in his contribution to Wilson's *Festschrift* (Whisson & West 1975). By this time, of course, he had his own Cambridge PhD under his belt, had been through the chastening experience of the 'Mafeje affair' at the University of Cape Town, and had been joined in interrogating the shortcomings of liberal South African anthropology by compatriots-in-exile such as Bernard Magubane (1973). Moreover the field research Mafeje had undertaken in the Transkei in the mid-1960s gave him deeper insight into circumstances in *Langa*, and his contribution to *Religion and Social Change* turned on a comparison between these two field sites.

Viewed on its own, *Langa* seemed to be an exemplification of the 'modernisation' story Wilson had sought to tell. Many of the migrant workers, who were at the bottom of the social hierarchy (and at the spatial margins of the township), were reported still to be pagans. Most of the urban residents, on the other hand, were identified as Christians, but they fell into two categories in which there was a correlation between social class and the 'types' of church to which people belonged. The 'respectable', middle-class people belonged mainly to the established churches, while the less respectable, lower-class urban residents adhered to one or other of the independent churches in *Langa*. Wilson's intention was, no doubt, to provide a more subtle account than this, but one could certainly read into the text of *Langa* a very straightforward story about the sequence of steps by which the urban encounter was 'school-

ing' black South Africans in Christianity in particular, and 'civilisation' in general.

The Transkei studies provided the vantage from which to give an alternative account of *Langa*. They allowed Mafeje to make two crucial points. One (which was well-known from Mayer's work in East London, but was not clearly spelt out in *Langa*) was that the Christian-pagan (or School-Red) division was a long-standing rural phenomenon (Mayer 1963). The other was that, in the Transkei settlements he studied, adherents of the independent churches were looked down on by established-church Christians and pagans alike. Even the All Saints Mission Station, indeed, constituted a social environment in which Anglicans and pagans regarded each other with a strong measure of respect, in part because this distinction did not correspond, anywhere near as clearly as in *Langa*, with social class and standing. Moreover the 'Red' pagans at the mission station were conscious, and proud, of their paganism. Mafeje argued that they were 'militant' pagans, who deliberately refused to succumb to the self-alienation they saw among their Christian neighbours, and in this respect they stood in contrast to the 'defensive' pagans of the outlying settlement he studied, who – in the absence of in-their-faces antagonists – were merely waiting disconsolately for the tidal wave of 'western' civilisation to break over them (Mafeje 1975:177–84).

His Transkei observations allowed Mafeje to supplement the initial questions about the character of social groups and the types of churches in *Langa* (which he acknowledged had been 'inane') with an attempt to grasp what Christianity meant for people in the different social classes evident in *Langa* (Mafeje 1975:167). He emphasised that there were both pagans and Christians among the migrant workers in the barracks, pointing out that if the pagans appeared in any way apologetic about their beliefs this was because they, like their Christian counterparts, were at the bottom of the township's socio-economic hierarchy. There was little space for militant paganism in *Langa*. On the other hand, however, there were many merely nominal Christians, particularly among the township's youth, who were contemptuous of the Christian piety displayed by their elders, whether aligned with the established or the independent churches. In his reconsideration of the material, Mafeje clearly found these

young people the most interesting category of the general population, mainly because they – like the militant pagans in the countryside – had come closest to realising that Christian piety went hand-in-hand with the ‘respectable’ people’s willingness to mimic white, middle-class civilisation in all respects, and to ignore the obvious contradictions, as well as the costs in terms of ‘self-alienation’, involved in doing so.

Mafeje’s contribution to Wilson’s *Festschrift* was, in my opinion, the best piece in an otherwise pedestrian collection. This was, in large measure, because he succeeded in introducing many of the principles of his political activism into his reconsideration of the Langa field material. By 1975 he had clearly worked out how to formulate academic questions that were firmly grounded in his political convictions, and he did this by showing that some of the people in Langa, and indeed also (and perhaps particularly) in the Transkei, came close to sharing his understanding that a social order grounded in racial capitalism – not simply ‘white domination’ – constituted the major problem facing black South Africans.

Does ‘social change’ or ‘being civilised’ mean, unambiguously, being assimilated into the white middle-class cosmic view? What will it take for that view to transcend itself? (Mafeje 1975:184)

Mafeje looked, in this context, to what he hoped was the growing influence of the militant urban youth, and the militant pagans in the countryside, for the answer to his questions. Whether the answer still lies in these particular categories of the population is, no doubt, a subject for contemporary debate. But the questions he posed remain as pertinent today as they were a quarter-century and more ago.

Mafeje’s reformulation of the Langa material marked a formal, and obvious, break with the teachings of his distinguished mentor. Yet this break was achieved without any hint of hostility or rancour. One might reasonably expect no such hint to be apparent in a contribution to a book intended to honour Monica Wilson and her scholarship. But it is also the case that there is no evidence of any parting of personal ways in the private correspondence between Wilson and Mafeje in the 1960s and 1970s. Their regard for each other survived the ordeal to which it was subjected during the abortive attempt to appoint him to a teaching position in

the Anthropology Department at the University of Cape Town in 1968.<sup>24</sup> At the height of this crisis, Wilson wrote to Mafeje in Cambridge to suggest that he might wish to consider turning the job down, because the South African government’s hostile reaction to his initial appointment indicated that any career he might have at the university would be neither easy nor of long duration. Mafeje’s reply was solicitous and firm. He regretted the difficult situation in which Wilson had been placed on his account, but he also declined the idea of withdrawing from the job.<sup>25</sup> For many years after this he continued to address Wilson in his letters as ‘Aunt Monica’.

### Speaking Truth to Power

In the light of his later writings, we have become accustomed to the idea of Archie Mafeje as a scholar who spoke truth, unflinchingly, to power. The value of the archival material relating to his early career is that it shows that he had to work hard to develop the skill to be able to do this. He did not criticise the *Langa* manuscript on substantive or theoretical grounds in the early 1960s. The fact that he did not do so was not an indication that he was unwilling to criticise his mentor, or that he had not yet arrived at the political principles that guided his later work. His endorsement of the manuscript suggests, rather, that he had not worked out how to marshal the findings of his field research in Langa in a way that would allow him to support his political convictions by means of his anthropology. His contribution to *Religion and Social Change* shows, on the other hand, that he had found a way to do this by the mid-1970s.

The start of Mafeje’s intellectual journey therefore tells us several important things. One is that it requires time, and careful reflection, to be able to speak truth to power effectively. Another important insight is that while speaking truth to power calls for hard and uncompromising intellectual argument, it does not require personal animosity towards, or the denial of respect for, those with whom one comes to argue.

A third lesson, on which I wish to dwell for a moment in concluding this article, is that the act of speaking such truth is most effective, in the case of an anthropologist, when it is grounded in a sophisticated understanding of one’s own ethnography. In this respect I am struck by the fact that Mafeje always insisted on the importance of his ethnographic inquiry

ies, even when, in later years, he explicitly turned his back on the notion that he was an anthropologist (Mafeje 1998a, 1998b). What he objected to about anthropology was not its methods of research or the evidence that could be produced by careful participant observation. Even at his most critical he took care to endorse the value of this form of inquiry relative to others. In this respect, one may say, he remained faithful to Wilson’s injunction that any attempt to understand the circumstances of people in Africa required first-hand inquiry into what they made of these circumstances themselves.

What Mafeje objected to, by contrast, was an anthropology in which particular epistemological assumptions – which he invariably characterised as ‘Western’ – were allowed to overwhelm whatever it was that people on the ground had to say about the conditions in which they found themselves. In this article, I have shown how he developed his argument on this score in his early research in Langa. Liberal observers such as Wilson suggested that Africans in towns had embarked on a process of social transformation that would remake them, ever more closely over time, in the image of ‘Western civilisation’. This was not in all senses incorrect, since these observers would have been able to point to people in places such as Langa who believed that they were undergoing this process of refashioning themselves. But the crucial point, at which Mafeje had arrived by the mid-1970s, was that this was by no means true of all the residents of Langa. This insight allowed him to distinguish between ‘assimilation’ as an analytical framework (which he, like Magubane, rejected outright), and ‘assimilation’ as an ideology to which some people in Langa undoubtedly subscribed. It also allowed him to argue that their adherence to this ideology was something that had to be explained by means of a more acceptable analytical approach, giving rise to his insistence that many of the ‘respectable’ residents of the township had become caught in the contradictions of a form of nationalism that encouraged them to mimic ‘Europeans’ in order to demonstrate that they were every bit as good, and as sophisticated, as the latter were purported to be.

Mafeje knew that the presence of such people had to be acknowledged. But he also knew that it was necessary to show, as Wilson and other liberal anthropologists had not, that there were others in

Langa who had not succumbed to these contradictions, and were on the road to overcoming them. Liberal anthropology could accommodate a narrative of African liberation based on assimilation, but it could not recognise the voices of the people who challenged the assumptions on which this narrative rested.

Mafeje objected to this kind of anthropology because anthropology was the discipline he knew best – the one he had said was his ‘calling’ at the outset of his professional career. Had he had cause to express himself with equal fervour in respect of other disciplines, he would no doubt have found the epistemological premises of their liberal versions as objectionable as those of liberal anthropology. What clearly distressed him in later years was the attempt by African scholars to resuscitate a form of anthropology that had evidently learnt nothing from his own confrontation with liberal thinking, and that sought – from a position of self-imposed disadvantage – to mimic ‘Western’ academic orthodoxy.

**Notes**

1. University of Cape Town, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Godfrey and Monica Wilson Papers, BC 880 (hereafter BC 880), Correspondence with Archie Mafeje re Research 1960–1, K1.2 (hereafter K1.2), Mafeje to Wilson, 22 July 1961.
2. BC 880, Proposals, correspondence, reports 1953–1962, K1.1 (hereafter K1.1), Proposal to the National Council for Social Research (NCSR), 29 March 1954.
3. BC 880, K1.1, NCSR to University of Cape Town (UCT), 25 April 1954.
4. BC 880, K1.1, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, *Ontwikkeling van Wes-Kaaplandse Navorsingsprojek*.

5. BC 880, K1.1, Wilson to T.B. Davie, 17 May 1954.
6. BC 880, K1.1, Minutes of a Meeting of the Supervisory Committee, 3 June 1957; Wilson to UCT Principal, 6 October 1959.
7. BC 880, K1.1, Minutes of a Meeting of the Liaison Committee for Research on Non-Europeans in the Western Cape, 18 August 1956; Minutes of a Meeting of the Supervisory Committee, 3 June 1957; Wilson to UCT Principal, 6 October 1959.
8. BC 880, K1.1, Wilson to UCT Principal, 6 October 1959.
9. BC 880, K1.2, Mafeje to Wilson, 20 January 1962.
10. See note 8.
11. BC880, K1.1, A.R.W. Crosse-Upcott, *Progress Report on a Survey of Langa African Township, July 1955–March 1956*.
12. BC 880, K1.1, Wilson to UCT Principal, 6 October 1959.
13. See note 11.
14. See note 12.
15. BC 880, K1.2, Mafeje to Wilson, 13 February 1962.
16. BC 880, K1.2, Mafeje to Wilson, 20 January 1962.
17. BC 880, K1.2, Wilson to Mafeje (undated).
18. BC 880, K1.1, Wilson to Secretary, National Council for Social Research, 20 June 1962.
19. BC 880, K1.2, Mafeje to Wilson, 18 January 1962.
20. BC 880, K1.2, A. Mafeje, *Comments on the Manuscript* (undated).
21. See note 20.
22. Wilson & Mafeje 1963:143.
23. See note 20.

24. UCT Libraries, Manuscripts and Archives Division, Sir Richard Luyt Papers, BC 1072, Mafeje Affair 1968, B2.
25. BC 880, Correspondence, K1.

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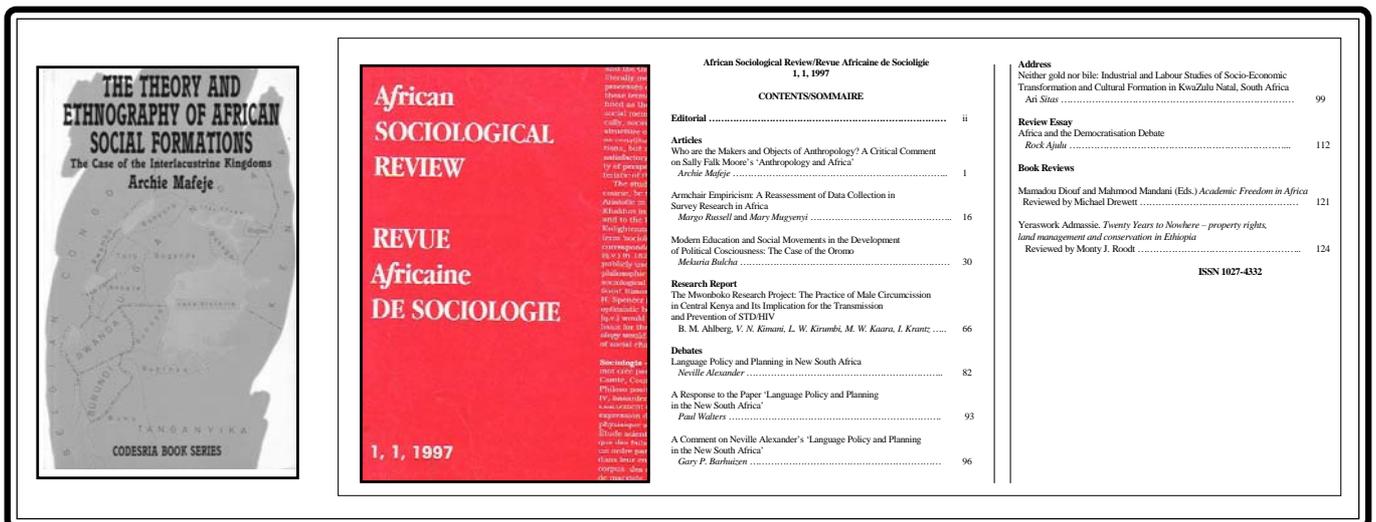
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# The Mafeje and UCT Saga: An Unfinished Business?

## Background

Archie Mafeje began his distinguished academic career at the University of Cape Town (UCT). After completing his Masters degree at UCT in 1964 and having co-authored a book with his supervisor and mentor, Monica Wilson, Mafeje went on to further his studies and registered for a PhD degree at Cambridge University in England. He was destined to return to UCT and pursue an academic career at this university upon completion of his studies. As it turned out, Mafeje never returned to UCT. This is despite attempts on his part to return to his *alma mater*. Later attempts by UCT to reconcile with Mafeje were not successful. This was in the form of the award of an honorary doctorate in 2003, as well as a formal apology in the same year in which the University Council offered its sincere regret and apologies. Mafeje treated these overtures with disdain, not even replying to the various communications. At the time of his death in March 2007, Mafeje was still angry and bitter with UCT.

The thorny and vexed relationship between Mafeje and UCT has become known as the 'Mafeje affair'. To most, this relates to the events of 1968. As will be seen in the next section, Mafeje was appointed on merit in 1968 as Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology at UCT, but the UCT Council rescinded the appointment allegedly owing to the apartheid government's pressure. The Council decision was taken despite strong opposition from within the university, particularly from students who protested by occupying the university administration building for nine days. Little known, though, is what happened after 1968, especially after the demise of official apartheid beginning with the political negotiation process in 1990.

It is noteworthy that since the death of Mafeje, UCT has made strenuous efforts to reconcile with the Mafeje family. Following detailed research which I conducted on the relationship between Mafeje and UCT from 1968 to his death, the university brought together eleven members of the Mafeje family over three days in August 2008, during which period a symposium on Mafeje was held at

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UCT, where a second apology to the Mafeje family was publicly read and an Honorary Doctorate posthumously awarded to Archie Mafeje alongside the installation of the new Vice Chancellor at UCT, Dr Max Price. These events were meant to close this particular chapter in the history of UCT. As will be seen later, the second apology was much more comprehensive and accepting responsibility on the part of UCT than the 2003 apology. It is on the strength of the second apology that the Mafeje family agreed to overrule Archie Mafeje and accept an apology on his behalf.

My contribution attempts to give an account of the relationship between Mafeje and UCT, on the one hand, and to pose questions about the meaning of the recent (2008) agreement between UCT and the Mafeje family, on the other. Here are some key questions this contribution seeks to address: Why did Mafeje refuse to accept the two important gestures made in 2003? Was he angry or bitter about the withdrawal of his appointment in 1968? Or was it a case of too little, too late? What is the significance of the recent agreement with the family?

I argue that it is the manner in which UCT treated Mafeje in the 1990s, more than the 1968 episode that can help us understand Mafeje's behaviour in 2003 and his anger and bitterness towards UCT at the time of his death. This must not be seen as downplaying the significance of the 1968 event. My contention is that a case can always be made that, in the context of 1968, a threat by the apartheid government could not be taken idly, given how vicious the system was. However, the context of the 1990s, the advent of democracy, was fundamentally different. There was no external pressure to hide behind. With regard to recent developments involving the second apology and the posthumous award of the honorary doctorate, my point is that while this un-

doubtedly marks a major step forward and opens up space to debate the Mafeje affair within the context of transforming universities in post-1994 South Africa, it is still an open question whether the chapter on the relationship between Mafeje and UCT can be declared closed. I will expand on this later.

## The Mafeje Affair: The Events of 1968

Fred Hendricks (forthcoming) has arguably written the most comprehensive and provocative account of the 1968 events so far. For current purposes, I will focus on the selection process, the decision to rescind the appointment, the reaction to the decision to withdraw the appointment and how the Mafeje issue was finally resolved until it re-emerged in the 1990s.

As noted in the background section above, the UCT Council appointed, on merit, Archie Mafeje to the position of Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology on 1 May 1968. It is clear from records that the process of appointing the senior lecturer in Social Anthropology was protracted, the first advert coming out in September 1966.<sup>1</sup> Mafeje applied in 1967 in the second round. After an involved process, Mafeje was deemed to be the best candidate for the job. In recommending him, Professor Monica Wilson, head of department and Mafeje's former supervisor and mentor, argued that Mafeje was 'the ablest anthropologist of the three and much the best teacher'. She disclosed that she knew this 'both from students in Cambridge and from Professor Fortes', who pointed out 'that there was competition' on the part of students 'to get into (Mafeje's) tutorial group there'. According to Wilson, Mafeje 'was equally popular when taking tutorials here (UCT)'. She concluded: 'As a person Mr. Mafeje is very much liked both by fellow students and staff, wherever he works.'<sup>2</sup> Most of what Wilson had to say was echoed by the three referees of Mafeje.

It must be said, though, that there was one objection from a member of Senate, D.C. Robertson. His objection was based on the qualifications of the candidates, particularly the fact that the other two candidates had doctorates and had a far

better teaching record than Mafeje who was completing his PhD. However, Robertson's objection was unsuccessful. The Committee of Selectors, 'after full discussion', resolved 'that the unanimous recommendation of the Board of Electors that Mr. A. Mafeje be appointed, be upheld'.<sup>3</sup> This recommendation was accepted by Council on 1 May 1968. On the same day, the registrar wrote a letter to Mafeje in Cambridge.

This letter was never sent to Mafeje. The Principal, Sir Richard Luyt, reported that subsequent to Council's decision at its meeting on 1 May 1968, he received a letter from the Minister of National Education urging that the appointment be reconsidered. According to Luyt, there was a clear warning that if the Council disregarded the request of the Minister, the Government 'would not hesitate to take such steps as it may deem fit to ensure that the accepted traditional outlook of South Africa was observed'.<sup>4</sup> Luyt read out the Minister's letter and 'also outlined discussions which he had had with the Minister and with the Director of Higher Education'.<sup>5</sup>

In the end, the UCT Council resolved on 5 June 1968 to rescind its decision to appoint Mafeje. The motion was put to a vote, with a close outcome of 12 for and 8 against. An addendum to the motion to the effect that the Council 'express dismay and regret that its decision in this matter of the appointment of Mr. Mafeje should have been challenged by the Minister' recorded a vote of 14 in favour and 7 against. Subsequently, Senate 'noted' the Council's decision to rescind its appointment of Mafeje and associated themselves with the addendum of the Council cited above.

Following a report from the Academic Freedom Committee, Council adopted the following resolution by 11 for and 2 against:

In protesting against being deprived in this manner of the right to appoint the staff deemed most fit by normal University criteria, the University Council must make known publicly its future inability, as a consequence of the Government's intervention, to appoint non-white persons to academic posts, unless allowed to do so in special circumstances.

On 1 August 1968, almost the same letter that was written to Mafeje was sent to Dr M.C. Whisson. There were only two al-

terations: the date of commencement, from 1 July to 1 September 1968 and the deletion of the paragraph referring to the need to obtain 'the necessary permission to teach and reside in Cape Town...'. On 13 August 1968, the Registrar notified Mafeje that 'the vacancy (had)...been filled'.

The Council decision to rescind the appointment of Mafeje provoked debate even within Council. Some saw it as unduly succumbing to government pressure. After all, there was no law that stopped UCT from employing a black academic outside African languages. Others, on the other hand, feared that a refusal to heed the warning of the Minister of National Education could backfire in the event government were to introduce a law with a retroactive effect. Such a law would affect black academics who were already in the university system. Geoff Budlender, a student at UCT in 1968, recalled in an interview with me that this was one of the arguments adduced by some members of Council justifying their decision to cave in to government pressure.

Another sector of the university that became involved in the Mafeje affair was the student population. In terms of world history, the Mafeje affair took place against the backdrop of protests that involved thousands of students in France, Germany and the USA. The decision by the UCT Council provided ammunition for students in South Africa to become part of these global developments. Students, not only from UCT but from other liberal campuses in South Africa, emphatically rejected Council's decision to withdraw its appointment of Mafeje.<sup>6</sup> The Mafeje affair got attention at the June 1968 congress of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), held at the University of Witwatersrand. A resolution on the affair read as follows:

This student assembly regrets that the UCT council has, in capitulating to the Minister's threats, been guilty of a betrayal of the university's principles of academic freedom and university autonomy (Resolution 80, NUSAS Congress, 1968:25, as quoted in Hendricks' unpublished paper).

Resolution 83 urged the UCT Students Representative Council 'to do the utmost in its power to organise effective and significant protest against the treatment meted out to Mr Mafeje and furthermore urges all university and training college

staff and students at other centres to give such protests their fullest support'.

This set the scene for students' protests soon after their return from the mid-year vacation. A mass meeting was held in Jameson Hall on 7 August to discuss Council's decision. Students attending the meeting supported Raphael Kaplinsky's call to Council not to do the Government's dirty job. When this call did not elicit any positive response, the students organised another mass meeting on 13 August 1968. This, it must be noted, is the same day that the Registrar wrote a letter of regret to Mafeje. Following this meeting, about 600 students marched to the Bremner Administration Building, demanding an emergency meeting of Council. When their call was rejected, the students resolved to occupy the building, including the Senate room until such time that Council conceded to their demand for an emergency meeting to discuss the Mafeje affair. As Hendricks has noted, the sit-in 'was the start of the first student occupation of a university building in South Africa in 1968'. There were solidarity protests at the Wits and Natal universities.<sup>7</sup>

The sit-in came to an end after nine days. Those involved succumbed to all-round pressure: from the state, students from the then conservative pro-government Stellenbosch University, Council's refusal to bow to students' pressure, not to forget considerations of their future careers. To show its resolve, Council passed a final resolution on 26 August 1968 reaffirming that 'an offer to Mr Mafeje of appointment to the post of Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology cannot in all circumstances be made' (Minutes of the Special Meeting of Council, 26 August 1968).

In the end, the university embarked on what Hendricks correctly, in my opinion, refers to as 'face-saving measures' to 'create an aura of respect for academic freedom and for institutional autonomy at the very moment when the University was responsible for the denial of these principles'. Students became part of this exercise. Their proposal for an Academic Freedom Research Award in honour of Archie Mafeje received the approval of all sectors of UCT. However, the Senate rejected a critical aspect of the students' proposal that a levy be imposed so as to finance the award. The university never had a plan of financing the award other than that it

would be funded on a voluntary basis. Not surprising, nothing came of this exercise.

A somewhat successful venture was the erection of a plaque in remembrance of the Mafeje affair in the UCT Heritage Trail alongside the steps leading to the Chancellor Oppenheimer Library. The plaque is next to an earlier one commemorating academic freedom following the extension of Bantu Education to universities in 1959 as a result of the enactment of the Extension of Universities Act.

By the end of the 1960s, the Mafeje affair had escaped the memory of virtually all sectors of UCT, including students and staff who sat-in at Bremner building. It is interesting to note that almost all the students of 1968 that I interviewed in 2008 not only claimed that they never met Mafeje, they never made attempts to find out what happened to him – a clear suggestion that the Mafeje affair was, in the eyes of the students, not about Mafeje, the person, but about themselves and at best, the principle, in this case, academic freedom and the autonomy of universities.

The manner in which the UCT Council responded to government pressure is likely to be debated for a long time. There are no easy answers to the issue. With hindsight, it is easy to condemn the actions of Council. Yet it is important to remember the political context at the time and the viciousness of the apartheid state with Prime Minister John Vorster and security chief Hendrik van den Bergh at the helm. The dilemma facing the UCT Council is best captured in Ndebele's letter to the Mafeje family when Mafeje passed away:

It was a different era then. The threat of the then Minister of Arts and Science (responsible for Education) to the UCT Council may not have been an idle one and going against it could have had significant negative consequences. Yet – we should have been brave enough, should have resisted the pressure and remained principled. Regrettably, in this instance, we did not.<sup>8</sup>

Mrs Swana, Archie Mafeje's sister, has recently recalled how the police harassed her. According to her, the police detained her, took her correspondence with her brother and told her that they would detain Mafeje were he to return to South Africa. Mrs Swana's story ties up with Richard Luyt's account of his meeting with Minister de Klerk on the Mafeje affair. The minister claimed that the South African Minister of Police and Internal

Affairs showed him 'a paper setting out the record of Mr Mafeje in regard to subversive activity'. The minister, according to Luyt, went on to tell him that 'the record was so adverse that he (the minister) doubted whether Mr Mafeje would be allowed back in South Africa let alone at the University of Cape Town'. As far as the minister was concerned,

the University was extremely fortunate not to have been allowed to appoint Mr Mafeje to its staff... he was not free to give details of Mr Mafeje's record of subversive activities but he could assure us that it was serious. (Richard Luyt Papers, Aide Memoire, The Mafeje Affair, 23 April–6 September 1968, as quoted in Hendricks' paper)

Luyt's account must be read in the context of a person who was trying to justify the position of Council. But there is a sense in which one can read the above accounts as some indication of the determination of the state to ensure that Mafeje was not employed. Whether being principled by defying these threats under the prevailing conditions was a viable option is debatable.

Hendricks' forthcoming publication deals with these issues and takes a hard and critical line, arguing that there was complicity between the UCT Council and the apartheid state in the Mafeje case. His stance will most likely provoke healthy debates about how to interpret the decision of the UCT Council in 1968. My position is that controversial as the 1968 UCT Council decision was, we must look beyond 1968 to understand why Mafeje never reconciled with UCT. Whenever Mafeje reflected about the events of 1968, he seems to have understood the pressure UCT was under. This does not mean that he condoned the position of Council. In fact, it is arguable whether Mafeje would have taken up the position. According to his sister, Mrs Swana, she advised him not to return to South Africa when the police started harassing her.

### **Mafeje and UCT in Democratic South Africa**

Ordinary sense suggests that if UCT could not in the 1960s employ Mafeje because of government interference, the early 1990s created conditions for UCT to make amends and offer Mafeje the job that he was given on merit in 1968. There is little doubt that Mafeje would have welcomed the occasion. According to his

friend, Kwesi Prah, Mafeje was always looking for opportunities to be close to South Africa in the late 1980s and to return to South Africa as soon as it became possible for exiles to do so.<sup>9</sup> In the early years of the political negotiation process in South Africa, Mafeje was, in 1990 and 1991, doing research under the Visiting Fellowship Programme of the SAPES Trust in Zimbabwe. This research was published in 1992 as collection of essays under the telling title: *In Search of an Alternative: A Collection of Essays on Revolutionary Theory and Politics*. This seems to suggest that he was sharpening his intellectual tools for a return to South Africa. Most important, by 1990, Mafeje was a far cry in scholarly terms from the one who was appointed Senior Lecturer in 1968. He had by this time established himself as an internationally acclaimed scholar, as his CV showed.<sup>10</sup>

It is well known by now that UCT did not make any approaches to Mafeje. This seems to bear testimony to the notion that for this institution Mafeje, the person, never mattered. In 1968 he was used merely as a ladder or a taxi to pursue certain principles and arguably also to feather the nests of some individuals. As indicated, hardly anyone was ever keen to enquire about the whereabouts of Mafeje, particularly as some at UCT claim that at the time the university was in search of black academics. Mafeje found himself in a situation where he had to take the initiative and explore opportunities of returning to UCT. It is difficult to imagine why a highly principled and proud scholar such as Mafeje would subject himself to reapplying for a job he was offered on merit. It can only mean that, for him, coming back to South Africa to pursue an academic career meant returning to UCT, his alma mater.

Archival records suggest that Mafeje made investigations through a friend about the possibility of returning to UCT in 1990, the same year that political organisations were unbanned and the political negotiation process was set to be under way. His friend took up the issue with the leadership at UCT. The response was that UCT could not 'make any commitment to Mafeje'. This again was an indication that, despite the treatment Mafeje received in 1968, the leadership of UCT did not want to take responsibility and create a job for Mafeje.

Following 'many discussions' Mafeje's 'champion' suggested 'that Archie Mafeje

be a visiting' Senior Research Fellow on a one-year contract. The university leadership found this acceptable. However, when Mafeje's friend conveyed this to him, he was not keen to accept such a compromise. Mafeje clearly deserved more than this. He reasoned with his friend that 'as much as I appreciate the gesture ... (o)ne year is too short for me to move my whole family and take my daughter out of the British International School here in Cairo'. He firmly pointed out that his family was 'dead against the idea of moving on the strength of one year. They would rather wait until more posts for which I could apply come up'.<sup>11</sup>

Mafeje's champion agreed with Mafeje that a year was 'rather too short to uproot' an entire family 'in order to come home'. He informed Mafeje that he had been trying to get a three-year contract at UCT, but this was not possible owing to 'the current financial circumstances'. His hope was if Mafeje came, it would be possible 'to raise funds or to find a job that could continue beyond the present one'. He told Mafeje that there were jobs that were coming up, including the Chair of Anthropology at UCT and the Director for the Centre of African Studies, also at UCT.<sup>12</sup>

Despite Mafeje's reservations about the one-year contract, UCT went on to make him the offer and placed his salary at the bracket of a Senior Lecturer. Upon receipt of the letter, Mafeje was quick to point out that he found the offer 'most demeaning'. He reasoned:

I fail to see how after 18 years of being a professor internationally I could be offered a research fellowship at the rank of senior lecturer at the University of Cape Town. This becomes even more incomprehensible when one recalls that one had been offered an appointment at the same rank by the same university as far back as 1968. ... After 27 years in exile I do not intend to return to South Africa under any conditions. Some of the senior staff at the University of Cape Town should have understood this.

He concluded:

Also, I cannot imagine what sort of research I could do in South Africa in such a short space of time after nearly 30 years in exile. One of my main research interests in coming back to South Africa would be to undertake a comprehensive study of South African historiography ... seeing that

somehow we all have to rediscover ourselves in the wake of the current changes in the country. This would probably be one of my last major professional undertakings and I cannot do it outside South Africa.<sup>13</sup>

Mafeje's reply left UCT unmoved. Its response was restricted to explaining the title of a Senior Research Fellow and why Mafeje was, despite his vast experience and qualifications, offered remuneration at the scale of a senior lecturer. With regard to the latter, the explanation was that this was owing to limited resources as the posts concerned 'are funded with "soft money"'.<sup>14</sup>

The claim that UCT did not have financial resources to offer Mafeje a permanent job is of course laughable and must be rejected. Why UCT treated Mafeje in this manner is a matter that calls for careful research and may throw light on UCT's attitude towards black scholars.

It is noteworthy that as the leadership of UCT was discussing their response to Mafeje's letter, a senior member who drafted the offer to Mafeje wrote an internal memorandum in which he, among others, indicated that he was

not convinced that Prof Mafeje is a suitable candidate for a senior permanent position at this university, given his poor publication and research record for the past 10 years. Thus, I would not be enthusiastic about extending the offer beyond one year, which will give him some time to hunt around for a suitable position in South Africa.

This quotation raises two issues. In the first place, it casts doubts about the UCT claim that the reason it offered Mafeje a one-year contract at the scale of a senior lecturer was as a result of financial constraints. The quotation strongly suggests that a senior permanent appointment was not beyond the capacity of UCT. Secondly, it is interesting to note that in his letter to Mafeje, this honourable person indicated that members of his department had 'enthusiastically endorsed' the invitation.<sup>14</sup> However, in private, when Mafeje cannot defend himself, the enthusiasm evaporates and Mafeje is no longer good enough for a senior permanent position. When I interviewed this esteemed scholar at the beginning of this year (2008), he could not remember why he made this damning remark about Mafeje's scholarship. He promised to get back to me. I'm still waiting.

In 1993, close friends of Mafeje urged him to apply for the A.C. Jordan Chair in African Studies at UCT. Reluctantly, Mafeje applied and was on the short-list as an 'A' candidate.<sup>15</sup> In his letter, Mafeje had confidently declared:

I believe that I am eminently qualified for the post. Not only did I have the privilege of working with the late A.C. Jordan as a research student at the University of Cape Town and abroad but also I can claim that among African scholars specialised in African Studies I probably have the widest experience and recognition throughout the continent, including Arab-speaking Africa.<sup>16</sup>

After providing details of his achievements and extensive contacts with 'pan-African and regional organisations', he ended his letter on a somewhat personal note:

It would ... be a great pleasure for me to bring all this intellectual capital to the University of Cape Town (my alma mater) and in general to African studies in South Africa. To impart some of this knowledge to South African graduate students who have been isolated from the rest of Africa for so many years would be the greatest contribution I could make after thirty years in exile.

A substantial amount of time was devoted to a discussion of Mafeje's application.<sup>17</sup> Critical to note is that the chairperson argued that Mafeje's application be turned down. This was despite the fact that Mafeje was rated among the top candidates during the shortlisting stage. The reasons offered by the chairperson were largely based on Mafeje's personality and had very little to do about his scholarship. After making reference to the 1968 UCT decision to rescind the appointment of Mafeje, the chairperson raised three critical issues that were severely damaging. First, the chairperson divulged that 'a colleague' at the University of Namibia, where Mafeje was based, divulged that Mafeje had negative things to say about UCT and 'if offered the post will turn it down'. Secondly, the chairperson brought to the attention of the selection committee correspondence between the two regarding Mafeje's refusal to submit copies of his publications as demonstration of Mafeje's 'character' and to show how difficult it was to work with Mafeje. In response to the request, Mafeje had

opined that he did 'not see how they would gain greater wisdom from reading randomly and subjectively selected texts by contending candidates'.<sup>18</sup> The third issue was that Mafeje had 'a drinking problem'. The authority in this regard was a 'UCT colleague who had spoken to (Mafeje) recently'. Lastly, it was alleged that Mafeje was 'very opposed to the women's centre being set up at UCT'.

No decision was taken at this meeting largely because those attending did not make up a quorum. The matter was to be formalised in the next meeting.

It is not clear what happened in the period leading to the next meeting to make the chairperson appear to have softened his stance on Mafeje. Having argued in the previous meeting for the rejection of the Mafeje candidature, the chairperson changed his mind and persuaded the committee to grant Mafeje an interview. It is clear from records that the main reason why the chairperson changed his mind was to put Mafeje on the spot and make him not only to state his case, but also to give the committee a chance to assess his personality. Ultimately, a decision was taken to interview Mafeje.

At its next meeting, the chairperson reported that since the last meeting 'he had subsequently learnt that Mafeje had left the University of Namibia and had gone to the American University in Cairo'. He noted that Mafeje had not advised the Appointments Office of his change of address. This seems to have given the chairperson an excuse to exclude Mafeje. According to the *aide-memoires*, the chairperson indicated that 'as he had reservations about Mafeje, and as it was a marginal decision to invite him for interview at the last meeting, he felt at this stage, Mafeje not be invited for interview'. If the committee felt differently, this could be discussed after the interview of the other candidate for the job.<sup>19</sup>

As it turned out, this strategy had the effect of successfully excluding Mafeje from contention. When the other candidate was interviewed, all the members of the committee had to decide whether the candidate was appointable or not. At the end of the interview, there was a unanimous decision that the candidate was appointable. As soon as the candidate accepted the UCT offer, the chairperson wrote a letter of regret to Mafeje, thus ending the latter's dream of returning to UCT.

I have not the least doubt, on available evidence, that the selection process for the A.C. Jordan Chair was fundamentally flawed. In the first place, the chairperson had already demonstrated that he was highly prejudiced against Mafeje. This goes back to Mafeje's attempt to return to UCT in 1990. At the time, the chairperson wrote to the leadership at UCT pointing out that a department that he was associated with would not house Mafeje if he accepted the one-year contract discussed above. Later, when one colleague at UCT recommended Mafeje when the post for the A.C. Jordan Chair became available, the chairperson indicated that Mafeje was not what they were looking for. Records show that the chairperson was influential in tarnishing the image of Mafeje.

Secondly, the information or evidence that was used against Mafeje about his activities in Namibia was hearsay, based, as indicated, on what the chairperson heard from a colleague in Namibia. The information was never tested. Why a selection committee made up of senior members of the university accepted this is puzzling, except to say that the seniority of the chairperson is a factor that must be taken into account when considering why members of the committee allowed themselves to be influenced by an individual. Additionally, I could not come across evidence to show that reference was ever made to the reports of Mafeje's referees. This raises questions about the purpose behind asking candidates for these reports.

Upon receipt of the letter of regret, Mafeje wrote a lengthy letter to the chairperson, which he ended with these words:

In 1968 it was an honour to be offered a post at UCT but in 1994 it is a heavy burden which only the politically naïve or the unimaginative can face, without some uneasy doubts. I might be wrong but only time will tell.

This was arguably Mafeje's last official letter to UCT. The letter of regret from UCT was, as far as I know, the last communication with Mafeje until nine years later when UCT offered Mafeje an honorary doctorate and a formal apology, as indicated at the outset. This suggests that in the interim no efforts were made by UCT to attract Mafeje. This is despite hopes that under a black leadership some attempts to recruit Mafeje would be made. Efforts made by friends and sympathisers of Mafeje to the black leadership at UCT in the mid-to-late 1990s were never taken se-

riously. It is only in 2002 that the Mafeje affair was reopened for discussion at UCT.

### UCT's Attempts to Make Amends

As pointed out at the beginning of this contribution, in 2003, UCT tried to make amends with Mafeje. This came in two forms. First, following a motivation in 2002, Vice Chancellor Ndebele wrote a letter to Mafeje, inviting the latter to accept an honorary doctorate at the UCT June graduation ceremony. As the June graduation was approaching and Mafeje had not replied to the letter, a second letter inviting him to the December graduation was issued. On the same day, the University Council offered its sincere regret and apologies for the university's role in the events of 1968. As indicated, Mafeje did not even reply to the various letters, something that some people saw as impolite.

But we have to ask ourselves why Mafeje behaved in this manner. Was he angry or bitter about the withdrawal of his appointment in 1968? Or was there more to it than the events of 1968? As will be seen below, Mafeje felt the honorary doctorate was too little, too late and that it did not address broader political issues. Of more interest for our purposes is the apology, which is discussed in some detail below.

In his letter dated 17 June 2003, Vice Chancellor Ndebele informed Mafeje about a unanimous decision of the University Council ...to apologise to you formally for withdrawing an offer of appointment to you in 1968, following severe pressure from the government of the day.<sup>20</sup>

Ndebele concluded with these words:

This apology is part of our process of reviewing and redressing aspects of our past. It is a matter of personal satisfaction to me that Council has taken this decision.

We hope that you will be able to accept this apology in the spirit in which it is offered.<sup>21</sup>

With regard to the UCT Council resolution, this is how it reads:

The Council of the University of Cape Town recognises that there remain many who are critical of the 1968 decision of the Council to rescind its decision to offer an appointment of senior lecturer in social anthropology to Mr A Mafeje. The Council has reviewed this, expresses its sincere regret for this, and apologises to Dr Mafeje.

The resolution that was adopted by Council shows a slight amendment of an earlier draft whose last sentence read: ‘ The Council has reviewed this, *accepts that this was wrong and apologises to Dr Mafeje for having done so*’ (my emphasis).

As can be seen, the apology is about the 1968 decision to rescind the appointment of Mafeje. There is not even a slight reference to the treatment meted out to Mafeje in the 1990s as discussed above. While the events of 1968 are important and cannot be swept under the carpet or justified in terms of a repressive apartheid regime, I argue that it is developments in the 1990s that lie at the heart of Mafeje’s resentment, anger and bitterness towards UCT. That the 2003 apology did not refer to the 1990s casts doubts about the seriousness of UCT in extending the apology.

In conversations with former Vice Chancellor Ndebele, he pointed out that he only heard about the developments of the 1990s when I reported to him in 2008. He joined UCT in 2000. What is important to note though is that some of the people who were associated with the Council decision were not only aware of the events of 1990s, but were directly involved. They cannot claim ignorance.

When Mafeje understandably did not reply to the letters sent to him, Council sent an emissary. This is her account:

Archie (Mafeje) was very bitter and resentful about UCT’s late recognition of what had happened; that under the black leadership ... no approaches had been made and by the time I approached him he had made up his mind that UCT was compromised about his situation ... When I asked him why he would not accept the nomination and the apology, it was clear that he had closed his heart towards UCT in a big way. He liked talking to me and enjoyed telling me about his pain and resentment, and for him UCT failed and took far too long to acknowledge what they had done. He also had a sense that they thought he was a third rate scholar and not good enough for them. I think he would have liked being offered an Extraordinary or Emeritus position, the use of an office and UCT’s resources, etc. For him an apology, coming from UCT at the time that it was done, seemed to him more like the politically correct thing to do rather than one of real contrition.<sup>22</sup>

There is little doubt that the letters to Mafeje must have forced him to close the

UCT chapter in dramatic fashion. In March 2004, he wrote in his will that all his books be donated to the Walter Sisulu University in the Eastern Cape. The message seems loud and clear that Mafeje wanted to distance himself from UCT.

It appears as if the issue of reconciliation was not pursued with any sense of vigour and hardly anything was being done by the time Mafeje passed away.

Since the death of Mafeje, UCT has made giant strides to bring closure to the Mafeje saga. This process began under the leadership of the previous Vice Chancellor, Njabulo Ndebele. It was, it must be said, under his leadership that the Mafeje affair was reopened for discussion in 2002. In the letter to the Mafeje family referred to earlier, Ndebele had this to say to the family:

The UCT Council Executive Committee in this week stood in silence in honour of Prof Mafeje. It recognized again the deep injustice done. It acknowledged his extraordinary contributions. The Committee has instructed that his impact as an extraordinarily gifted scholar be captured forever. UCT will find a practical way to do this.<sup>23</sup>

In September 2007, just on six months after the death of Mafeje, Ndebele restated his commitment to resolving the Mafeje affair before his retirement in June 2008. He told me in a conversation that he would not like his successor to inherit this problem, as was the case with him. He wanted to establish whether I was willing to be part of the solution. I told him, as I did when I agreed to be UCT emissary at the funeral, that it would be an honour for me to part of solving this complex but extremely important issue.

Towards the end of 2007, Ndebele formalised the process by appointing Deputy Vice Chancellor Thandabantu Nhlapo and me to apply our minds as to the most appropriate way of resolving the Mafeje affair, as well as how best to honour him. We agreed with Deputy Vice Chancellor Nhlapo at the end of 2007 that I should conduct the research on the relationship between Mafeje and UCT in order to base whatever steps would be followed on sound knowledge and understanding of what precisely happened in this relationship.

A working paper based on research on the Mafeje affair, which contained some recommendations, was made available to the then outgoing Vice Chancellor

Ndebele. Given the limited time at his disposal, the new Vice Chancellor, Dr Max Price, picked up the threads. It is under his leadership that the Mafeje family was brought to UCT, a second apology offered and an honorary doctorate posthumously awarded to Archie Mafeje.

Regarding the apology,<sup>24</sup> UCT acknowledged that it

has become clear that the University did not do nearly enough in the 1990s to make it possible for Professor Mafeje to return to UCT, and that this remained an obstacle to his reconciliation with his alma mater.

It goes on:

We record therefore that significant opportunities were lost during the period of South Africa’s transition to democracy to bring a very significant African scholar home to UCT. In this the University showed a serious lack of sensitivity, and it is a matter of profound regret that Professor Mafeje’s life ended with these matters unresolved. The University now wishes to apologise to Professor Mafeje’s family that it did not make a committed effort to secure a place for Professor Mafeje at UCT, and that it may even have acted in a way that prejudiced Prof. Mafeje a second time in the 1990s. UCT also reiterates its regret regarding the Council’s decision under government pressure to withdraw the appointment as senior lecturer in 1968.

With regard to how UCT would honour Mafeje and ensure that justice is done, the university committed itself

to finding tangible ways in which the memory of a fine scholar of Africa might be acceptably and indelibly enshrined both at the University of Cape Town, and in the wider scholarly community.

These tangible ways entail the following:

- The University undertakes firstly, to permit access to scholars wishing to research the events surrounding Archie Mafeje at UCT to all relevant archival material without waiting the normal proscribed period, and to allow publication of any research resulting from this. However, no individuals still living may be named or identified without their permission.

- UCT will fund and promote a *Festschrift* to honour Professor Mafeje's life-long body of scholarly work.
- UCT will create a postgraduate scholarship in the name of Archie Mafeje for a black South African scholar in the field of African Studies.
- UCT will rename the Senate Room in which the 1968 sit-in took place as the Archie Mafeje Room and erect an appropriate plaque recalling the history of the Mafeje affair.
- UCT will confer on Archie Mafeje posthumously the degree Doctor of Literature, *Honoris Causa*.

On 17 August 2008, the first of the above undertakings was fulfilled when it was formally announced at the symposium that the Senate Room would be renamed the Archie Mafeje Room and the plaque to this effect unveiled by Mafeje's son, Xolani. On the following day, along with the installation of the new Vice Chancellor, an honorary doctorate was posthumously conferred on Archie Mafeje. The certificate was received by Mafeje's daughter, Dana.

At the time of writing this contribution, at the end of August 2008, nothing concrete has been done regarding the remaining three undertakings.

### Unfinished Business? Concluding Remarks

UCT is attempting to bring closure to the Mafeje saga in circumstances where earlier attempts to reconcile with Mafeje failed rather dismally. This immediately raises questions about how UCT's current attempts to make amends with the Mafeje family will be viewed. There is a real danger that efforts on the part of UCT to resolve the Mafeje affair, however genuine, may be seen as opportunistic. Vice Chancellor Ndebele made it clear to us that he would not be happy with that impression. It is precisely this awareness and the importance of demonstrating that UCT's attempts are not an exercise riddled with opportunism that I agreed to be involved in this process of reconciliation. As can be seen in this contribution, UCT has reconciled with the immediate family of Archie Mafeje. They have overruled him and accepted an apology and honorary doctorate on his behalf.

The question that imposes itself on us is whether this marks the end of the Mafeje

affair. A related question is whether any lessons can be learnt from this experience. Or was it one unfortunate isolated experience? These are difficult questions to respond to precisely because of their concreteness. One may be tempted to take the easier route and leave these questions to time. But it is also possible to respond in a suggestive, rather than definitive way to these questions. I propose to do the latter.

It can be argued that one of the main reasons why Mafeje was so angry and contemptuous of UCT's efforts in 2003, particularly the apology, was that he felt that the university was not open enough about the nature of the Mafeje affair. As has been shown, for UCT in 2003, it was about the events of 1968. It is apparent that apologising for what happened in 1968 was an easy option for UCT for the simple reason that blame could always be apportioned to the apartheid state. More difficult for UCT, it seems, was an acceptance of responsibility, which is what the treatment meted out to Mafeje in the 1990s demanded. It is, I would argue, this acknowledgement and acceptance of responsibility that makes the 2008 apology more acceptable and respectable. This is a major step that must be applauded.

The 2008 apology makes another important breakthrough by permitting opening access to archival material to 'scholars wishing to research the events surrounding Archie Mafeje at UCT...without waiting the normal proscribed period and to allow publication of any research resulting from this'. What this section of the clause in the apology also points to is recognition that Mafeje was a scholar, and that in making an apology, it is critical to consider not only Mafeje's immediate, biological family, but his wider family of scholars and activists. They are as concerned about the Mafeje affair as his immediate family. Inviting scholars to do research is one way of extending the apology to Mafeje bigger family.

Worrying, though, is the qualification in the above clause. In terms of this qualification, 'no individuals still living may be named or identified without their permission'. If this was all the qualification was about there would be no problems. After all, this is standard practice in research. It is, however, the footnote that raises concern. According to this footnote, 'scholars wishing to access material still within the 30-year archival protection period must first obtain the permission of the Vice-

Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor will have to approve how any information obtained may be published or shared with third parties'. This requirement, in terms of the footnote, is meant to 'ensure public confidence in the confidentiality and integrity of selection committee processes past and future'.

How are we to interpret this qualification? What does it mean to say that the Vice Chancellor 'will have to approve' how information obtain 'may be published or shared with third parties'? What does this mean in practice? Are scholars expected to submit whatever they write to the Vice Chancellor for approval before they submit for publication? Is this going to be a form of censorship? With regard to the rationale given about ensuring public confidence and integrity of selection committee processes, it can be argued that the very process of keeping records closed for 30 years makes these committees unaccountable to the broader university constituency and beyond. This protection may be a recipe for abuse and irresponsible behaviour. Indeed, the 30-year embargo on records is something that must be put on the agenda of transforming higher education institutions. This is arguably one important lesson we can draw from the Mafeje affair.

In a nutshell, it is important for the credibility of the 2008 apology and for an everlasting solution of the Mafeje affair that the truth about the relationship between Mafeje and UCT be known. Whatever is done for Mafeje will be meaningless if UCT will be seen to be suppressing the truth. On a personal note, this would amount to a betrayal of Mafeje. Until such time that the qualification is clarified in terms of how it will affect telling the truth about what happened in the 1990s, the Mafeje affair may well be an unfinished business.

### Notes

1. See File 12.2.5, 'Senior Lecturer/Lecturer in Social Anthropology', Administrative Archives, UCT. I could not establish from the records whether Mafeje applied.
2. Ibid..
3. 'Personal file', Location 4.3.3, Box No. 366. Administrative Archives, UCT.
4. Minutes of a meeting of the University Council held at 3 pm on Wednesday, 5 June, 1968. 'Personal file', Location 4.3.3, Box No. 366. Administrative Archives, UCT.

5. See Fred Hendricks' forthcoming article for a detailed account of the interaction between the UCT administration and the Minister of National Education and his employees between 2 May 1968 and the Council meeting on 5 June 1968. The report that Luyt presented to Council in June was based on this interaction.
6. It is notable that the historically black universities such as Fort Hare do not seem to have been involved in the Mafeje affair.
7. 'Celebrated scholar dies', *Monday Paper*, 26/05, 23 April–6 May 2007, 5.
8. Copy of the letter with the author. I attended the funeral and delivered the letter to the family on behalf of UCT.
9. Numerous conversations with the author.
10. See file 'Prof. Archie Mafeje (SocSch/9 Anthropology)', Location 21.1.4 Box No. 111, Administrative Archives, UCT.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. As already stated, in 1990 and 1991 Mafeje was doing research in Zimbabwe.
14. See file 'Prof. Archie Mafeje (SocSch/9 Anthropology)', Location 21.1.4 Box No. 111, Administrative Archives, UCT.
15. This is the category of candidates that deserve to be interviewed.
16. AC Jordan W/Os, File 300, No. 2, Administrative Archives, UCT.
17. Information about the proceedings of the meetings of the selection committee is from *aide-memoires*, whose status is not the same as minutes. The latter are approved by those attending. However, the *aide-memoires* were signed by the chairperson. It was difficult to get information through interviews. Most of the members of the committee who were approached claimed that they could not remember the discussions.
18. Letter to the Appointment Office, University of Cape Town, dated 14 April 1994. AC Jordan W/Os, File 300, No. 2, Administrative Archives, UCT.
19. I am not at liberty to mention the candidate, but it was not Mahmood Mamdani, who was appointed in a separate process in 1996.
20. Hon Degree Corres – 2003, Dec Grad 2003, Administrative Files, UCT.
21. Ibid.
22. E-mail correspondence dated 10 February 2008.
23. Letter to 'members of the Mafeje family' dated 5 April 2007. A copy of this letter was made available to the author and is kept in his files.
24. Copy of the apology is with the author. The apology was read aloud at the symposium and at a press conference on

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## The Imperative of Africanising Universities in South Africa

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### Epistemicide and Its Legacy in Education

It is important to unashamedly declare from the outset that I am in sympathy with, and therefore an advocate of the core concerns of the proponents of Africanisation of universities in South Africa. In this regard, the recurrent theme of my academic and popular articles has been the issue of Africanisation of universities in light of colonial epistemicide and valuecide fostered by Eurocentric paradigms on one hand, and the imperative for indigenous knowledge to inform and underpin social policy and development trajectories in South Africa on the other. Given the longevity and quantity characterizing white colonial-settlerism in South Africa, epistemicide was comprehensive and extended to all spheres of life, including religion, politics, law, economics and education.

Historically, European colonisation was justified on the basis of vacuous claims that when Europeans first came to the southern African part of continent, they found a territory that was empty, unknown and un-owned. By virtue of its status as such, such a territory invited the attention of those who wanted to know and own it. Ownership, here, entailed both claiming possession of and imposing

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one's knowledge systems on such a territory. This defining mantra of colonial historiography had serious implications for South Africa, as it had for the entire African continent. For instance, it necessitated claiming and, thereby filling of the country with European moral philosophy, social values, cultural traditions and economic fundamentals. But this also meant that in their self-serving wars of conquest, which did not meet the requirements of both the right to wage war and the ethico-legal imperatives in the conduct of war, the invading colonialists destroyed indigenous African social institutions and customs.

With regard to the South African academia, epistemicide inaugurated intellectual parochialism and resulted in intellectual extraversion in which raw data was exported, theories were uncritically imported and categories on local conditions were superimposed. Academia became an imposition and extension of the epistemological paradigm of the colonial conqueror. The thrust of Western education

was to deny the colonised indigenous people of South Africa useful and relevant social knowledge about themselves and their world and, in turn, transmit a culture that embodied, and was designed to consolidate dependency and generally undermine their creative capacities.

In many ways, colonial epistemicide has been an indispensable trigger for re-affirmation by indigenous African people. Although historically preceding the period, in South Africa the call for indigenous knowledge heightened with the advent of post-apartheid education and the need for an educational philosophy that would reflect a renewal and redirection towards the rest of Africa, African cultures, identities and values. Since then the debates on indigenization of knowledge in South Africa have been so emotive and polemical. Not only its content and purpose but also its very possibility have been, and continue to be, the subject of understandably passionate exchanges.

The idea of indigenization and the issues raised in the raging national debate, such as endogeneity, context-sensitivity and relevance, directly speaks to the right to be an African university. However, there are many who are still intrigued by the idea of the 'right to be an African university'. The argument is made that 'the right

to be an African university' presupposes that someone is denying this 'right' and therefore this argument only made sense in the context of colonial-apartheid, but not in a post-colonial environment. It would be naïve to assume that the South African academia, which has so stubbornly resisted transformation, has reversed epistemicide. In fact, the South African academia as seen in its institutional rigidity and cultural conservatism, remain insulated and has not benefited significantly from intellectual expositions and philosophical projections coming out of the continent. This is despite the few 'top' African scholars recruited to teach at a number of universities in the country.

### Importance of Historical Memory

The importance of appropriate historical memory and historical imagination and practice (as an antidote to the colonial historical project) has been the preoccupation of a number of post-independence African historians, especially the Dar es Salaam School of History, the Ibadan School of History and the Diopian Africanity. Despite variations in their intellectual enterprises, the central characteristic of these historians has been their refusal to be carried away by and to endorse the dominant knowledge systems of the colonial conquerors. Rather, they engaged in vigilant, combative and uncompromising deconstruction of historical distortions which were conscripted into the service of the colonial project. But this engagement has to be understood dialectically since in deconstructing the Eurocentric colonial project, they also reconstructed Africanity. They challenged and debunked well-encrusted negative notions and systematically eroded a number of misconceptions and philosophical crotchets about the African continent; its "lack of civilisation, history and moral values".

Therefore, the younger generation of African scholars can only condemn such intellectual icons at their own peril 'for spending too much of their intellectual careers' demythologizing European colonial historiography on Africa and demonstrating the existence of indigenous African knowledge systems and history prior to colonisation. Clearly, it is not only combative but a liberatory act to expose the tendentious nature of European colonial historiography.

My direct contention is that without appropriate historical memory and histori-

cal imagination, the academia in South Africa will continue to depose rather than pose vexing questions relating to higher education and its relevance in the new political and socio-economic dispensation. For instance, in the immediate post-1994 South Africa, the result of overlooking the historical perspective in the educational sphere has been the false and misleading but commonly held stratification of higher education, especially its university subset, as either merely black/disadvantaged or white/advantaged.

Such descriptors emanated from an incorrect historical understanding regarding the development, nature and role of universities in colonial-apartheid South Africa. After all, descriptors, like metaphors, are conjured up to give an organizing pattern to matters. In theory, they are supposed to help explain what is going on, but in practice are often meant to shape responses to policy. Essentially, descriptors carry an acknowledged political freight and perform a political purpose.

Given that South African historiography is still fundamentally colonial, a wrong diagnosis and a wrong prognosis were inevitable. An appropriate historical analysis indicates that the real problem of universities in South Africa has been that of the right to be an African university. This right was denied through a process of degrading and marginalizing indigenous African knowledge systems. In the post-apartheid era, such a process takes place through resistance to transform universities to meet the critical requirements of the transforming society.

### The Myth of Standards and the Search for Alternatives

In the light of the above, we propose a reversal of epistemicide through an inscription of indigenous African epistemologies in education. The resistance of underpinning universities with African philosophy, on grounds that this threatens standards, is to perpetuate cognitive and epistemological injustice. Our observation is that the intellectual thinking behind the standards argument is the fear that most white intellectuals and academics will experience erosion of their power base. The actual motive for wanting to protect the current standards is essentially to spawn a 'law of inertia of privilege' that guarantees that there is no reversal of epistemicide and reclamation of African epistemologies. The reversal of epistemicide will inevitably undermine

existing dominant interests and challenge the citadel of European paradigms and scientific epistemologies of knowledge. For instance, an African wit reminded us recently that 'Apartheid created a self-satisfied culture among white South Africans. Because they could put down blacks through force of law, white South Africa did not imagine that they would not make the grades internationally. And so they continued talking about standards but essentially from a very low base'. Little wonder that there are various attempts at circumscribing and pre-empting the entry into the dominant discourse of indigenous African epistemologies.

From the perspective of the sociology of indigenous knowledge, the assumptions which constructed European thought, literature and traditions are not universal but are derived from specific and discreet European experiences prescribed by the level of economic and industrial development. Implicit in this perspective is that standards are not universal but contextual. Academic standards are tentative, constructed, historical and contextual and, therefore, certainly not universal, permanent, objective, neutral or invariant. Clearly, the notion of standards must be subjected to a careful, specific and historically sensitive analysis. Some scholars have advised that rather than maintaining and applying given academic and educational standards, we need to continually create and redefine them.

The right to be an African university, which implies Africanisation, is essentially part of continually creating and redefining educational standards within appropriate context of relevance. In other words, the focus on relevance and usefulness is not antithetical to high standards. Rather, the imperative for inscribing indigenous African epistemologies into the curriculum and underpinning education with African philosophy is, in the first instance, a question of rights, and thus a matter of natural and historical justice. These are key issues the South African academia should not only acknowledge but, more importantly, begin to address.

It is in appreciation of the need for such natural and historical justice that Professor Mafeje was always measured in his writings and was never comfortable with ideas lacking in substance. Until he passed away, he remained particularly respectful of his sizeable and highly conscious African scholarly and intellectual

constituency. Hence, his extraordinary mind is reflected not so much in the volume but in the quality of his intellectual contributions. His ability to marry scholarly pursuits with a life-time pan-Africanist political commitment made him a liberatory thinker who never compromised on his intellectual responsibilities in pursuit of knowledge, in particular the indigenization of African discourse. As seen through many intellectual confrontations and conversations with his conti-

mental and international opponents and detractors, including his memorable brawls with Professor Ali Mazrui and later Professor Sally Moore, self-preservation was not Professor Mafeje's hallmark.

Professor Mafeje's personal contributions and legacies to knowledge and scholarship – from the deconstruction of Eurocentricism to the (re)construction of indigenous knowledge – have blazed a new trail for younger and future African social scientists. Indeed, it is incumbent

upon them to stand on the shoulders of this intellectual giant in order for them to see further. More importantly, the challenge for universities in South Africa is to begin to introduce learners to his works. Anything less is a travesty of and a dishonour to scholarship in the context of the knowledge struggles raging on in the South African academy.

\* Lebakeng, T.J. (2007). Archibald Boyce Mafeje: a tribute to excellent scholarship. Tribute. February. pp. 30-32.

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## Crossing Swords and Drawing Blood : Archie Mafeje – A Warrior in a Double Battle

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### Introduction

Archie Mafeje thrived on debate. He clarified his own positions as he marshalled his arguments in his many frontal attacks. He revelled in a genuine difference of opinion, informed by evidence and commitment, because these permitted him to pursue his purpose with a rare single-mindedness. ' You are either stupid or intellectually dishonest' , he barked at a young Rhodes University lecturer at a dinner party at my house in Grahamstown a few years ago. The other guests were somewhat astounded by his brazenness, but it cannot be said of Mafeje that his bark was worse than his bite. He could also bite with considerable force and his eloquence together with his erudite manner never failed him in his many intellectual battles. Ali Mazrui felt the full ferocity of his bite in the pages of the *CODESRIA Bulletin* (1995:16) when Mafeje made the following remark, which has stuck in my mind as a powerful metaphor of argument as war:

I am prepared to cross swords with Ali Mazrui. If in the process real blood is drawn, it might be an overdue sacrifice to the African gods or an invitation to young African warriors.

I don't regard myself as young but I am taking up the invitation extended by Mafeje. It is a double-edged and hazardous invitation. Knowing just how much he detested the banal, I have to be extremely careful not to be platitudinous, because that would be an affront to his abiding spirit. Irrespective of the fact that Mafeje has now departed from our world I can't help the sense of awe that I have

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in the presence of his intellect. He is still very much with us in his work, in his words and in our many memories of him. So, on the one hand, I am driven to pay tribute to his inestimable contribution, but at the same time if only in respect to Mafeje, I try to do this in ways that demonstrate a critical engagement with a small part of his corpus. Having known Archie Mafeje as a person imposes a particular constraint on any engagement with his work. He did not suffer fools. He was an enormously complex and multi-faceted individual who has helped us in constructing a unique approach to understanding our continent. Here, I refer to only two of the very many sides of the man. Firstly, I use his style of debate to symbolise how, in his many years of scholarship, he has tried to enjoin epistemological, theoretical and empirical issues in the process of generating knowledge about, on and of Africa. Secondly, I illustrate how he changed the way in which we think about Anthropology in Africa.

### Argument as War: Mafeje's Double Battle

In his later years Mafeje started to violate some of the basic principles of epistemology. He did this consciously, realising the importance of the subject of inquiry as a research problem rather than as a predetermined area of specialisation or disci-

pline. But his interests did not end with being a mere maker of knowledge. His other side radiates a deep political commitment to the pan-Africanist ideal of proper political, economic and cultural emancipation for Africans. It is precisely this mixture of a normative concern for what is good for Africa with his sharp analytical mind that made Archie Mafeje such a formidable intellect on the continent.

I wish to use the conceptual metaphor ' argument is war' as analysed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980:4) in their book, *Metaphors We Live By*, to provide some backdrop to Mafeje's style of debate and to ensure that the battle of ideas as conceived and practised by Mafeje is placed in a reasonable framework. Lakoff and Johnson (1980:4) state their case very clearly:

It is important to see that we don't just talk about arguments in terms of war. We actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies. If we find a position indefensible, we can abandon it and take a new line of attack. Many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war. Though there is no physical battle, there is verbal battle and the structure of an argument – attack, defence, counterattack, etc. reflects this.

Their definition of a metaphor is captivatingly simple, ' ...understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another' (1980:5). I'm using the metaphor of argument as war in order to demon-

strate one aspect of Mafeje in debate. It is obvious that verbal discourse and the conduct of war are two entirely different things, but the one is understood in precisely the same terms as the other. Mafeje's discourse fits this metaphorical concept perfectly. His polemics are suffused with the metaphors of war: to take one choice example, '(F)or an Anthropologist,' says Mafeje, 'it is well to remember that one thing "primitives" do not know is how to fight in the dark.' I use this example to show the linkages between the combative style in Mafeje's writing, the various representations of actual ethnographic experiences and his struggle to understand how he understands his own encounters with history.

Mafeje committed himself to combating the distorted images produced and reproduced about Africa from the outside, by reference to the notion of authenticity in his ethnographic practices. His polemic is thus not only metaphorically warlike, it is an extension of a battle over how Africa may be conceived and how African claims over those conceptions may be framed.

Mafeje is a warrior in a double battle. He is totally immersed in the struggle for ideas about Africa to be produced by Africans for themselves and he connects this endeavour to a profound commitment to the political and economic liberation of Africans. His armour as well as his arguments have to be scrutinised very closely for an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses so that we can collectively engage with ways in which this double struggle can be advanced. Mafeje's clearest asset is his incisive mind and his ability to translate the complexity of his thought into compelling and elegant prose. He is almost intrinsically combative. And it is through these intellectual debates that he has revealed his encyclopaedic knowledge of Africa.

The major chink in his armour was the fact that he fought alone. He never co-authored any significant work and he only collaborated with others in rather esoteric areas where the outcome did not really matter. As a warrior of the social sciences in Africa, Mafeje chose his battleground very carefully. One of the major gaps in his considerable repertoire of writings on Africa is North Africa. Being married to an Egyptian with a daughter from the marriage, Mafeje spent a considerable period of time in Cairo. Yet, almost as part of the syndrome of his exile, he chose not

to accept Egypt as his home, and he certainly did not regard it as part of his social laboratory. This remains an abiding problem in his pan-Africanism. Since he paid no scholarly attention to the cultural and political milieu of North Africa he inadvertently reproduced ideas about a disaggregated and dismembered Africa. While he lived in North Africa for those years, his intellectual gaze remained fixed and confined to Sub-Saharan Africa.

As much as I respected his intellect, admired his brilliant turn of phrase and cherished his company, I also appreciated that Archie Mafeje was a deeply embittered man. 'What's wrong with being bitter?' he would frequently ask in conversation. As a retort, I would point to the lack of bitterness in Nelson Mandela, after spending almost three decades in apartheid jails. But Mafeje was, as with almost everything else, assured in his bitterness, or at least he managed to give the impression of being so self-assured. The consequences of his bitterness were beneficial because when it crept into his analysis it sharpened the terms of the debate and it permitted him to utilise his penchant for pushing the arguments to and even beyond their logical conclusions. Balance is clearly a casualty of this form of polemic, but it served the very important purpose of extending the boundaries of our understanding. Mafeje was obviously aware of the consequences of his style of debate. In his polemics, he gave at least as good as and often much more than he got. He was prepared to expose himself to personal abuse and attack, and he was often bruised in the process, sometimes very severely, but this did not make him waver from his pan-Africanist ideals and objectives of building a viable community of social science scholars on the continent.

Mafeje's voice is unambiguously African. He brings his Western learning to bear on a profound understanding of the limits of decolonisation. In many ways, his work precedes and pre-empts the kind of analyses that have emerged from the 'subaltern' school of history in India on the relation between the struggle for national independence and colonialism. There is simple realisation permeating this school concerning the way in which nationalism did not end up being the antithesis of colonialism but instead its most grotesque imitation. Mafeje tries to avoid this kind of stricture in his writing by ensuring that his project was genuinely eman-

atory and not compromised by association with colonialism and oppression.

### **Anthropology in Africa: Who are its makers and its subjects?**

As a protagonist in the debate about Anthropology in Africa, Mafeje reveals the full range of his analytical thinking, his incisive mind and his unwavering commitment to the continent. He made us think about Africa in different ways. There is little doubt that his acerbic engagement stems from a steadfast dedication to a pan-Africanist ideal as the negation of a Eurocentric discourse. The point of Africanity, Mafeje would argue, is a very simple one indeed. Africans should speak for themselves, they should nurture ideas about themselves, they should understand themselves through their own intellectual efforts, they should make their own representations about themselves, and they have to ensure that they have a monopoly over the images that are made of and about them. Mafeje has played a central role in the legitimate African claims to write about and understand themselves, and the Anthropology debate can be firmly anchored within this overarching Africanist impulse.

The debate represents a turbulent mixture of Mafeje's passion for and encyclopaedic knowledge of the continent and his grasp of the intricate details of the political passing parade in Africa.

All students of African Anthropology cannot avoid encountering Mafeje's debate with a range of scholars and anthropologists. The debate was appropriately published in the very first issue of the *African Sociological Review* in 1997, which in itself represents an effort to establish a community of self-referring African social scientists. Mafeje's wide-ranging review of Sally Falk Moore's book, *Anthropology and Africa* is a frontal attack on the manner in which the discipline is constructed and structured around metropolitan interests. He deconstructs the essential concepts of Anthropology and reveals what lies hidden – its basis in alterity. But he does more than that. Since he is concerned about African claims to study, understand and interpret their own reality, he exposes the manner in which the supposed makers of anthropological knowledge position themselves vis-à-vis the assumed objects. Invariably, given its history as well as its political and ideological importance in Africa, especially around the concept of 'tribe' the makers

were suffused, according to Mafeje, with deep-seated white racism. Mafeje challenges the conventional division of the social sciences and links the historiography of Anthropology directly to the colonial experience. He issues an abiding challenge to all African anthropologists to become makers rather than mere objects of knowledge. He also insists that they should be centrally involved in a project to produce images, understandings and analyses of and for themselves rather than merely consuming what is produced for them by others outside the continent. For Mafeje, Anthropology is necessarily a discipline founded on alterity, on the colonial settlers studying the native other. For this reason it is intrinsically limited and therefore was driven underground by the decolonisation process in Africa. While the anthropologists did not suddenly disappear, they had to be content with operating under the rubric of joint academic departments, invariably with Sociology. It was really only in Southern Africa that the discipline of Anthropology survived as a separate entity, and that in itself reveals very much about both the discipline and the colonial history of the region.

A question that lies at the heart of Mafeje's efforts is the epistemological basis of the discipline of Anthropology in a postcolonial Africa. Since tribe was such a central organising concept in colonial Anthropology, it is important to emphasise how Mafeje was deconstructing this notion.

'It is interesting to note', wrote Mafeje in his highly influential article, 'The Ideology of Tribalism', 'that the word for tribe does not exist in indigenous languages of South Africa'. As he became more familiar with anti-colonial struggles across the continent, and more fully conversant with social and political realities in other African countries, he extended this formulation to the rest of the continent:

How often must it be pointed out that in African languages there is no equivalent for the term 'tribe' and that the concept 'tribe' is a colonial imposition in Africa? What is ethnographically known is that Africans, like everybody else, are conscious of the linguistic and ethnic group to which they belong.

About his own ethnic affiliation, Mafeje said the following,

I don't care about being Xhosa, I am a South African black. It does not mat-

ter to me if I'm Xhosa or Zulu or Tswana or anything else. I am just comfortable. If I had a choice, I would probably go along more with the Sothos than with the Xhosas. Just in terms of temperament and the way they do things. I am certainly not committed to something called Xhosa.

Mafeje's views are consistent with his explanation for ethnic politics and conflict. He scolds Ntoli and others for not providing an analysis of ethnicity and for treating ethnic groups as things in themselves, following the empiricism rife in American Political Science. Instead he dispels the idea that there are discrete naturally occurring entities of belonging that may be called ethnic groups in Africa. He draws a distinction between social groups and social categories, where the former are characterised by inevitable patterns of social interaction, for example, lineages or associations, and the latter does not imply such regular interaction at all but is rather defined by common identity, such as membership of the same religion. Mafeje's argument is that ethnicity is related to the national competition for scarce resources in response to the centralisation of power rather than to local particularistic conflicts. In this sense, ethnicity has a recent derivation since it refers to an ideological ploy used by political elites to yield the benefits of power and wealth. On this view, ethnicity does not represent some pre-existing African cultural essence but a convenient means of political mobilisation for elites.

### The Embattled Warrior

In 2003 Archie Mafeje delivered the third annual Z.K. Mathews memorial lecture at the University of Fort Hare, in the little village of Alice in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. It was an auspicious occasion indeed. The first of these lectures was delivered in 2001 by the president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, and the second lecture was given by Quett Masire, the former president of Botswana. Archie Mafeje followed a formidable lineup. He did not disappoint the audience. The warrior took on the role of performance rather than actual battle since the formality of the occasion prevented any retort, debate or even discussion. In his lecture Mafeje singlehandedly took on each of the social science disciplines as they are practised in Africa. He flattened all of History with a single strike to the head. He demolished Anthropology with

a vicious body blow. He proceeded to bash Economics, Sociology, Political Science and Philosophy. Even Psychology was not spared his assault. After his performance, Mafeje stood alone among the ruins of the disciplines that he had annihilated.

I thought that there was a profound contradiction in all of this. While he was singularly scathing about anything that had emerged from Africa in the field of social science, Mafeje continued to argue for an Afrocentric approach to our subject of investigation. He was also against anything that smacked of Euro-centrism. It appeared to me that Mafeje the warrior was fighting a very lonely battle indeed, since he was the only one worthy of its lofty heights.

### In Praise of Mafeje

We all realise that developing an African social science discourse through the promotion of an African social science community of scholars is an extremely difficult exercise against the background of the parlous state of African universities. Mafeje reminded us just how structural adjustment and a range of other factors have conspired to wreck these universities. Under these circumstances and within this context it is to be expected that African social scientists would be quite happy to apply metropolitan ideas and concepts without subjecting them to critical scrutiny, and certainly not developing concepts appropriate to the study of African societies. Attempts to indigenise social science in Africa have been inchoate, unsystematic and anecdotal. In this respect, there can be little doubt that the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the Organization for Social Science Research in East and Southern Africa (OSSREA) stand out as important beacons of hope for the future of the social sciences in Africa. Yet, their reach cannot stretch far enough to the nooks and crannies of intellectual poverty on the continent.

Mafeje has more than most enriched our intellectual landscape by grappling with the issues of historical explanation, of how to relate science and ideology to development, how to understand the constraints that confront the neocolonial state in Africa, how to combine social history with ethnographic experience and generally how to marry scholarly pursuits with political commitment. He represents

the collective conscience of African social science, and because of his widespread legitimacy and credibility across the continent it is not surprising that he is not liked by those outside who wish to

write about Africa in ways that distort and harm the interests of people here.

It is well that we honour Mafeje as an intellectual warrior so that younger gen-

erations can appreciate the depth and breadth of his contribution and so that they can also be inspired by his irreverence and his irrepressible spirit.

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## Honouring a Giant

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*A Note on the Archie Mafeje Special Panel of the CODESRIA 30th Anniversary Grande Finale Conference, held in Dakar in December 2003*

'I would like to thank CODESRIA for the great honour, which is not to say that I am grateful. It might be that you are wishing me not an early death, but a death alright. When you honour people, you usually honour them after their death, and the glory comes after their death. But this glory comes before death. In fact, I was warned by the philosopher Hountondji, who said to me: 'be careful, do not accept this thing.'

True to form, Archie Mafeje's initial response to two hours of presentations and testimonies highlighting his contribution to African and global scholarship, and his extraordinary human qualities, was both to point out the ritual side to such practices and to remind us that he was born to a community of scholars, whose primary concern should be about how to give birth to and nurture more scholars like him.

Honouring people has indeed sometimes been a way of burying them. Not so with the CODESRIA panel, one could argue; for, as Adebayo Olukoshi, the Executive Secretary, explained in his opening remarks to the panel, the idea was to perpetuate a CODESRIA tradition, that of breaking, precisely, with a terrible habit of the African academy, which consists of acknowledging great African scholars only after they have been acknowledged by West, and after their death. The CODESRIA Charter provides for 'Lifelong Membership' to be conferred on some of the most illustrious African scholars, and CODESRIA's Twentieth Anniversary conference held in 1993 was an occasion for Samir Amin, Abdallah Bujra and Govan Mbeki to be awarded 'Lifelong Membership' of CODESRIA. The Tenth General Assembly of CODESRIA, held in Kampala in December 2002, also included a special panel on the work of Samir Amin.

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Mafeje's sarcasm and misgivings about him being honoured during his own lifetime was therefore more of a kind of reminder to us in the African academy that perhaps the best way of honouring people like him is not to make them look like extraordinary people, but to both preserve the conditions that enable the academy to give birth to more great scholars, and to highlight the principles, ethics, values and practices that younger generations of scholars should be encouraged to cherish, and portray people like him as living examples of what, with hard work, they (the younger generation) could seek to achieve. Mentoring young scholars was in fact one of Mafeje's main preoccupations. I return to this issue later.

The panel discussion and the many testimonies that followed were each a mix of personal recollections of encounters, intellectual and otherwise, with Mafeje, and a discussion of his contributions to scholarship on a broad range of issues such as democracy, academic freedom, land and agrarian issues, and the nature of scholarship itself. The presentations began with a portrait of Archie Mafeje, the man and the scholar (Ebrima Sall), followed by a presentation on Archie's style of scholarship: 'drawing swords in the social sciences' (Fred Hendricks). Sam Moyo, the third speaker, focused on Mafeje's work on land and agrarian issues. Eddy Maloka spoke about Archie's place in the South African community of scholars today, where he has remained a relatively unknown figure, particularly to the younger generation, a point that Jimi Adesina also made in his contribution to the general

debate. Maloka also discussed the slow pace of change in the tertiary education sector in post-apartheid South Africa, particularly in matters of curriculum reform, and Tandeka Nkiwane discussed Mafeje's contribution to the debate on democracy. Speakers from the floor included Helmi Sharawy, Samir Amin, Thandika Mkandawire, Jimi Adesina, Said Adejumobi, Kunle Amuwo, and Shahida El-Baz, the spouse, friend and colleague who shared 35 years of Mafeje's life.

### **Mafeje: The Man, and the Scholar**

Participants were reminded that Mafeje was fond of saying that he was South African by birth, Dutch by nationality and Egyptian by adoption, for he lived in Cairo for 24 years. His childhood and adolescence were spent in apartheid South Africa. After a first degree in zoology and botanical sciences, Mafeje obtained a masters degree in social anthropology at the University of Cape Town. His MA thesis on leadership in Transkei was drafted in a monastery. He obtained a PhD in sociology and anthropology at the University of Cambridge, and went back to work in South Africa but was denied a job by the University of Cape Town (UCT), where he was going to be the first black African lecturer. Archie's life took a dramatic turn thereafter, for he then went into exile and returned to his native South Africa only recently. He has held senior positions in many universities in Africa, and Europe, including the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, the American University in Cairo, the University of South Africa in Pretoria and the Institute of Social Studies in The Netherlands. It was in The Netherlands that, in 1973, he became a Queen Juliana Professor of Anthropology and Sociology of Development by an act of Parliament, with the approval of all the 29 universities of The

Netherlands. The act was published in the prestigious Blue Pages of the Dutch government. That was one of the highest distinctions that a scholar could receive in The Netherlands. He was then only 34 years of age. His seminal papers and numerous other publications attested to the fact that he was arguably one of the most distinguished scholars produced by our continent. He was a member of the Scientific Committee of CODESRIA at the time of his passing.

There was unanimity among the panelists and general participants over what were seen as the main traits of Mafeje's personality. He was extremely rigorous, both as a scholar and in his personal attitude to life. ' Archie can't stand laziness' . And ' Mafeje can't stand sloppiness, wherever it comes from' . These phrases were repeated several times during the special CODESRIA panel. ' Mafeje detested the banal and platitudes, for he believed that people must demonstrate some independence of thought' (Hendricks). He had a high sense of integrity, and a high sense of social responsibility, and was ferociously independent in thinking, but also vis-à-vis structures such as political parties. ' Mafeje does not suffer fools' . He was ' utterly uncompromising' on matters of principle, and he ' never fought personal battles' (Shahida El-Baz). He was very direct, and sometimes brutal in his criticisms and rather aggressive, something that destabilised many a young scholar.

Several of his close friends, however, argued that behind the aggressive and ferociously critical Mafeje was a rather shy man. He was also very loyal to his friends, to CODESRIA, and to the African scholarly community in general. The complexity of his personality is probably best described in a very moving tribute to her father, written by Dana Mafeje a few days after his passing:

Most of you wrote about his academic prowess, genius mind, incomparable wit and endless struggle for his nation and greater Africa. Having acknowledged all these attributes at a very early age, I later realised that Papa was a ' giant' not only in the intellectual sense but as a human being.

My father was critical but humane, fierce but compassionate, sarcastic but gentle, silly, but brilliant, stubborn but loyal, but most of all he was passionate.

Behind the cynical façade, my father was one of the kindest, warmest and most giving men I ever met. I vividly remember him getting me dressed for school every day (militarily), asking me what I wanted to eat for lunch religiously (until I was 26!), never telling me to study because to him exams were for idiots, having serious chats with me without ever looking me in the eye (those of you who know him personally will relate), speaking to me logically in the most illogical situations, pushing me to excel just to be worthy of being his daughter and mostly for being my ultimate reference.

Shahida El-Baz, his spouse, gave a very moving account of how they met, and shared a whole life of struggle in mutual respect. She was a student at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, very active in the campaign against the UCT refusal to allow Archie to take up a teaching position to which he had been duly appointed. During his stint at the ISS, Mafeje became the guru of a small group of radical students, as he was later to be a key member of the Marxist and pan-African circles of Egypt. When they decided to get married, Dr El-Baz said he told her: ' I know you will make a lousy wife, but I don't like wives anyway' .

According to her, some of the episodes that left a lasting effect on Mafeje included his sojourn in Namibia, a sojourn that he actually shortened as a result of both his utter disappointment with the slow pace of transformation going on after the country's independence, and the endless fights he has had to fight against unrepentant racists desperately hanging on to a colonial mentality. Since for him going to work in Namibia was a first step on his journey back to South Africa, the unpleasant experience meant that his return to South Africa was going to be deferred by almost a whole decade.

Mafeje has mentored many African scholars, and many of those he mentored, including some of the panellists, found him to be hard with those he was mentoring, because his reference was the rigorous training he had himself been through, and the very high standards that he had set for himself as a scholar. As the Senegalese sociologist, Momar Coumba Diop once put it, Archie was what he would call a ' knowledge aristocrat' (*un aristocrate du savoir*), and a creative artist of sorts. Yet he was a very committed scholar as well, one whose mission was nothing

short of the liberation of Africans, and the building of a viable and self-sustaining scholarly community in Africa. His intellectual curiosity knew no bounds. I remember him explaining how he had spent six months underwater, observing the flora and fauna of the Atlantic Ocean in a Soviet submarine.

### Crossing Swords in the Social Sciences

Fred Hendricks called Mafeje an ' academic warrior' . Mafeje saw argument as war, and explicitly talked about ' crossing swords' with Ali Mazrui, in the famous Mafeje–Mazrui debate that went on for two years in the columns of *CODESRIA Bulletin*. The powerful metaphor of argument as war could also be applied to the exchanges Mafeje had with Sally Falk Moore, following the review that he wrote of Moore's book on *Anthropology and Africa*. The review was published in the maiden issue of the *African Sociological Review* in 1997. ' His polemics are suffused with the metaphor of war' (Hendricks): ' One thing primitives can't do is to fight in the dark' (Mafeje).

In the view of most of the panellists and contributors to the general debate, Mafeje's scholarship was an extension of his battles for Africa, for he was ' totally immersed in the battle for Africa' . A good illustration of this is his seminal piece (published in 1971 in the *Journal of Modern African Studies*) on the ideology of tribalism, an ideology that, he argued,

brought with it certain ways of reconstructing the African reality. It regarded African societies as particularly tribal. This approach produced certain blinkers or ideological pre-dispositions which made it difficult for those associated with the system to view these societies in any other light. Hence certain modes of thought among European scholars in Africa and their African counterparts have persisted, despite the many important economic and political changes that have occurred in the continent over the last 75–100 years.

The ideology of alterity, which is so central to colonial anthropology, is suffused with deep-seated racism that Mafeje exposed with brio. Hence the questions that he asks in his monograph titled *Anthropology and Independent Africans: Suicide, Or the End of an Era?*: what is the epistemological basis of the discipline

[anthropology] in independent Africa? Given that it was founded on alterity, how can it survive when colonialism has been overcome? This monograph formed the core around which a symposium was organised in the maiden issue of the *African Sociological Review* in 1997. Deconstructing concepts inherited from colonial social science has actually been part of the search for autonomy that Archie Mafeje and Joseph Ki-Zerbo, both of whom were honoured during the CODESRIA 30th anniversary conference, and both of whom have moved on, were engaged in, along with many other distinguished African scholars.

Another good example is Mafeje's critique of the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment (AAFSAP), published in *CODESRIA Bulletin* in 1990, in which he openly calls for 'an African recovery in thought'.

Other concepts that Mafeje subjected to a thorough critique include those of ethnicity (discussed by Hendricks), Africanity, and the peasantry. Sam Moyo's presentation was centred on Mafeje's work on the land and agrarian questions in Africa. In his critique of Dessalegn Rahmato's Green Book on *Peasant Organisations in Africa*, Mafeje challenged the assumption that peasants exist in Africa, and called for a much closer study of property relations in rural Africa, rather than transposing concepts borrowed from European sociology and anthropology. This was partly in response to Samir Amin's work on the tributary mode of production, and his characterisation of certain social relations as semi-feudal.

On the land question, according to Moyo, Mafeje has been arguing that apart from the settler colonies of Southern Africa, where there was massive expropriation of land and racial hegemony, there is no real land question in Africa.

Mafeje therefore crossed swords with a large number of African and non-African scholars. In addition to the Mazrui-Mafeje debate, examples cited by the various panellists include: the critical reviews of Sally Falk Moore's book, and Dessalegn Rahmato's Green Book that Sam Moyo discussed in his presentation, both of which enlisted critical responses from the authors, his debates with Samir Amin over the tributary mode of produc-

tion, but also with the Food and Agricultural Organisation, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the World Bank. Mafeje was a member of the expert group that, in the late 1990s, was put together by the CROP, an organisation based in Bergen, Norway, to review the World Bank's work on poverty.

Mafeje's work, Hendricks argued, in some respects preceded what later came from the subaltern school. He saw colonialism as a debasement of Africans. Unfortunately, according to Mafeje, nationalism did not always end up as a negation of colonialism, but its imitation.

The legitimacy that Mafeje enjoyed in Africa and other parts of the world has been a source of discomfort for all those who, particularly outside Africa, wish to continue to write about our continent in ways that distort the reality. Mafeje represented the collective conscience of the African social science community, and his knowledge was encyclopaedic.

### Criticisms

Mafeje was awarded a Lifelong Membership of CODESRIA, for a lifetime contribution to scholarship. In his acceptance speech, he said he was not worried that he would be subjected to severe criticism by the panellists, 'because I knew you will not denounce me as you are honouring me'. However, the panel was not about an uncritical celebration of Mafeje, but also critically engaging with his work. As Hendricks put it, in his contribution to the panel, he was answering Archie's invitation to the younger generation to draw swords, including with him. He therefore pointed out a couple of areas in which he felt Mafeje's positions were problematic.

One such area is North Africa, which is almost totally absent from Mafeje's work. Hendricks felt that this was a major omission, despite the fact that Mafeje had lived in Egypt for 24 years. This was rather difficult to comprehend. Was it a reflection of what his spouse Shahida called a 'refugee mentality', that is, some reluctance on his part to get himself deeply immersed in the social and intellectual life of Egypt?

'Mafeje was fighting a lonely battle' (Hendricks). To illustrate, Hendricks cited Mafeje's critique of the social sciences, one by one, in a Memorial Lecture he gave at Fort Hare in 2001, advocating, instead, for an 'afro-centric' approach.

Hendricks also argued that towards the end of his life, Mafeje had become 'an embittered man' (Hendricks), and that the bitterness occasionally crept into Mafeje's writings, although he offered no examples of how bitterness sometimes had clouded Mafeje's scholarship. There were certainly many things that Mafeje couldn't help being unhappy about. Besides the unpleasant Namibia experience, when he went back to South Africa itself, he was relatively unknown by the younger generation and isolated by those whose politics made them uncomfortable with someone like him. That great scholars like Archie Mafeje, Bernard Magubane and Cheikh Anta Diop are relatively unknown to the younger generation of South African scholars was a point made by several speakers, including Jimi Adesina, Kunle Amuwo, Eddy Maloka and Tandeka Nkiwane. Eddy Maloka explained how the Africa Institute of South Africa was, under his leadership, trying to deal with that problem by establishing an Archie Mafeje visiting fellowship, with support from the South African National Research Foundation. Although the problem of making great African scholars known to younger generations of scholars is particularly acute in South Africa, it is an Africa-wide problem, which is why CODESRIA has launched a Distinguished Lecture Series aimed at enabling people like Mafeje (who was a nominee of that programme) to travel and give lectures in different parts of the continent.

As for Mafeje's relative isolation in South Africa, in the conversations I was privileged to have with him during the last few years of his life, on many occasions he said some scholars began keeping away from him from the moment that he frankly expressed his views on some of their published work – which he found rather sloppy. It was also rather unfortunate that in post-apartheid South Africa, a scholar of the calibre of Archie Mafeje could be left without a proper pension scheme. Maloka also made the very important observation that no serious attempt is being made to encourage African scholars to study the history of the liberation movements, particularly those of Southern Africa – not even the history of the ANC is being seriously studied. His explanation was that South African scholarship has been constructed, and is constructing itself, as a sub-field of scholarship in Europe and the USA. Other major

gaps in South African scholarship highlighted by Maloka are those of the study of legal Marxism, and the study of Africa more generally.

Nkiwane, one of the panellists, and a few of the contributors from the floor (Samir Amin in particular) argued that the genius of Archie was not so much in the fact that he broke new ground, but because he revisited old questions, such as the question of democracy (Nkiwane), and the agrarian question (Amin). Yet his critique of the ideology of tribalism has been celebrated as a seminal contribution.

On the land question, according to Sam Moyo, Mafeje has been arguing that apart from the settler colonies of Southern Africa, where there was massive expropriation of land and racial hegemony, there is no real land question in Africa. To defend such a thesis, Moyo argued, was to fail to acknowledge the complexity of the land question in Africa today, particularly with urbanisation and migration, on the one hand, and on the other, the new ways in which land is being concentrated in few hands for use as tourist resorts. There are broader territorial issues involved, and much of the Southern African land mass (about 40 per cent), Moyo

further argued, is now more or less reserved for operations related to tourism, which is a massive expropriation carried out with the backing of state and global capital.

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Archie Mafeje took African scholars very seriously, and read and engaged with as many of the scholarly writings of Africans as he could (Mkandawire). He was a fugitive scholar, who found a base in regional organisations like CODESRIA, OSSREA and SAPEs, and he was certainly one of those who contributed most to the building of these organisations. Mafeje was a committed Pan-Africanist, and a world-class scholar.

In a way, he seemed to have sensed that the end wasn't far away. As early as the year 2000, several of us heard him say, in his usual joking manner, that he had a 'rendezvous with death in three years...'. It was as if he could foretell when his life was going to end.

He was a man with multiple identities and he had many dimensions to him. Upon his passing, many of these dimensions were brought out. Part of Archie's journey ended in his village close to the city

of Umtata, in South Africa, where he was given a decent burial. But prayers were said for him in mosques and churches in Egypt, in the United Kingdom and in South Africa.

The special session organised to honour Mafeje ended on a very high note, with Archie, in his near-legendary humility, reminding everybody that he wasn't a lone star/scholar: there are other people, scholars he's been talking to over the years. Among those present at the sessions, he cited: Thandika Mkandawire, Samir Amin, Helmi Sharawy and Sam Moyo. And then there are all those he's been crossing swords with. The list is long. 'You don't make knowledge alone...' said Mafeje.

This was also an occasion for Mafeje to reiterate what he had always been saying: that CODESRIA should continue to encourage multi-disciplinarity. That was why when, as new members of the Scientific Committee of CODESRIA, 'we were asked to write state-of-the-discipline notes on our respective disciplines, we refused to do so'.

That was Professor Archibald Mafeje, or 'Mr Mafeje', as he preferred to be called.

*À Dieu, Prof.!*



Archie Mafeje with Suzane Nkomo and Jimmy Adesina at the 30th Anniversary Conference, December 2003, in Dakar, Senegal

## Archie Mafeje: The Local and the Universal

In his address to the National Research Foundation in South Africa in May 2001 on 'The Impact of Social Sciences on Development and Democracy: A Positivist Illusion', Archie Mafeje made this point:

Some social philosophers believe that the universal is contained in the local. This is only true, if the local is universally recognised. The so-called African renaissance is not universally recognised. Its intellectual representations are wanting and its political determinations are in question. This raises two questions: i) the indigenisation of knowledge in Africa; and ii) the political significance of Africanity or the so-called African renaissance. Both of these questions are not popular in white South Africa and the West in general. In their immediate connotations these signify nothing more than an assertion of a new self-identity. It is inevitably that any identity emerges as an opposed category to another/others. Likewise, it is inevitably that the assertion of any identity provokes equally subjective/ideological revulsions from whatever is perceived as alterity.<sup>1</sup>

Mafeje here was taking issue with the 'illusion' of positivism in social sciences in favour of a 'normative social science, that is, a social science that does not only acknowledge the fact that it is not "value-free" but is willing to confront and objectify social and moral issues such as poverty, racism, and globalisation'. However, the dialect of and the tension between the local and universal, or the self and the other that he describes in the citation above somehow explain how he was received in his country, South Africa, on his return from exile.

Jimi Adesina, in one of the tributes to Mafeje, recounts how 'in our last conversation he [Mafeje] spoke of his isolation and loneliness in South Africa (at home, in a place of his birth, in a land that gave us one of the finest minds in the global community of the social sciences)'. And this, indeed, is one of the themes that emerged from speeches by friends and relatives at a memorial service held in his honour at the University of South Africa

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NEPAD Secretariat  
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(UNISA), which took place in the Transkei a few days leading to his funeral.

In his widely disseminated tribute to Mafeje, Pallo Jordan, South Africa's Minister of Arts and Culture, recalls that Mafeje 'described himself as South African by birth, Dutch by citizenship, and Egyptian by domicile. His return to the Motherland was intended to not only fuse these into one but spend the last years of his life as a living example of African cosmopolitanism'.<sup>2</sup> Another observer described Mafeje as a 'straight-shooting Afrocentric critic of colonial anthropology and distortions of Africa in western academies... [his] work is not well known among younger scholars and is not as widely circulated in western venues as it deserves'.<sup>3</sup> Mahmood Mamdani concurs: 'The important point is to memorialize the meaning of his life and work in a way that makes it accessible to the younger generation, those who did not have the opportunity to know him personally as we did'.

When I persuaded Mafeje to return 'home' some few years ago, the intention was, among others, to bring his intellectual influence and the respect he commanded on the continent and internationally, closer to his home front. We had hoped he would dedicate whatever strength was still left in his body and mind to collate his work for publication and dissemination. This is a daunting task that is yet to be accomplished.

I was also hoping that Mafeje's return 'home' would inject more energy and, perhaps, even direction, in the ongoing debate about the role and contribution of black intellectuals in the post-apartheid transition. This debate is in three related areas. Firstly, is the concern over the fact that public discourse in post-apartheid South Africa is largely dominated, shaped and led by those who were historically privileged in the past because of the colour of their skin. Indeed, at its 52nd national conference of December 2007, the

ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), deliberated on this challenge under the topic: 'Communications and the Battle of Ideas'. One of the resolutions adopted at the conference in this regard committed the party to 'vigorously communicate the ANC's outlook and values (developmental state, collective rights, values of caring and community solidarity, ubuntu, non-sexism, etc.) versus the current mainstream media's ideological outlook (neo-liberalism, a weak and passive state, and overemphasis on individual rights, market fundamentalism, etc.)', and 'that the battle of ideas must be conducted in deeds not only in theory and these deeds must find practical expression through the ANC structures'. Accordingly, the party's mouthpiece, *ANC Today*, subsequently carried a lead article with the title: 'The Voice of the ANC Must Be Heard'!

The second area of the debate is about the virtual absence of black intelligentsia in the country. Pitika Ntuli painted a disturbing picture:

In South Africa, with the advent of the new dispensation, intellectuals were induced from academe into government to function as bureaucrats. Those who felt constrained there were in turn induced into the corporate world. In both these new homes they find their voices circumscribed by the logic of survival. There were those who went the NGO route, but even there they found that if they spoke out they would not receive state funding. Some sought other means of contributing to the broader society: they sought funding from international agencies, but this brought new problems; they were accused of collaborating with enemies of the state or were used by these agencies to subvert our new democracy.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, for Ebrahim Harvey,

alongside the decline of civil society we have seen the decline in black intellectual production. There is a resulting dearth of independent and committed black intellectuals. So discourse in every field continues overwhelmingly to be dominated by white academics and intellectuals.<sup>5</sup>

And finally, there is a tendency in the white intellectual and opinion-making establishment to deny the currency and significance of 'race' in South Africa today because, they argue, apartheid is dead! What matters now is, for the white Marxist Left, 'class' or, for most, the fear of being overwhelmed by an all-powerful ANC. When some black intellectuals organised themselves into a Native Club in 2006, this was dismissed in the media and other public fora; others even comparing the club to the 'Broederbond' of the Afrikaner nationalists during apartheid. Recently, some black journalists convened a Forum for Black Journalists, and this also led to outrage in the white opinion-making establishment, with some white journalists even gate-crashing into a meeting of the forum to play heroes and martyrs for 'liberty' and 'freedom of speech and association'. The argument was, as in the case of the Native Club, that it is racist for blacks to organise themselves into exclusive or, as they put it, 'apartheid-type' organisations. Yet many public spaces in the country, including organisations, remain exclusively white because of structural constraints and impediments to access and entry for blacks, thanks to the impact of centuries of colonial rule.

Unfortunately, Mafeje could not fit in and find his way into this debate. His towering intellectual stature and his 'straight-shooting' approach could have helped make the case for a very vibrant, strong and independent black intelligentsia as a force to reckon with in confronting the enduring legacy of apartheid. His age was, to be fair, taking a heavy toll on him.

Perhaps, another factor that contributed to Mafeje's loneliness on his return 'home' was the fact that he was never an active part of the liberation movement establishment. Jordan makes this point in his tribute to Mafeje:

Though he was a keen supporter of African liberation, from his days as a student at [University of Cape Town] UCT, Archie Mafeje was always extremely sceptical of national liberation movements. He immersed himself in the study of the anti-colonial nationalist movements across sub-Saharan Africa. He withheld his support from all the liberation movements in South Africa, and even after 1994 he sounded doubtful about returning home to South Africa, preferring to attach himself to the newly established

Multidisciplinary Research Centre at the University of Namibia, as director. It took the efforts of his old friends and colleagues at UCT to persuade him to apply for a post at the University of South Africa.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, for Mafeje,

governments determine the options for 'development' but they are not the source of all wisdom, as every social philosopher or social scientist would agree. Critique is the ultimate commitment of all good social scientists. Tendentious social science is not only a confirmation of the status quo but is also anti-intellectual and, therefore, detrimental to human/social development. Critical social science insights are indispensable for social development and enlightened governance.<sup>7</sup>

Of course, when the South African Left debated the future of socialism in the early 1990s in the wake of Joe Slovo's 'Has Socialism Failed?' , Mafeje joined in the fray with his 'The Bathos of Tendentious Historiography' . Mafeje informed, as it were, by the belief that Slovo was 'a confirmed Stalinist until the writing of the essay under review' , argued that the South African Communist Party (SACP) was formed by 'white émigré communists [who] depended to a very large extent on the Soviet Union and had virtually no constituency inside the country' . For him, the Party 'succeeded in splitting the black national movement right in the middle for its own purposes. Having lost any support of white workers ...it sought a constituency within the black national movement *without giving up its privileged position*, as a "vanguard party" " [emphasis in the original]. Thus, concluded Mafeje, '... had it not been for its [SACP's] self-interested interference, a number of differences, say, between the Unity Movement and the ANC, and between the ANC and the PAC could have been resolved' .<sup>8</sup>

In his survey of the 'Has Socialism Failed?' debate, Pallo Jordan observed at the time that

Mafeje unfortunately did not engage with Slovo, choosing instead to scold the SACP and its ally, the ANC, about the policies they are pursuing to bring down apartheid. Although ...Mafeje could have made a number of valid points, these got lost because of the Africanist stance he adopted. This

was unfortunate because South African Marxism has an extremely underdeveloped theoretical tradition to which Mafeje might have made a more substantial contribution if he had contained his bad temper. In this instance his eagerness to settle accounts with ideological opponents got the better of him.<sup>9</sup>

Mafeje may have not had the impact we all had hoped for on his return 'home' from exile, but perhaps it was because he was a living expression of the dialect of the local and the universal; an African living without borders, be they geographic or intellectual. He may have not been one of the commissars in the trenches of the liberation movement for fear of being constrained by 'borders' negotiating the dialect of the local and the universal, but he was without doubt one of the pioneers of the knowledge that we are armed with today in our struggle for the total liberation of our continent.

But Mafeje could change lives also, and even transport them from the local to the beyond of the universal, like that of Ken Hughes, now with the Department of Mathematics and Applied Mathematics at UCT, who was among the 200-odd students who staged a sit-in at that university in 1968 to protest the 'Mafeje incident' . For Hughes:

The UCT sit-in of 1968 was a landmark event, both for the university and for those who took part in it. Several people for whom it was a formative experience are still around...In my case it was the start of a peculiar career as an international student agitator – for I went from UCT to the University of Warwick in England, where general grievances resulted in occupying the Registry, and then on to MIT in the US, where we sat in protest against the Vietnam War.<sup>10</sup>

## Notes

1. Archie Mafeje, 'The Impact of Social Sciences on Development and Democracy: A Positivist Illusion', Address to the National Research Foundation, 31 May 2001.
2. Pallo Jordan, 'Statement on the Passing of Professor Archie Mafeje by Minister of Arts & Culture', 4 April 2007.
3. 'Celebrated African Anthropologist Archie Mafeje is Dead', *AfrikaNews.org*, 1 April 2007.
4. Pitika Ntuli, 'We Need Real Intellectual to ask the Right Questions', *Sunday Times*, 27 January 2008.



5. Ebrahim Harvey, 'South Africa: Where are the Black Thinkers of the Left?', *Online Mail and Guardian*, 5 May 2006.
6. Jordan, 'Statement on the Passing of Professor Archie Mafeje by Minister of Arts & Culture'.
7. Mafeje, 'The Impact of Social Sciences on Development and Democracy'.
8. Mafeje, 'The Bathos of Tendentious Historiography: A Review of Joe Slovo's "Has Socialism Failed?"', *SAPES*, vol. 3, no. 11 August 1990.
9. Pallo Jordan, 'A Survey of the South African Debate on the Decline of Socialism in Eastern Europe', *South African Communist Party*, 1991 [see SACP website].
10. *UCT Monday Paper*, vol. 26.05, 23 April 2007.

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## Speaking of Archie

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In 1957, fresh out of university, I left England for South Africa, looking to join the struggle there. I thought the revolution was imminent. Shortly disabused of this notion, I remained to be instructed from scratch in what that revolution entailed. Eventually, in the organization distinguished from all others in the liberatory movement for its uncompromising probity, non-collaborationist policy, non-negotiable programme of democratic demands, I found my instructors. This happened in Cape Town when I providentially picked up a job at the university, thereby acquiring at one and the same time a livelihood and an introduction to Unity Movement politics from an assortment of its junior members studying there. That was how I became acquainted with Archie.

Already a seasoned Unity cadre, lately arrived from the Eastern Cape to study (after a trial run in the biological sciences) for a degree in Social Anthropology, he was then in his early twenties, a tall, spare, loose-jointed young man, tastefully attired, however meagre his wardrobe. His face too, highly charged and singularly resolute, had its merits, but beauty wasn't one of them. Years later, in his Dar-es-Salaam period, that face took the brunt of a head-on automobile collision that landed him in one hospital after another for months on end. Immediately upon hearing the grim news, I wrote him post-haste to say for his consolation what a mercy it was only his face, since he never had any looks to lose. But it wasn't his looks he was worried about. From the hospital, in Copenhagen this time, where he was about to undergo highly specialized surgery on his jaw, he replied piteously, 'For two weeks my mouth will be sealed. Can you imagine?' It was indeed barely imaginable. I never knew anyone so terse in his speech who had so much to say, 'to discuss', as he called it.

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New York  
USA

He was always at it, discussing, analyzing, synthesizing, everywhere on the campus, with the single exception of Blackies' Corner – so-named as the undisputed preserve of the non-whites. Archie denounced it as voluntary segregation. He wouldn't be found dead at Blackies' Corner. Likewise at lectures, while the non-white students customarily occupied the back row, Archie sat right up in the front row, an admiring white girl on either side. Ever himself, how strenuously he safeguarded his autonomy was equally plain to all of us who knew him in the Unity Movement in those years. No respecter of persons, he kept a measured distance from the leadership, the better (as he gave out) to get his Movement work done.

In his first year at UCT he would sometimes drop in at my office, 'to discuss' between lectures. But thereafter, as our acquaintance progressed, he preferred to call at my lodgings (always transient in those days, since I had to decamp as often as either my landlady objected to black visitors, or scandalized neighbours called the police). He would stop by regularly on his way from the townships where he did his fieldwork, bringing me his insider's knowledge and meticulous observation of the township people, the multifarious African working class, whose as yet unconsolidated struggle, he, of all the comrades who contributed to my political education, best interpreted for me, because he was closest to the people whom it most closely concerned. He was my political touchstone in those years, and so he remained all the years of our life-long friendship.

Archie was one of those intellectuals who (as he described them), petit-bourgeois

by definition, yet actively seeking to transform their society, have thrown in their lot with the worker/peasant constituency in their struggle towards socialism. Mindful of the inherent contradiction in this position, he proposes in one of his essays that 'the intellectual, like the samurai, should go armed with two swords – one for killing his enemies, the other for killing himself when he betrays his cause'. But the one sword was all Archie ever needed. The cause he served was the social, political and economic transformation of Africa, nothing less. In this comprehensive vision of a socialist Africa, his inexhaustible intellectual passion found its commensurate form and scope. Hence, (to quote one of the early CODESRIA tributes), 'he could not be shaken from his stand'.

Archie's opposites in South Africa, the majority intellectuals of the petit-bourgeois constituency who share the spoils of the ANC's negotiated settlement, not surprisingly foresaw his presence in their midst as a direct threat. That is why when – free to return to South Africa in the 1990s, an eminent scholar of international renown – he sought appropriate employment at his alma mater, the UCT administration, far from making due amends for their predecessors' craven withdrawal of his appointment in 1968, contrived by all manner of foul means to keep him out. Nor, when he returned to South Africa permanently in 2002 did they extend themselves further than to send him the following year an apology exclusively for the 1968 offence, with a similarly worthless offer of an honorary doctorate – both of which Archie, never a man to be messed with, studiously ignored. And there the matter rested till his death last year, whereupon the students came out in such clamorous and widely broadcast protest on his behalf that the administration, taking fright, forthwith reversed their position. With declared intent to 'bring closure to the Mafeje issue', they dispatched their

emissary to Archie's funeral with assurances that the UCT Council Executive Committee, recognizing 'the deep injustice done', resolved that 'his impact as an extraordinarily gifted scholar be captured forever', and promised 'to find a practical way' to that end.

As it now appears, the post-apartheid custodians of UCT who so assiduously kept Archie's 'impact' out of the curriculum, who closed their own ranks against him and, with the ready collusion of their sister universities, effectively ostracized him till the end of his life, have lately attempted to make amends. The new Vice-Chancellor, in his public apology for the University's failure 'to bring a very significant African scholar home to UCT',

has gone so far as to say that the University 'did not make a committed effort ... and that it may even have acted in a way that prejudiced Professor Mafeje a second time in the 1990s'. As regards further reparations, the first and most notable on the list is the University's undertaking to open their archives to 'scholars wishing to research the events surrounding Archie Mafeje at UCT'. Archival research on the University Council's withdrawal of Archie's appointment in 1968 has already revealed that the Minister of Education, in his discussions with the Principal of UCT at that time, informed him of 'Mafeje's record of subversive activity'. But it's a safe bet that research into the motive for the post-apartheid Council's

equally unbecoming conduct in the 1990s won't turn up any such telling material. Indeed, the University's deafening silence on Archie's politics casts serious doubt on its fitness to celebrate the memory of the man whose unshakable commitment to the interests of the disregarded majority of South Africa's people so strongly discommended him to the university constituency of South Africa's comprador government.

It remains for those of his family, colleagues, students, comrades and friends to whom he was dearest, and who best know the crucial importance to Africa's future of his transformative, unremittingly honest and fearless life's work, to keep his banner flying.

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## Archie, Dear Archie

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Archie was a Renaissance man. Others have written about his outstanding intellectual abilities, which are so well known in academic and political circles that they need no repetition here. He also loved and was highly knowledgeable about classical music (I can see him now, lounging on the sofa, totally absorbed in listening to a recording). He had a formidable grasp of the English language, frequently using words that had mother-tongue English graduates reaching for their dictionaries – and always finding that he had used them correctly. He knew about wines, he knew about food, he knew about many other things too numerous to mention here. He was a demon table-tennis player. When he displayed any of his huge range of interests he was not showing off, simply stretching his knowledge and practising it.

I first met Archie at Cambridge in the Anthropology Department library, in the autumn of 1964. We had both arrived at the same time, he to do his PhD against all the odds after the torment and experience of growing up in apartheid South Africa, I as a first-year undergraduate after working briefly in a multiracial school in Swaziland between English boarding school and university. I remember our first encounter vividly. Someone told me that the man sitting hunched at a table absorbed in reading was South African. I bounced up to him, introduced myself, told him I had just come back from Swaziland and had been volunteering in

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Oxford University  
UK

the ANC office in London. When I had finished he looked up at me with that inimitable, quizzical look of his and said, 'So?'

He was always good at deflating people's egos when he thought it necessary to do so. He was equally good at encouraging people's confidence. Archie and I remained friends, and he taught me more than I ever took the time to thank him for. He taught me by example how vital it is to question, to study, to think independently, to stick to principles in the face of fashion, never to compromise.

Archie was always challenging, but only dismissive when he felt dismissed. At Cambridge he quickly acquired a reputation for not suffering fools gladly, and woe betide the person at the other end of his acerbic tongue. But in Dar es Salaam, where I was living when he arrived to take up his post as Professor of Sociology (and was almost deported for travelling on a South African passport), I saw a new side of Archie, endlessly patient and often tender towards his students, supporting them, encouraging them, playing with them, all the time teaching them. His commitment was total.

Then Archie introduced me to Shahida, his soulmate and intellectual equal bar none. Shahida and I became friends, then close friends, then sisters. For me, from then on, Archie was family. The intellectual challenges continued whenever there was a chance, alongside his ecstatic 'We're going to have a baby!' when they discovered that Shahida was pregnant, his pleasure at my baby son calling him 'Daddy Archie' ('He isn't confusing me with his father, he just understands that I'm in a similar role'), the delicious meals served in their Cairo apartment, his cultural explanation of why he was driving us up a one-way road the wrong way, his sudden call to go to the window after a long night of serious talk with him and Shahida, to see 'this is what I like about Cairo' – waiters at the end of their night shift, at 5.00am, joyously playing football by the canal.

To say that Archie was unconventional is an understatement. In everything he did, he ploughed his own, usually very lonely furrow. He was neither a conventional husband nor a conventional father, but he adored and was fiercely proud of both his wife Shahida and his daughter Dana. Dana brought huge joy into her parents' lives; Archie's decision to leave Cairo and go back to South Africa must have been one of the hardest he ever made. Ever a man of principle, he did what he thought he had to do, for all that he and Shahida had always believed in. It

meant he was alone when he died, isolated from the mainstream of contemporary South African scholarship and poli-

tics, but doubtless determined to the last to keep fighting for a truly transformed

South Africa. What a privilege to have known the man.

## Archie Mafeje

**P**rofessor Archie Mafeje was born in the region of Eastern Cape on 30 March 1936. A few days before his 71st birthday on 28 March 2007, he passed away. The sad news of his death brought to the whole African intellectual community, to his family and friends, a deep shock and a profound sense of pain. For a moment, it seemed, time stood still, poised at the edge of the unknown.

One of the finest minds among African scholars, Archie was a fighter for African freedom, a comrade, a mentor, and a very special friend, to so many of us. Archie was above all the projects of CODESRIA, husband of our dear sister and friend, Shahida. His departure leaves an inconsolable sense of loss. This untimely departure leaves us with many projects and dreams unrealized, as CODESRIA had great plans of immortalizing his formidable achievements and ensuring continuity for the mentorship he was never tired of giving us, and the younger generation of social scientists.

In his intellectual and commendable controversial style, Archie was a profound thinker, always concerned with the different social, political and economic challenges Africa has faced and still faces. It would be shortsighted of us to limit our appreciation of Archie's contributions to knowledge only to his published works. To celebrate the fullness of his contribu-

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tion, we need to recognize that the areas covered by his analysis came out also through his speeches, conference papers, public lectures and many other interventions. Whether published or unpublished, his highly original and profound quality of thought has always been a great inspiration for different generations of Africa scholars and for Africans of all walks of life.

Archie has been and will always remain a founding father and guide of CODESRIA. His contributions are of such magnitude that the history of CODESRIA cannot be complete without him. In recognition of his immense work, he was honored by the African social research community with a life membership of CODESRIA at the 30th Anniversary Conference in Dakar in 2003.

As current president of CODESRIA I shall sorely miss his wisdom, guidance and good humor at Scientific Committee meetings. With other founder members, he shared different debates on the future of Africa. His honest positions, political and intellectual integrity, immense generosity and authority of voice earned him profound respect from the academic community.

In this moment of profound pain, and on behalf of CODESRIA's members, the Scientific Committee where he served, the Executive Committee, and on my personal behalf, I would like to express our heartfelt condolence and solidarity with Archie's family, intellectual colleagues, friends, and all those who have had occasion to drink from his well of wisdom.

And last but not the least, I have a word for our dear sister. Dear Shaida, I'm aware that in a moment of pain such as this, and especially the loss of someone we love so dearly, the words of our friends are not enough to fill the great emptiness we feel. However, I would like to assure you that CODESRIA's family will walk with you, with Dana, with Xolane, and with the other members of Archie's family, hand in hand, in this difficult phase of your lives, offering as much as we can, a shoulder for you to lean on. Accept therefore, our deep expression of love and solidarity. On behalf of CODESRIA I can also assure you and the African community of our commitment to make any efforts necessary to immortalize Archie's lifelong work and to realize the dream we built together, to spread his knowledge to the younger generation in the continent and beyond.

Archie has died, Archie lives. Archie will live forever in our hearts. Archie's memories and thoughts will continue to grow and flower like the seed of a giant tree.



Sammy Beban Chumbow,  
Tandika Nkiwane  
and Archie Mafeje,  
December 2003, in Dakar,  
Senegal

## Tribute to Archie Mafeje

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We are all here because we loved and admired Professor Mafeje. I for one have always been intimidated by him and infatuated by his work.

In one obituary written in his honour the author politely alluded to Archie's intolerance of mediocrity reminding us that he was '(L)ess tolerant of scholars not sure footed in their scholarship'. I think he was referring to me!

Archie could indeed be much less than tolerant. But his writing and scholarship were kind and conscious of the limitations of others. *He wrote to convert* practitioners and researchers from objects to agents for the liberation of African social science. He was aware of how insurmountable the walls of 'colonial anthropology' were and blamed that project and its complexity for the 'defeat' of African anthropology. To liberate the latter, anthropolo-

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Cairo, Egypt

gists need to master, apprehend, surround, expose and vanquish the former. This quintessential deconstruction, deconstruction for transformation, is a tolerant project that makes explicit his awareness of and acceptance of the limitations of much current scholarship.

His vitriolic attacks on postmodernism are known to most of you. So are his attempts to deracialize Anthropology and to decimate its central concept of alterity. But while he speculated on the end of Anthropology he seduced his students into that very same discipline. Archie com-

mented on a rather awful paper that I once wrote for him saying, 'Perhaps you can read but you certainly can't write!' Perhaps I still can't but it is thanks to him that I continue to try.

There are three gifts that he has left his students and readers:

- 1- The importance of cognitive value as distinct from empirical stock;
- 2- Clarity and rigour in writing as an alternative to writing postmodernist circles in an opaque but likeable language;
- 3- Courage to find a peer group and recognize when established criteria of worth are fickle and faddish.

Thank you, Archie, on behalf of the 'not so brilliant' who you helped challenge and shape. Thank you for your brilliance, cheek, audacity and very loving self.

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## My Father

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Dear all,

I have read and appreciated all that was written about my father so far. At first, I refused to, simply because I wanted to shut out the idea of having lost such a man. Most of you wrote about his academic prowess, genius mind, incomparable wit and endless struggle for his nation and greater Africa. Having acknowledged all these attributes at a very early age, I later realised that Papa was a 'giant' not only in the intellectual sense but as a human being.

My father was critical but humane, fierce but compassionate, sarcastic but gentle, silly, but brilliant, stubborn but loyal, but most of all he was passionate.

Behind the cynical façade, my father was one of the kindest, warmest and most giving men I ever met. I vividly remember

**Dana Mafeje**  
Cairo, Egypt

him getting me dressed for school every day (militarily), asking me what I wanted to eat for lunch religiously (until I was 26!), never telling me to study because to him exams were for idiots, having serious chats with me without ever looking me in the eye (those of you who know him personally will relate), speaking to me logically in the most illogical situations, pushing me to excel just to be worthy of being his daughter and mostly for being my ultimate reference.

Last time I saw Papa was late 2005. We spent a week together in Pretoria. Some-

how I felt he didn't want to lose a minute, he introduced me to my South African family and friends, gave me advice on relationships, life and tennis, he even taught me his famous curry recipe. On my way back, I called my mother from the airport, crying and I told her I knew it would be the last time I ever saw my father. Unfortunately I was right.

I was always told by him that 'life isn't fair', I never really understood what that meant until he left me. I wish I had seen him one last time, I wish I had told him what a hero he was in my eyes. I wish he had known how loved and admired he was. To me he will always remain Papa, Archie Mafeje, the man who got on the pedestal and never fell down.

His daughter, Dana

April 2007



After 71 years of life, this is what Archie Mafeje would have told you:

### My Way

And now, the end is near;  
And so I face the final curtain.  
My friend, I' ll say it clear,  
I' ll state my case, of which I' m certain.

I' ve lived a life that' s full.  
I' ve traveled each and every highway;  
And more, much more than this,  
I did it my way.

Regrets, I' ve had a few;  
But then again, too few to mention.  
I did what I had to do  
And saw it through without exemption.

I planned each charted course;  
Each careful step along the high-way,  
But more, much more than this,  
I did it my way.

Yes, there were times, I' m sure you knew  
When I bit off more than I could chew.  
But through it all, when there was doubt,  
I ate it up and spat it out.  
I faced it all and I stood tall;  
And did it my way.

I' ve loved, I' ve laughed and cried.  
I' ve had my fill; my share of losing.  
And now, as tears subside,  
I find it all so amusing.

To think I did all that;  
And may I say - not in a shy way,  
No, oh no not me,  
I did it my way.

For what is a man, what has he got?  
If not himself, then he has naught.  
To say the things he truly feels;  
And not the words of one who kneels.  
The record shows I took the blows -  
And did it my way!

Written by Paul Anka

God rest his soul.

P.S. I love you Papa, Dana