

THE STUDENT AFRICANIST'S HANDBOOK:
A GUIDE TO RESOURCES

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C.W. Hartwig and W.M. O'Barr, *The Student Africanist's Handbook: A Guide to Resources*, Schenkman Publishing Company, pp. vii + 152, \$5.95.

Until recently, the study of the African continent was regarded as either part of imperial studies or a pursuit of the exotic. Since the Second World War, however, with the introduction of Centres of African Studies in European and American universities and the establishment of universities in Africa, it has been found opportune to apply various branches of the bourgeois social sciences to the study of Africa and her people. Thus we now have African history, African economics, African philosophy, etc., each claiming to be a new and independent area of study, true to the bourgeois specialization of labour.

It is not an accident of history that the social sciences are being reproduced in a new terrain. The emergence of the African petty bourgeoisie in the colonial era with a belief that they could excel the agents of the metropolitan bourgeoisie in the "civilizing mission," inter alia, called for a change in the crude racist approach to Africa in bourgeois scholarship. No longer was it acceptable, for example, to utter what one of the early settlers in Kenya, Grogan, said about Africans, i.e. that "the African native...is fundamentally inferior in mental development and ethical possibilities...to the white man," and that "a good sound system of compulsory labour would do more to raise the native in five year than all the millions that have been sunk in missionary efforts for the last fifty," for there had emerged "African modernizers" who were just as hard working as their mentors. Moreover, it could no longer be said that Africans were "sly, cunning, deceitful, cowardly, and devoid of any sense of honour¹" as Lord Cranworth saw of the Kikuyu of Kenya. There were African "entrepreneurs," to borrow from Schumpeter's arsenal of concepts as has been done by some Africanists,² who were just as competent in their "work" as those of any other race. These were also educated Africans who could dig into the African past to show the wonders that their predecessors had accomplished: like Antony Amoo of Ghana who in the seventeenth century taught in universities in Germany and wrote dissertations in Latin and Greek.³

Evidence therefore was being uncovered to show that Africa was not so different from Europe as to be regarded as a terrain of the exotic. Here then, like in Europe, there was change: environmental and social, which justified

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- 1 Quoted by A. Clayton and D.C. Savage, *Government and Labour in Kenya*, London, 1974, pp 21-22.
- 2 For example J. Iliffe, *Agricultural Change in Modern Tanganyika*, Nairobi, 1971, pp 21-27
- 3 See either A.A. Mazrui, "Ancient Greece" in *African Political Thought*, Nairobi, 1967, or J. E. Harris, *Africans and their History*, New York, 1972.

the application of the various branches of bourgeois scholarship, if the nature of such change were to be appropriated. Accordingly, since 1945, so much work along these lines has been done that a student guide like the one under review is timely. This work, therefore, is welcome on that score.

As a guide to sources, the book also includes a perspective which the authors regarded as their lodestar: the concept of diversity which they found so applicable to the African situation. One thing that struck them about Africa is its diversity in terms of geography, social organization, political systems (pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial), etc. This served as their guide to sources whether in political science, history, anthropology, sociology, geography, ethnology, etc.

Indeed diversity cannot be gainsaid. The problem, however, is to explain it. Perhaps, it might be argued that an explanation will emerge from the variety of sources themselves. But there is nothing to guarantee that, like stamp collecting, such a venture might not bring in something even more exotic. To buy a lottery ticket is no guarantee that one will get a prize.

C. Wright Mills once noted that what men need is not merely information, but a quality of mind that will help them understand that information. How do simple issues fit into complex ones? How are issues interrelated?...⁴ Concepts adequate for a task in hand are more important than the information. We can take the example of African entrepreneurs to illustrate this point. Schumpeter has argued that the development of any country depends on her men of vision: the entrepreneurs who are characterized by their habit of "simply... doing... new things". The doing of things that are already being done in a new way, (innovation)"...⁵ Hence the more entrepreneurs a country has, the more development she will undergo and vice versa. Thus it has been asserted that Africa is developing slowly because it has very few entrepreneurs. This phenomenon has been attributed to the ubiquity of authoritarian states (pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial) which has hampered the free development of entrepreneurship...⁶

But why should African states be so authoritarian? Short of a racist answer, an empiricist would say that we need to do more research, i.e. to collect more facts. But it should be underlined that the nature of the state is determined by the mode of production prevalent which is in turn historically determined.⁷ Moreover, it is not true that authoritarian states hinder

- 4 C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, Harmondsworth, 1970.
- 5 Quoted by I. Inkster, "A Smattering of history: marginal men and the English industrial revolution," Working paper in Economic History, 2/1975, University of New South Wales.
- 6 E. Terray, "Classes and class consciousness in the Abnron kingdom of Gyaman", M. Bloch ed. *Marxist Analyses and Social Anthropology*, London, 1975.
- 7 This is the thrust of Inkster's article cited above.

development. Nazi Germany is a glaring example. The men of vision have to be "situated" if their vision is to be explained...⁸

That said, the book being reviewed is meant for students in metropolitan universities. But given that the various disciplines which claim to be African are still a "conceptual province" of the bourgeois world-view⁹... which is empiricist¹⁰..., the book is bound to find its way to the periphery as a stimulant to students of these countries to "catch up". It is therefore important to reiterate that the book is meant as a recipe on how to find one's way in the labyrinth of reinforcing the bourgeois way of life. Whether the periphery will be able to produce people who will excel in this remains to be seen. But it should be noted that intermediaries cannot be otherwise. This thought is historically determined.

8 Notwithstanding their claims of independence, African studies remain conceptually a bourgeois province.

9 The historical part of this argument has been put forward by A.J. Temu and Bonaventure Swai, "Old and New Themes of African History Since the 1960s: The Case of Tanzanian Historiography," The Association of African Universities History Workshop, Lagos, 1977.

10 J. Depelchin has written a short but stimulating article on the merits and demerits of empiricism in history and the importance of the materialist approach. "Notes Towards the Production of a Materialist Pre-colonial Central African History", Dar es Salaam, August, 1977.

SEKOUTOURE'S GUINEA AND GUINEA: THE MOBILISATION OF A PEOPLE

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1. Ladipo Adamolekun, *Sekou Toure's Guinea: An Experiment in Nation Building*, London Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1976.
2. Claude Riviere, *Guinea: The Mobilization of a People*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1977.

There are many monographs, articles written about Guinea's socialist experimentation, but only a few provide fair accounts of that country's strengths and achievements, weaknesses and failures. This is so because the Guinean regime's opponents as well as those progressive writers sympathetic to a non-capitalist path of development tend to have emotional involvements at stake, which prevent them from analysing the Guinean experience with much scholarly detachment. Furthermore, the scarcity of available and reliable data makes the objectivity of such accounts precarious. Yet Jean Suret-Canale's *La Republique de Guinee* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1970) still stands out as one of the most comprehensive evaluation and future outlook of independent Guinea, although the study appears dated today.

Adamolekun's *Sekou Toure's Guinea* and Riviere's *Guinea* are serious attempts to evaluate the claim of the Guinean leaders to transform their country from a traditional, colonized society into a modern, progressive, revolutionary society. These two authors use empirical conceptual framework: Adamolekun's study tests the conventional hypotheses of the concept of modernization and nation-building to demonstrate that the Guinean regime has successfully mobilized Guinean society politically (Adamolekun p. 154) and has made considerable progress in promoting the country's economic and political development, but yet has not done much in realizing the development potentials of the country. Riviere at times uses dialectics in analysing colonial modes of production, productive forces and relations, class concepts, and at other times uses the concept of social modification or mutation in analyzing the ethnic integration, the emancipation of women, the mobilization of youth and religion. At other times, he uses stereotyped anthropological characterization to conclude that the political system is not effective and that the economic prospects are bad (pp. 208-209).

Adamolekun's and Riviere's studies recognize as central to Guinea's nation building process such factors as an effectively mobilized people, a belief in the correctness and justness of the ideology of the Parti Democratique de Guinee (P.D.G.), the sole political party, and a charismatic

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