Reflections on the future of anthropology in Africa

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Introduction[1]

Does anthropology have a future in Africa?

Divination — and by what other means could this question be answered — has been a significant, persistent topic in the anthropological study of Africa, recently acquiring new depth by the fascinating work of such researchers as Werbner and Devisch.[2] As an anthropologist, and coming — matrilaterally, as these cases go —

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[1]   This is a revised version of an argument originally presented at the African Futures Conference, Centre of African Studies, Edinburgh, 9-11th December 1987, celebrating that institution's 25th anniversary. The original version was published as: van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1988, 'Reflections on the future of anthropology in Africa', in: Fyfe, C., ed., *African futures: Twenty-fifth anniversary conference*, Edinburgh: Centre of African Studies, Seminar Proceedings, No. 28, pp. 293-309. The present version has been slightly revised, extensive references have been added whereas the original version had none, and whereas the original 1987 postscript has been incorporated in the main text now, a new postscript has have been added to comment on the 1987 situation from the perspective of 2002. The title was set by the conference organisers and therefore represents no choice on my part; yet no anthropologist could consider such a title without being reminded of: Lévi-Strauss, C., 1965, *The future of kinship studies*, Huxley Memorial Lecture, London: Royal Anthropological Institute.

[2]   Cf. de Boeck, F., & R. Devisch, 1994, 'Ndembu, Luunda and Yaka divination compared: From representation and social engineering to embodiment and worldmaking', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 24: 98-133; Devisch, R., 1978, 'Towards a semantic study of divination: Trance and initiation of the Yaka diviner as a basis for his authority', *Bijdragen: Tijdschrift voor Filosofie en Theologie*, 39: 278-288; Devisch, R., 1985, 'Diagnostic divinatoire chez les Yaka du Zaïre: Les axes étiologiques et le sujet de l'énonciation', *L'Ethnographie*, 81, 96-97: 197-216; Devisch, R., 1985, 'Perspectives on divination in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa', in: van Binsbergen, W.M.J. & Schoffeleers, J.M., eds., *Theoretical explorations in African religion,* London/ Boston: Kegan Paul International, pp. 50-83; Devisch, R., 1991, 'Mediumistic divination among the northern Yaka of Zaire', in: Peek, P.M., ed., 1991, *African divination systems: Ways of knowing*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 112-132; Devisch, R., 1995, 'The slit drum and the birth of divinatory utterance in the Yaka milieu (Zaire)', in: de Heusch, L., ed., *Objects: Signs of Africa*, Tervuren: Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale; Devisch, R., 1997, 'Divination and oracles', in: Middleton, J.M., ed., Encyclopaedia of Africa south of the Sahara, New York: Scribners, vol. 1: 493-497; Devisch, R., & Vervaeck, B., 1985, 'Auto-production, production et reproduction: Divination et politique chez les Yaka du Zaire', *Social Compass*, 1984, ed. M. Schoffeleers, special issue on 'Meaning and power'; Werbner, R.P., 1973, 'The superabundance of understanding: Kalanga rhetoric and domestic divination', *American Anthropologist*, 75: 414-440; Werbner, R.P., 1989, 'Making the hidden seen: Tswapong wisdom divination', in: Werbner, R.P., 1989, Ritual passage sacred journey: The process and organization of religious movement, Washington/ Manchester: Smithsonian Institution Press/ Manchester University Press, ch. 1, pp. 19-60. When this was written in 1987, my own preoccupation with divination was still only academic. A few years later I became a Southern African diviner-priest myself, cf. van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1991, 'Becoming a sangoma: Religious anthropological field-work in

from a European family background that has a tradition in herbalism, interpretation of dreams and visions, and psychotherapy, I have extensively worked with diviners in various parts of Africa, seeking to understand their trade. Yet no degree of anthropological expertise or congeni(t)ality would allow me to answer the above question at a fundamentally different level than the way it tends to be discussed, in Africa as elsewhere, among social scientists: after work, over beers. I take it the question is meant to provoke stimulating and contentious statements and to generate discussion, in the overall context of stock-taking that defined the Edinburgh conference on African futures at which the present paper was first presented. I shall do my best to oblige, in the awareness that dreams about the future are often unmistakable indications of problems and contradictions such as exist in the present or existed in the past. The essence of the diviner's task is not to predict or stipulate an unchangeable future, but to re-attach the distressed client (anthropology? the international community of Africanists?) to a pattern of symbols and relations; to restore — at least for the duration of the session — meaning and direction to that pattern (often through somewhat cheap theatrical means which however should be vindicated by the formal virtuosity of the diviner's praxeological performance); and to confront the client, on the basis of the sense of illumination that is produced by the session, with a limited number of alternative courses of action, each evaluated in terms of the symbols that have been evoked...[3]

One thing should be clear from the start: much as I am flattered by the organizers' invitation, I consider myself not the right person to be addressing our leading question, and to officiate in this divinatory session.

For one thing, despite my anthropological training I am not so sure that I still qualify as an anthropologist — having done research, published and carried administrative responsibilities in the emphatically multi-disciplinary environment of the Leiden African Studies Centre for more than ten years now. Inevitably, my views on the future of anthropology wherever in the world will be influenced by my assessment of both the limitations and the potential of anthropology in the presentday intellectual environment of the North Atlantic region, as brought out in the course of my own career.

Much more important, the time is past that others than Africans could be in a position to define and advocate whatever is good or bad for Africa and its future: imposing research priorities, identifying blind spots and issuing exhortations and directions. As intellectuals operating in an international context, our 'dual mandate'

Francistown, Botswana', Journal of Religion in Africa, 21, 4: 309-344, also at: http://come.to/african_religion , and greatly revised version forthcoming in my book Intercultural encounters; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1998, 'Sangoma in Nederland: Over integriteit in interculturele bemiddeling', in: Elias, M., & Reis, R., eds., Getuigen ondanks zichzelf: Voor Jan-Matthijs Schoffeleers bij zijn zeventigste verjaardag, Maastricht: Shaker, pp. 1-29; English version: Sangoma in the Netherlands: On integrity in intercultural mediation, at: http://come.to/african_religion, and greatly revised version forthcoming in my book Intercultural encounters.

[3] On these characteristics of the diviner's craft, cf. the work of Devisch and Werbner as cited above, and: van Binsbergen, W.M.J., & J.M. Schoffeleers, 1985b, 'Theoretical explorations in African religion: Introduction', in: Binsbergen, W.M.J. van, & J.M. Schoffeleers, 1985a, red., Theoretical explorations in African religion, Londen/ Boston: Kegan Paul International, pp. 1-49; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1994, 'Divinatie met vier tabletten: Medische technologie in Zuidelijk Afrika', in: Sjaak van der Geest, Paul ten Have, Gerhard Nijhoff en Piet Verbeek-Heida, eds., De macht der dingen: Medische technologie in cultureel perspectief, Amsterdam: Spinhuis, pp. 61-110; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1995, 'Four-tablet divination as trans-regional medical technology in Southern Africa', Journal of Religion in Africa, 25, 2: 114-140, also at http:// come.to/ african_religion; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1996, 'Transregional and historical connections of four-tablet divination in Southern Africa', Journal of Religion in Africa, 26, 1: 2-29, also at http:// come.to/ african_religion.

(!),[4] with regard to the maintenance and development of our discipline, concerns

(a) our home institutions, and
(b) international scholarly exchange, through conferences, publications, and institutional facilities for research and writing open to colleagues on a world-wide basis.

Let it be Africans who define the future of scholarship in Africa, and when in doing so they subject their views to the international academic community, then is the proper moment for others, like myself, to comment. There are many African colleagues with whom I feel united in our love both for the people of Africa and for anthropology. I trust that those, who do have the mandate to speak on the future of African institutions and contributions, will raise the present discussion above the plane on which I, as a well-meaning outsider, must operate; and I hope that what little is offered here will give them inspiration and moral support, rather than causing them irritation.

Meanwhile, the leading question, such as put before us by our distressed client (still in the metaphor of a divination session), in itself needs to be taken apart before an answer can be attempted. What is anthropology? What is it doing in Africa?

What is anthropology?

Anthropology is not necessarily what anthropologists do, nor are anthropologists to be defined as members of those subsystems of formal organization known as anthropology departments.

Like over half a century ago when the discipline was being established, anthropology departments in the North Atlantic region are once again peopled by researchers from a wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds. But now the movement would appear to be centrifugal rather than centripetal. Those lawyers, engineers, linguists, musicologists and geographers of the past were drawn into the fold in order to make rather converging contributions to an emerging common cause, anthropology, which they believed to be more meaningful than their own original professions. At present, however, the development economists, agronomists, sociologists, historians, political scientists, feminist and Marxist activists, educationalists, statisticians etc. that have come to rub shoulders with the anthropologists are so many signs that the profession (now firmly established in the North Atlantic academic structures, and with an ever increasing impact on the arts, mass culture and the media in this part of the world) has greatly diversified and fragmented in its contents, theoretical orientation and underlying philosophy.

A series of rapidly alternating new paradigms, each with an active life span of hardly a decade, has sought to remedy the main weaknesses of the now classic anthropology of the 1940s and '50s.[5] We still owe a very great deal of intellectual

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[4] An ironical reference to: Lugard, F.J.D., 1922, The dual mandate in British tropical Africa, **[place, publisher]**, at the time an influential text on enlightened colonial policy. Lugard was in principle convinced on the inevitability of African self-government, yet his efforts were directed at protecting Africans from exploitation than helping prepare themselves for a return to self-government (cf. Bull, M., 1997, 'Lugard, Frederick John Dealtry', in: Middleton, J.M., ed., Encyclopaedia of Africa south of the Sahara, New York: Scribners, vol. 3, pp. 60-61). I would wish the situation of North Atlantic anthropology of Africa were fundamentally different.

[5] Risking an accusation of myopia, I see the Africanist anthropology of the mid-twentieth century as emblematic for the whole of anthropology, and would reserve the epithet 'classic' specifically for: ;

inspiration and aesthetic satisfaction to the anthropological classics and their authors. If I sum up subsequent innovations and transformations of anthropology as responses to 'failures', negative points, of the classical model, this must be seen in the light of this positive overall assessment.

These points on which the classic model was claimed to be capable of improvement included:

(a) Its failure to situate the anthropological endeavour, as an intellectual movement, within the totality of evolving political, economic, military, cultural and intellectual relations between the North Atlantic region (the cradle of anthropology) and the rest of the world.
(b) Its failure to embark on an anthropology of North Atlantic society, including its peripheral, rural aspects but also its urban life and major ideological orientations.
(c) Its failure to arrive, with regard to societies outside the North Atlantic region, at meaningful statements above the local and the regional level.
(d) Its failure to historicize and periodicize such structure as anthropology did attribute to the institutions of societies outside the North Atlantic region — and to take a relative view of such structure in the face of the historicity of micro processes of power and conflict.
(e) Its failure to subject such institutions (bureaucracies, towns, peripheral capitalism etc.) as were imposed upon, or spread to, areas outside the North Atlantic region since the last century, to the same methodological and analytical treatment as was given to pre-existing ('traditional') autochthonous institutions, and to grasp the reality of contemporary societies outside the North Atlantic region as a complex dialectical interplay between neo-traditional and North Atlantic elements, each transformed away from their respective initial models.
(f) Its failure to offer a ready, usable, instrumental grip on societies outside the North Atlantic region, in other words to offer a method and a perspective through which plans for social and economic change could be designed, and legitimated, while observing the constraints of minimal inputs of time, finance and specialist academic conceptualization that development agencies favour. Below I shall argue, of course, that the latter 'failure', leading to current attempts to mobilize anthropology for development, is of a different order than the others, and attempts to address this 'failure' (that was not one) have resulted, not in a positive transformation of the anthropological discipline, but in its decline, acerbating some of its major built-in shortcomings.

What appeared to be a crisis, throughout the second part of the twentieth century, of the young discipline of anthropology has in fact been an intensive process of growth, in all these (and many more) different directions of innovation and correction. The best that could happen to the innovative paradigms was that they were caught into the orbit of main-stream anthropology, and henceforth came to belong to the standard textbook

Evans-Pritchard, E.E., 1937, Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1937); Evans-Pritchard, E.E., 1940, The Political System of the Anuak of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. London: London School of Economics, Monographs on Social Anthropology no. 4; Evans-Pritchard, E.E., 1948, The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk of the Nilotic Sudan. Cambridge: University Press; Evans-Pritchard, E. E., 1949, The Sanusi of Cyrenaica. London: Oxford University Press; Evans-Pritchard, E.E., 1951, Kinship and marriage among the Nuer, Londen: Oxford University Press; Evans-Pritchard, E.E., 1951, Social Anthropology. New York: Free Press; Evans-Pritchard, E.E., 1956, Nuer Religion, Clarendon Press, 1956., ; Evans-Pritchard, E.E. & Fortes, M., 1940, African Political Systems. International African Institute. London: Oxford University Press; Fortes, M., 1945, The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi, London: Oxford University Press for International African Institute; Fortes, M., 1949, The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi, London: Oxford University Press for International African Institute; Fortes, M., 1953, 'The structure of unilineal descent groups', American Anthropologist, 55: 17-41.

package. This seems to have happened to the Manchester school heritage[6] (an early, and formidable, response to the shortcomings of the classic model, initiated and vigorously led by Max Gluckman), to network theory[7] and to historical anthropology,[8] and did also happen — in which which few could foresee in 1987 when this paper was drafted — to the paradigm of the articulation of modes of production.[9] Other attempts,

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[6] Werbner, Richard P., 1984, 'The Manchester School in South-Central Africa', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 13: 157-185; Van Teeffelen, T., 1978, 'The Manchester School in Africa and Israel: a critique', *Dialectical Anthropology*, 3 : 67-83; both with extensive references.

[7] Cf. Boissevain, J., 1974, Friends of Friends: Networks, Manipulators and Coalition, Oxford: Blackwell; Boissevain, J.F., & Mitchell, J.C., 1973,ed., Network analysis, Den Haag/ Paris: Mouton; Mitchell, J.C., 1969, ed., Social Networks in Urban Situations: Analyses of Personal Relationships in Central African Towns, Manchester: Manchester University Press; Hannerz, U., 1992, 'The global ecumene as a network of networks', in: A. Kuper, ed., Conceptualizing society, London: Routledge, pp. 34-56; Long, N., van der Ploeg, J., Curtin, C. and Box, L., 1986, The Commoditization Debate: Labour Process, Strategy and Social Network, Vol 17. Wageningen, The Netherlands, Agricultural University.

[8] Cf. Kroeber, A.L., 1935, 'History and Science in Anthropology', American Anthropologist, 37: 539-69; Boas, F., 1936, 'History and Science in Anthropology: A reply', Race, Language and Culture. New York: Macmillan, 305-11; Driver, H. E., 1956, An Integration of Functional, Evolutionary, and Historical Theory by Means of Correlations. Indiana University Publications in Anthropology and Linguistics. Memoir 12; Cunnison, I.G., 1957, 'History and genealogies in a conquest state', American Anthropologist, 59: 20-31; Schapera, I., 1962, 'Should anthropologists be historians? (Presidential address), Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 92, 2: 143-156; Lévi-Strauss, C., 1963, 'History and anthropology', in : Lévi-Strauss, C., Structural anthropology, [place, publisher] , p. 1-27; Kroeber, A.L., 1963, An Anthropologist Looks at History. Berkeley: University of Califomia Press; Harris M., 1969, The rise of anthropological theory: A history of theories of culture, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, first published New York: Crowell, 1968; Vansina, J., 1970, 'Cultures through time', in: Naroll, R., & Cohen, R., eds., A handbook of method in cultural anthropology, Garden City (N.Y.): Natural History Press, pp. 165-179; Finley, M.I., 1975, 'Anthropology and the classics', in: Finley, M. I., 1975, The Use and Abuse of History. New York: Viking. Reprinted, New York: Penguin, 1987; Godelier, M., 1978, 'Infrastructures, societies and history', Current Anthropology, 19, 4: 763-771; De Certeau, M., 1980, 'Writing vs. Time: History and Anthropology in the Works of Lafitau.' Yale French Studies 59: 37-64. ; Cohn, B.S., 1982, 'Towards a rapproachment' [between history and anthropology] , in: A. Rabb & R.J. Rothberg, eds, The new history: The 1980s and beyond, Princeton: Princeton University Press; Sahlins, M.D., 1983, 'Other times, other customs: The anthropology of history', American Anthropologist, 85, 3: 517-544; Tonkin, E., McDonald, M., & Chapman, M., 1989, red., History and ethnicity, Londen/ New York: Routledge; Kelly, J.D. & M. Kaplan, 1990, 'History, structure, and ritual', Annual Review of Anthropology, XIX, 119-150; Vansina, J., 1993, [Review of : Binsbergen, W.M.J. van, 1992, Tears of Rain: Ethnicity and history in Central Western Zambia, Londen/ Boston: Kegan Paul International] , Anthropos, 88: 215-217; Amselle, J.-L., 1993, 'Anthropology and historicity', History and Theory, Beiheft 32, pp. 12-31.

[9] Cf. Bloch, M., ed., 1975, Marxist Approaches and Social Anthropology, London: Malaby Press, ASA Studies, pp. 3-27; Caplan, Ann P., 1982, 'Gender, ideology and modes of production on the coast of East Africa', in J. de Vere Allen and T.H. Wilson (eds.), From Zinj to Zanzibar: Studies in history, trace and society on the eastern coast of Africa, pp. 29-43. Paideuma 28. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag; Gerold-Scheepers, T.J.F.A. & W.M.J. van Binsbergen, 1978, 'Marxist and non-Marxist approaches to migration in Africa', in: Van Binsbergen, W.M.J. & H.A. Meilink, eds, 1978, Migration and the Transformation of Modern African Society, African Perspectives 1978/1, Leiden: Afrika-Studiecentrum, pp. 21-35; Geschiere, P.L., 1978, 'The articulation of different modes of production: Old and new inequalities in Maka villages (Southeast Cameroon)' in Buijtenhuijs, R., & Geschiere, P.L., eds., Social Stratification and Class Formation, African Perspectives 197812, Leiden: African Studies Centre, pp. 45-69; Hindess, B., & Hirst, P.Q., 1975, Pre-Capitalist Modes of

like the peasants paradigm[10] of the 1960s and the mobilization paradigm[11] of the early 1970s, were less successful from the start, never succeeding to penetrate to the lasting core of the anthropological discipline.

The result is no longer a unified discipline with classic overtones, but a composite of schools and partial paradigms. Because of the massive, and deliberate, contributions from adjacent and auxiliary disciplines such as sociology, history and political

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Production, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Houtart, F., 1980, Religion et modes de production précapitalistes Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles; Houtart, F., & Lemercinier, G., 1977, eds., Religion and Tributary Mode of Production, Social Compass, 24, 2-3, Louvain: Centre de Recherches Socio-Religieuses; Houtart, F., & Lemercinier, G., 1979, 'Religion et mode de production lignager', Social Compass, 26, 4: 403-16; Jewsiewicki, B., with Létourneau, J., 1985, eds, Modes of Production: The challenge of Africa, Ste-Foy (Can.): **[publisher]** ; Meillassoux, C., 1975, Femmes, greniers et capitaux, Paris: Maspero; Mudzibganyama, N.S., 1983, 'Articulation of modes of production and the development of a labour reserve in Southern Africa, 1885-1944: The case of Botswana', Botswana Notes and Records, 15: 49-58; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1978, 'Class formation and the penetration of capitalism in the Kaoma rural district, Zambia, 1800-1978', paper read at the seminar on class formation in Africa, African Studies Centre, Leiden, May 1978; revised version 2002 at: http:// [add detail] ; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1981, Religious change in Zabmia, London / Boston: Kegan Paul International; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., & P. Geschiere, 1985, eds, Old modes of production and capitalist encroachment: Anthropological explorations in Africa, London/Boston: Kegan Paul International; Wolpe, Harold, ed. , 1980. The Articulation of Modes of Production. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

[10] Cf. Buijtenhuijs, R., 1971, Le mouvement 'Mau-Mau': une révolte paysanne et anti-coloniale en Afrique noire, THe Hague / Paris: Mouton; Bundy, Colin, 1979. The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry. Berkeley: University of California Press. ; Chayanov, A.V., Thoner, D Kerbay, B & Smith, R.E.F, 1966, eds, The theory of peasant economy. Homewood, Illinois; Cliffe L., 1987, 'The debate on African peasantries', Development and Change, 18, 4: 625-635; Geschiere P. L., 1984, 'La paysannerie africaine est-elle'captive'? Sur la thèse de Goran Hyden, et pour une réponse plus nuancée', Politique africaine, n° 14, pp. 13-33; Hyden, G., 1980, Beyond ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and an uncaptured peasantry, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University California Press; Hyden, G., 1983, No shortcuts to progress: African development management in perspective, Berkeley: Univeristy of California Press; Migdal, J.S., 1974, Peasants, Politics and Revolution. Pressures toward political and social change in the Third World. Princeton University [delete period]. press; Palmer, R., & N.Q. Parsons, 1977, eds., The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa, London: Heinemann; Pitt-Rivers, J., 1963, ed., The mediterranean countryman, The Hague / Paris: Mouton; Ranger, T.O., 1978, 'Growing from the roots: Reflexions on peasant studies in Central and Southern Africa', Journal of Southern African Studies, 5: 99-133; Ranger, T.O., 1985, Peasant consciousness and guerilla war in Zimbabwe, London: James Currey; Redfield, R., 1947, 'The Folk Society', American Journal of Sociology, 52: 293-308; Redfield, R., 1956, Peasant society and culture: An anthropological approach to civilisation, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Rey, P.-P., 1976, Capitalisme négrier: La marche des paysans vers le prolétariat, (together with E. Le Bris and M. Samuel), Paris: Maspero; Saul, J.S., & R. Woods, 1973, 'African peasantries', in: Arrighi, G., & J.S. Saul, 1973, Essays on the Political Economy of Africa, New York/London: Monthly Review Press, pp. 406-16; Saul, J.S., 1974, 'African peasants and revolution', Review of African Political Economy, I : 41-68; Wolf, E., 1966, Peasants. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

[11] Harries-Jones P., 1975, Freedom and Labour: Mobilization and Political Control on the Zambian Copperbelt. Oxford: Basil Blackwell; Sharp, J., 1996, 'Ethnogenesis and ethnic mobilization: a comparative perspective on a South African dilemma', in E. Wilmsen and P. McAllister, eds, 1996, The Politics of Difference: Ethnic Premises in a World of Power, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ; Snow, David A. and Robert D. Bedford, 1988, 'Ideology, frame resonance and participant mobilization', in B. Klandermans, H. Kriesi & S. Tarrow, eds, From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research across Cultures, International Social Movement Research, Vol. I, Greenwich CT: JAI Press. ; Uyanne, F. U., 1990, 'Extended Egoism, Situational Imperatives and Mobilization for National Integration', in J.I. Obikwu et al (eds), Social Mobilization and National Development, Onitsha: Kawuriz and Manilas Publishers.

economy, the boundaries between them and anthropology have become blurred, particularly in the field of African studies. Yet it is meaningful to speak of anthropology as a distinct subject, in so far as certain elements have remained constant in the discipline since the beginning:

(a) A set of basic theoretical instruments: the thesis of the biological unity of humanity; the thesis of human cultures as man-made, with an enormous range of choice cross-culturally, and enormous capacity for change and exchange, and transmitted (from generation to generation and across cultural boundaries) by the learning process of socialization; a built-in sense of cultural relativism,[12] in terms of which all human cultures are essentially of equal value and worthy of the anthropologist's professional and personal respect.

(b) On the methodological plane, these basic ideas have stipulated fieldwork[13] as the standard method through which anthropology acquires its principal data: sufficiently prolonged to acquire some limited mastery in local systems of language and symbolism, etiquette and subtle micro-political maneuvering; and sufficiently personal, exposed and humble to enable the researcher to emulate, within the span of a year or two and with reference to selected aspects of the culture, the complex learning process that people born into that culture normally have to go through.

(c) Largely because of the methodological preference for participant observation, anthropology has continued to lay emphasis on the face-to-face dimension of social life, such as enacted in villages and neighbourhoods, urban wards and families, and inside formal organizations. It is on this primary level that anthropology has developed most of its skills of observation, analysis and theory. For the modern anthropologist, the analysis no longer stops short at that level but it now includes such wider social-structural and politico-economic contexts as inform, constrain or determine the level of immediate social interaction; yet it is a basic position in anthropology that its subjects have a face, that the researcher's face is reflected in their gaze, and that they be best approached for information through sharing their day-to-day life within the confines of the local setting.

Class limitations of athropology within the world-system

The emphasis on cultural relativism makes anthropology an illuminating and critical element in any modern society, potentially threatening all established ideological and political positions, all claims of hierarchy and legitimacy, as exist in that society. If we cannot refute the allegation (by such authors as Asad, Leclerc and Copans)[14] that anthropology was nurtured — some say even sired — by North Atlantic imperialism, the discipline has since long shown its potential to take apart and expose the ideology even of imperialism, and of the formal organizational structures of domination that served, and still serve, the latter. Anthropology almost by definition sides with the peripheral, the non-vocal, that which is outside the political and economic power in the modern world. If anthropology does not actually champion the cause of peripheral

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[12] See below, Postscript 2002.

[13] See below, Postscript 2002.

[14] Leclerc, G., 1972, Anthropologie et colonialisme, Paris: Fayard; Asad, T., 1973, ed., Anthropology and the colonial encounter, Londen: Ithaca Press; Copans, J., 1974, Critiques et politiques de l'anthropologie, Paris: Maspéro; Copans, J., 1975, ed. Anthropologie et impérialisme, Paris: Maspero.

groups, their members and institutions (it has been known to do just that, in the anthropology of advocacy),[15] it does at least document their existence, painstakingly and usually with love.

Anthropology is perhaps as far as we can go[16] in the development of an intellectual meta-language that allows us to speak, reflexively, objectively and comparatively, about human actions and institutions, including our very own. Admittedly, it has not taken us very far. Even anthropology is made by actors, and they have their own specific class positions and interests at, at least, three different levels:

(a) The micro level of the relations of production by which anthropology itself is being made; is there not some Primal Scene[17] here — repressed as it were from consciousness for the sake of our professional sanity — as regards
   • the forms of appropriation and control that constitute the habitual anthropological strategies of information gathering and data processing, working transculturally with informants and interpreters;[18] or
   • the processes of research topic selection and intellectual censorship that govern the relations between junior researchers, directors and funding agencies, etc.?
(b) Anthropologists, as members of their society, have tended to be middle-class academic workers, implicitly relying on the modern state for the maintenance of the institutional framework (buildings, libraries, computers, salaries) within which the vast majority of their work is carried out. The mass unemployment that hit North Atlantic anthropologists in the 1970s still does not (yet) seem to have given rise to a fundamentally new, extra-institutional, intellectually defiant or subversive Lumpen -type of anthropology; if it has, my own establishment blinkers have prevented me from spotting it. How much of the specific rationality of the modern state and its institutions, — how much of our class dependence as a professional group —, has been incorporated in our anthropology without us realizing this or taking critical precautions? Clearly, anthropology could only arise, as a critical and comparative reflection, in a complex industrial society whose ideological tissue had been torn by secularization, capitalism and the rise of new classes and political structures, in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. But did anthropology's subsequent professionalization further increase this critical distance to North Atlantic society and its power structure, or did it amount to a paralyzing incapsulation, neutralizing anthropology by bringing it back under the hegemony and control of the state, its

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[15] Cf. Wright, R., 1988, 'Anthropological presuppositions of indigenous advocacy', Annual Review of Anthropology, 17: 365-390; Gordon, R.J., Advocacy in Southern Africa: What lessons from the Bushmen?, paper read at the Anthropology Association of Southern Africa Annual Meeting, Durban-Westville, September 1992.

[16] See below, Postscript 2002.

[17] The Primal Scene, in Freudian psychoanalysis, is the infant's witnessing of the parents' sexual intercourse, thought to start a train of infantile interpretations and desires often conducive to mental disorders later in life. Another Primal Scene was postulated by Freud at the origins of human culture: as the sons' murdering of the tyrannical father monopolising women. Freud, S., 1918, Totem and Taboo, New York: Random House, English tr. of German edition Totem und Tabu, first published 1913.

[18] For an early discussion on these topics, cf. Bleek, W. [= J.D.M. van der Geest] , 1979, 'Envy and inequality in fieldwork: An example from Ghana', Human Organization, 38, 2: 201-205; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1979b, 'Anthropological Fieldwork: "There and Back Again" ', Human Organization, 38, 2: 205-9.

institutions and its flow of material resources? Did not anthropology lose its bite once it became enshrined in the vulnerable middle-class careers of anthropologists? The current pressure to redefine anthropology in terms of development relevance, to which I shall come back below, suggests that these questions have taken on a new relevance today.

(c) When at home and when out doing fieldwork, North Atlantic anthropologists implicitly share in the privileges and the power of the northern part of the world, as against the South. Anthropologists' professional (and ultimately state-protected) access to intimate aspects of social life outside the North Atlantic, when reported in the idiom of discourse of the colonial era, did represent a form of intellectual appropriation and humiliation against which, e.g., Africans in the nationalist era rightly protested.[19] Has anthropology since managed to shed these connotations?

With the exception of the intercontinental class dimension, these class limitations of anthropology are left implicit if not swept under the carpet, in most discussions of the profession. They are of immense importance however, when we try to assess the possible place, and the future, of anthropology outside the North Atlantic region. Our leading question ('What is the future of anthropology in Africa?') can only be answered positively, to the extent to which we manage to argue the possibility of shedding this threefold class bias of North Atlantic anthropology, and to arrive at something that is politically and ideologically as universalist as anthropology has always claimed to be.

The partial vindication of anthropology

What anthropological actor could emulate the legendary Baron of Münchhausen,[20] and raise herself or himself (intuitively, women — who have always contributed to anthropology at a par with men — would seem to stand a better chance, because of the class-like implications inequality of their own gender position) by the hairs out of this swamp? Certainly not I.[21] But there are a number of considerations which yet seem to argue, if inconsistently and inconclusively, in favour of anthropology.

One positive point could be inspired by that genial misinterpreter of early (Australian) anthropology, Emile Durkheim.[22] The social sciences are based on the

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[19] Mafeje, A., 1971, 'The ideology of tribalism', Journal of Modern African Studies, 9: 253-61; Mafeje, A., 1976, The Problem of Anthropology in Historical Perspective An Inquiry into the Growth of the Social Sciences, in Canadian Journal of African Studies, 10: 307-333; Magubane, B., 1971, 'A critical look at the indices used in the study of social change in colonial Africa', Current Anthropology, 12: 419-45.

[20] Bürger, G.A., 1788, Wunderbare Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande, Feldzüge und lustige Abenteuer des Freiherrn von Münchhausen, second enlarged edition, first edition 1786, being the translation of R.E. Raspe, 1786, Baron Münchhausen's narrative of his marvellouos travels and campaigns in Russia.

[21] See below, Postscript 2002.

[22] Durkheim, E., 1912, Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. Durkheim's major source when writing this book was the classic pioneer ethnography of Australian Aboriginal social organisation: Spencer, [initials] & [initials] Gillen, [year, ca. 1900] , Northern tribes of central Australia, [place, publisher] Durkheim's immensely influential theoretical interpretation of Australian socio-ritual organisation in terms of society venerating itself through the medium of arbitrarily chosen symbols has since been criticised by

insight, most clearly formulated by him, that the social represents a mode of factuality external to, distinct from and not to be reduced to, the individual. As a systematic, organized and enduring set of ideas and actions, as an intellectual institution, anthropology inevitably has its roots in the petty class interests of anthropologists, yet may represent something capable of ultimately transcending these interests.

Inevitably, the class implications of anthropological actors have partly determined the contents of modern anthropology. But precisely how? Apart from rather general and sweeping allegations, we have frankly not progressed very far in identifying these ideological biases in detail and correcting them explicitly. Allegations of a politically mercenary attitude among main-stream anthropologists of the colonial period[23] appear to be rather anachronistic, except in some isolated cases, such as the utilization of anthropological notions in the ideology of South African apartheid (as exposed by Sharp).[24] Meanwhile, on the positive side, the various transformations from classic to modern anthropology, as summarized all too briefly above, suggest that over the past few decades an enormous amount of sincere creative energy has been invested in producing an anthropology that at least takes some deliberate critical distance from the class ideologies of anthropologists of the classic era, such as we perceive them now. Someday our successors may hopefully do the same for us. African colleagues, such as

anthropologists making reference to empirical anthropological data concerning Aboriginal societies; e.g. Goldenweiser, A., 1958, Religion and society: A critique of Emile Durkheim's theory of the origin and nature of religion, (1917), in: Lessa, W.A., & E.Z. Vogt, eds., Reader in comparative relgiion, Evanston (Ill), pp. 76-84; Radcliffe-Brown, A.R., 1952, Structure and Function in Primitive Society. London: Oxford University Press, pp. 165f; Stanner, W.E.H., 1965, 'Religion, totemism, and symbolism', in R., M., and C., H., Berndt (eds.,), Aboriginal Man in Australia, Angus & Robertson, 1965; Stanner, W.E.H., 1967, 'Reflexions on Durkheim and aboriginal studies', in: Freedman, M., Social organization, London **[publisher]** , pp. 217-240; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1968, 'Durkheim's begrippenpaar "sacré/ profane" ', Kula (Utrecht), 8, 4: 14-21; Worsley, P.M., 1956, 'Emile Durkheim's theory of knowledge', Sociological Review, 4: 47-62.

[23]   Cf. Asad, *o.c*; Firth, Raymond, et al. , 1977. 'Anthropological Research in British Colonies: Some Personal Accounts.' Anthropological Forum 4 (special issue); Lewis, Diane, 1973, 'Anthropology and Colonialism', Current Anthropology, 14: 581-602; Pels, P., 1997, 'The Anthropology of Colonialism: Culture, History and the Emergence of Western Governmentality', Annual Review of Anthropology, 26: 163-183; Pels, P. & O. Salemink, 1994, 'Introduction: five theses on ethnography as colonial practice', History and Anthropology, 8, 1-4: 1-34; Pels, P. & Salemink, O. (Éds), 1995, 'Colonial Ethnographies', History and Anthropology, 8, 1-4; PRAH, K.K., 1981, Anthropologists, Clerics, Colonial Administration and the Lotuko. Mimeograph. Juba: University Printing Unit; Trask H-K. 1991 Natives and Anthropologists: the colonial struggle. The Contemporary Pacific, Spring: 159-176. This is not to deny that there is a more diffuse way in which the classic anthropological endeavour has been subservient to the North Atlantic hegemonic project, cf. Fabian, J., 1983, Time and the other: How anthropology makes its object, New York: Columbia University Press. That this orientation has profound roots in the European Enlightenment, and in the founding father of modern philosophy Immaneal Kant, is argued by Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi, 1997, The Color of Reason: The Idea of "Race" in Kant's Anthropology', in: Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi, ed., Postcolonial African philosophy: A critical reader, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 103-140. To the extent that nineteenth- and twentieth-century historicism, as a dominant facto in social and sociological thought, owe a greater debt to Hegel than to Kant, see the critique of Hegel's anti-African frame of mind by the prominent Hegel scholar Heinz Kimmerle: Kimmerle, H., 1993, 'Hegel und Afrika: Das Glas zerspringt', Hegel-Studien, 28: 303-325; also cf. Keita L., 1974, 'Two Philosophies of African History: Hegel and Diop', Presence africaine, n° 91, pp. 41-49.

[24]   Sharp, J.S., 1981, 'The roots and development of volkekunde in South Africa', Journal of Southern African Studies, 8, 1: 16-36; Boonzaier, E. and J. Sharp, eds, 1988, South African Keywords, Cape Town: OUP.

Mafeje, Magubane, Okot p'Bitek[25] — to mention only a few —, have contributed significantly to the contemporary transformations. Their work is a indication that at least the intercontinental class biases in anthropology can be made explicit, and can be corrected, without immediately destroying the anthropological discipline as an intellectual institution as a whole; its contents cannot be entirely reduced to North Atlantic intellectual domination, hence its critical appeal to academic minds outside that region. These authors were clamouring for a better anthropology, not for the abolition of anthropology. Their efforts clearly show that anthropology as a mode of thought is not really 'owned' by the North.

Nor could it be. Ultimately, the appropriation of academic knowledge by specific class interests is challenged, at least partially, by the fact that there is a limit to the extent to which the main instruments of academic production, books, can be kept from free and wide circulation. Moreover, no one is born a scholar, so scholarship is reproduced by constant recruitment (through education) from among non-scholars. Despite some well-known cases of auto-reproduction of anthropological positions of privilege from generation to generation,[26] most contemporary anthropologists were recruited from milieus that had not produced anthropologists before — nor academics in general, for that matter. Particularly in the anthropological discipline, which has internalized so fully the notion that human culture is not acquired by birth but only transmitted through a learning process, the catchment area for recruitment has always tended to be very wide, including members of societies outside the North Atlantic region. Perhaps, their earlier crossing of (sub-)cultural and social-class boundaries in the course of the process of becoming an anthropologist, has helped colleagues from the Third World — or colleagues from working-class milieus in the North Atlantic (like myself), for that matter — to cross similar boundaries again, professionally, in fieldwork, once they had become anthropologists.

Possibly, also, anthropologists of the latter types may have been less prone to completely entrench themselves in the class implications that yet attach to all anthropology. More importantly, participatory fieldwork, which has continued to form the hallmark of anthropology, puts the researcher in position that is, both politically and epistemologically, absolutely unique among academic disciplines. As the standard research praxis stipulated by the profession, fieldwork contains the basic philosophical tenets of anthropology: culture is learned; therefore research means learning a culture that is perceived as *learnable much more than as exotic*; and that culture comes ever closer to the researcher, revealing its internal structure, meaning and beauty ever more fully; therefore anthropological research is an initially painful but ever more gratifying dependence relation between the humble role of the researcher and the dominant role of the informant.

All this means that on the interactional, practical level anthropological fieldwork in itself offers a process of transcultural encounter that at least partially resolves and transcends the class implications of anthropology. This is very clear at the intermediate and the intercontinental level; it is rather less obvious at the micro level of the relations of anthropological production in fieldwork, about which each anthropologist has interminable private tales to tell but about which we as a profession have far too little systematic and public knowledge — which is largely avoided as a topic in published anthropological discourse. In fact, the temporary resolution of the class tensions implied in fieldwork is among the basic skills of the anthropologist: if he or she falls

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[25]   Mafeje, *o.c*; Magubane, *o.c*; p'Bitek, O., 1970, African Religions in Western Scholarship, Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House.

[26]   The practice was somewhat endemic at Leyden university, The Netherlands, in the first half of the twentieth century; e.g. both father and son de Josseling de Jong held the chair of general anthropology, and both father and son Holleman the chair of customary law.

short in this transcultural interaction management, the productive field relations (the ones that combine instrumentality with intimacy, trust with social calculation) from which most valuable information is to come, will never be established. The social control that the profession exercises over its members in this connexion should not be underestimated: the fieldwork process is both too subtle, and too recognizable even from the finished ethnographic product, than that too many bad fieldworkers could get away with failure on this point. At the same time we had better admit that many anthropologists, during a spell of fieldwork or during their periods of absense from the field, have experienced major conflicts between themselves and their local research participants precisely when they could no longer dissimilate the class contradiction in fieldwork (the contradiction between informants more or less freely offering information and services, and researchers building, upon these spoils, academic careers that — however uncertain and despised from the point of view of North Atlantic altenatives — from the perspective of most Third World research participants can only appear as unbelievable lucrative).

Desite such tensions it is a common anthropological experience that many informants greatly enjoy the personal exchange at the boundary between cultures in the context of fieldwork. The class implications of anthropology are nowhere more effectively dissimulated, even dispelled, than in the field, by both researcher and informants. Here a perspective of transcultural communication is gradually agreed upon, in the course of one's fieldwork, in which the anthropologist's work takes on a specific significance also in the eyes of the informants: to put on record fading institutions that are dear to the latter, to express an emerging ethnic identity in such a form (academic discourse in an international language) as carries weight with the powers that be at the national level, etc. Here the anthropologist is most appreciated by the people if she acts in accordance with their expectations and viewpoints; thus she can interpret their culture to the outside world, but it will be much harder for her to translate the outside world to the local people, if such messages from the outside threaten established perceptions, values, and identity constructs. For fieldwork, a receptive humility is professionally encouraged, and in such a frame of mind the fieldworker may not be able to explode a local stereotype, deceptive identity construction, patently wrong reading of regional history — as I experienced when in the course of decades of fieldwork contact with the Nkoya people of western central Zambia, the publications that contained my academic attempts at radical deconstruction of their recent and vulnerable ethnic self-identity were turned, by them, into ethnic propaganda.[27]

It is not in the field that anthropology is being written. Another basic anthropological skill is to take a radical distance from the intimacy of field participation, and to selectively rearrange and transform the field information so as to make the written product acceptable within the formal patterning of academic production, rendering that product conducive to academic goals (degree, career, competition between departments, paradigms and national schools of anthropology etc.) that are completely irrelevant to the informants and often almost betray the terms of their initial co-operation. The payoffs the informants had envisaged during fieldwork, become much delayed by-products of the project's main output — if they materialize at all. In pursuance of middle-class security as a professional, the anthropologist tends to sacrifice the transcultural intimacy of his or her fieldwork. So, while the anthropological encounter contains the potential for a resolution of the built-in class

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[27] van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1984, 'Can anthropology become the theory of peripheral class struggle? Reflexions on the work of P.P.Rey', in: W.M.J. van Binsbergen & G.S.C.M. Hesseling, (eds), Aspecten van Staat en Maatschappij in Afrika: Recent Dutch and Belgian Research on the African State, Leiden: African Studies Centre, pp. 163-80; German version: van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1984f., 'Kann die Ethnologie zur Theorie des Klassenkampfes in der Peripherie werden?: Reflexionen über das Werk von Pierre Philippe Rey', Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie (Vienna), 9, 4: 138-48.

conflict at the micro level, it fails in the end, in the final product.

Meanwhile, despite the discipline's cognitive emphasis on cultural relativism and universalism, the intercontinental class dimension continues to be reproduced in contemporary anthropology on the organizational side. The production and reproduction even of a transformed and critical, post-classic anthropology has been largely monopolized by North Atlantic academic institutions. In the nationalist era, anthropology on African soil had often to disguise as either sociology or history. This situation has somewhat changed now, and we could cite hundreds of names of African colleagues engaged in the pursuit of anthropology in Africa today. Yet it is not by virtue of some perspectival distortion that anthropology as a field of academic interaction, where power is generated and resources are allocated, still appears to be largely 'owned' by the North. Anthropological training institutions, collections, libraries, research funds, chairs, journals are in great majority situated in, or initiated and controlled from, the North Atlantic. Our colleagues who are permanently living and working in Africa are almost by definition peripheral to the main-stream of the discipline.[28]

Towards an answer

We are already approaching the end of our divination session. While I have attempted to refine our client's question as put before the oracle, and to show some of its less manifest implications, I have surely not been able to captivate your attention sufficiently to effectively conceal from your perception my own deliberate juggling with the divinatory apparatus, and to put you, praxeologically, in such a susceptible state of consciousness that my next pronouncements will appear to you as eminently true and illuminating. My limited language skill, and the fact that many of you are not anthropologists, may have something to do with this failure. However, many African diviners manage to exercise their trade across cultural and linguistic boundaries, and to convey, in the course of their session, a sense of relevance that initially would not seem possible considering the great difference in cultural background and language use between themselves and their clients; in anthropology as elsewhere, there is nothing like the original.

I have, meanwhile, tried to evoke a set of symbols that may appeal to you and that may add heightened meaning to our initial question: the image of anthropology as a meta-language for the detached appreciation of human action and human institutions, with a well-developed sense of relativism, equality, understanding and admiration. Such anthropology is not the intellectual possession of North Atlantic academics but may come to be recognized among the positive universal achievements of mankind. It enshrines a substantial part of the reflection, comparison and criticism that have constituted the proper domain of intellectuals in a changing society whenever and wherever. It makes anthropology a subject worthy of our love and dedication, in Africa as elsewhere. With its built-in emphasis on the local and regional level, its claims to represent the non-vocal and the peripheral in their own right, and its well-developed methods to approach these subjects and arrive at valid statements about their actions and institutions, anthropology can be expected to have a positive role to play in some of the most significant social and ideological processes going on in African societies today: the accommodation between peasants and urban proletarians on the one hand, the state and its formal bureaucratic organizations on the other; and also among the educated elites of Africa — to whom the finished products of anthropology are as available as the international book trade allows (which is not good enough by far) — anthropology

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28 See below, Postscript 2002.

offers some of the means to come to terms with their own background and heritage.

So much for the exalted symbolic vision. I have proceeded by indicating the negative elements that yet taint this anthropology: its threefold class implications, which may be temporarily and partially resolved — but only subjectively — and transcended in the concentrated situation of anthropological fieldwork yet form part and parcel of the praxis of anthropology at our North Atlantic institutions of learning, primarily because of the way in which the discipline is organized and in which its resources and power are unevenly distributed across the continents.

Therefore, if anthropology is to realize its potential future in Africa, it has to become truly intercontinental not just in theory and thought (it has been that from the beginning) but particularly in organizational structure: in the location of resources (books, research money, vehicles, computers, Internet access, opportunities for publication), initiatives, power, institutions.

Ever since the majority of African territories gained independence in the 1960s, North Atlantic Africanist anthropologists have sought to protect their own and their students' access to research sites in Africa, trading logistic support, prestigeous invitations and appointments for African colleagues, assistance in publishing and occasional teaching at African universities, for that much coveted piece of paper: the research clearance. In doing so we have implicitly perpetuated the intercontinental class dimension of anthropology. At the back of our minds there has lingered the assumption that, when all is said and done, the anthropology of African societies is best left in the hands of North Atlantic anthropologists.

So far, our African colleagues, their research institutions and boards, and the national immigration departments, have been rather patient with us, and have by and large tolerated our continued presence — occasionally even praising our publications when and if they came out, and when and if they happened to be made available to our African counterparts. Yet, in the long run, the best way to eradicate Africanist anthropology, first in Africa itself, and soon also in the North Atlantic, is to hold on to the North Atlantic initiative and professional power in Africanist research. If the discipline is to make all the positive contributions to African society, and so to the global society, we pretend it could make, then it must attune itself to the political and economic realities of the African continent today and of its relations with the rest of the world.

This reality is immensely complex and contradictory, but even so it should be clear that, after decades of North Atlantic cultural and ideological domination largely brought about by other institutions than anthropology, the necessary reconstruction of a viable and dynamic self-image among Africans and African societies has to be primarily undertaken by Africans themselves.[29] Here intellectuals from the North Atlantic can at best perform such ancillary roles as assigned to us, or requested from us, within the framework of research plans and priorities drawn up by African institutions. In so far as our North Atlantic Africanist research seeks justification in terms of a claimed contribution to contemporary and future African society, the most obvious touchstone for that justification lies in the confrontation with such plans. This is not to say that such anthropological research in Africa as primarily derives from North Atlantic research priorities, is automatically unjustified. Much research was, and still is, proposed by reference to fine points of anthropological theory as developed at North Atlantic centres of learning. Sometimes such projects do contribute to the theoretical development of the anthropological discipline in general, and should therefore be encouraged. But in the context of obtaining research clearances such research should not pretend to be primarily contributing to current intellectual responsibilities and priorities within Africa; research permission in this context is an intercontinental,

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[29]   See below, Postscript 2002.

bilateral prestation from the South to the North, and it should be traded off against similar or related services extended from the North to the South.

Turning now to the potential of anthropology to represent peripheral regional and ethnic groups and institutions (such as chieftainship, puberty initiation), whose position and status in contemporary African nation-states may be, somewhat irreverently (and with the same implications of self-imposed global responsibility), compared to those of endangered species: Yes, anthropology can do this, and time will tell whether in specific cases it was a good thing to do — or rather amounted to championing antiquarianism and obscurantism (as certain African and Marxist critics would certainly claim). But here again, considering the threefold class implications of anthropology, it it to be preferred that our African colleagues occupy themselves with these tasks, at their own discretion, on the basis of their own assessment of political necessities and room for maneuvering, yet with our unwavering moral and material support.[30]

Such support is not entirely without risks, if our main goal remains, mercenarily, to safeguard our own direct access to African research sites. The aloofness of peripheral or otherwise muted groups in Africa is not an accident of nature or history, but part of contemporary politics. The African continent has become characterized by the weakness if not downright repression of extra-governmental foci of organization, opinion, knowledge and criticism, cultural and institutional creativeness. Post-colonial states seek to impose their political and ideological control upon the individuals and groups residing within their territory, streamlining their experience and their performance into controlled uniformity and submission. African anthropologists now constitute the main (not the only) group to which the implementation of the positive promise of African anthropology is to be entrusted, but their attention for certain groups, themes and problems is bound to touch on political sensitivities. As concerns the relation vis-à-vis the state, the class position of African intellectuals including anthropologists may not — in terms of financial and institutional dependence — fundamentally differ from that of their North Atlantic colleagues, but there is certainly an enormous difference in degree: as regards options and alternatives, but also as regards proximity and access to politicians and policy makers. Given the reality of this dependent (if not altogether uncomfortable) class position, representing peripheral groups should be taken in a scholarly, not a political sense. Anthropology has a role to play, not primarily because research can generate political support or consciousness (a rather rare occurrence), but because of the discipline's basic philosophical outlook as outlined above. The prolonged and humble exposure to a specific local interaction setting is not only salutary and illuminating to the individual researcher no matter from what continent — it may also help to restore a general respect for peasants and urban proletarians in the intellectual and political debates concerning the planning and implementation of development in Africa today.[31] (Whether the anthropological contribution in the development context could go further than this, is a question I shall address at the very end of this paper.) The politically relevant questions can readily be translated (without losing much of their critical relevance) into an agenda for future Africanist anthropological research. Lest I too, after all, should encroach on a domain which can only be properly demarcated by my African colleagues, let me briefly indicate that such an agenda would include the following items, among many others:

(a) In an attempt to enrich the existing studies (by political scientists and administrative lawyers) with specific anthropological approaches (intimate personal detail, transactional historicity and connections with other life sphere: kinship, patronage,

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[30] See below, Postscript 2002.

[31] See below, Postscript 2002.

friends and neighbours) one should address more systematically the ethnography of modern bureaucracy and of state penetration at the local level — including the transformation and manipulation of pre-existing notions of power into modern political, administrative and religious organizational bodies.

(b) The ethnography of peripheral capitalism, with emphasis not only (as hitherto) on the economic aspect of capitalist relations of production and their articulation to pre-existing modes (cash cropping, migrancy, the urban informal sector etc.), but also on the ideological and experiential dimensions of peripheral capitalism: e.g. the radical reconstitution of time, space, person, body and self that springs from the commodification of labour and its products, and from participation in the formal bureaucratic organizations by which peripheral capitalism is increasingly patterned.

(c) The ethnography of peripheral identity formation, addressing such fundamental issues as: ethnography as a basis for historiography; ethnicity and incapsulated so-called traditional rulers; and the manipulation of tradition and neo-tradition as ideological constructions in the context of nation building.

When it comes to the class position of African intellectuals as compared with the peasants and proletarians who, if already by sheer force of numbers, should continue to constitute the main subjects of future Africanist anthropological research, we need not resort to populist myopia, as did the negritude movement some decades ago; of course our African colleagues occupy a middle-class position in their national society — but theirs is at least not tainted by intercontinental class implications as ours is, while the fact that the African anthropologists' research praxis is embedded in an incomparably wider general participation and societal (including linguistic) competence in the national society attenuates and sometimes even takes away the class implications of the production of anthropology at the micro level. In other words: they might do fieldwork without needing interpreters and extensive clearances, and in their home area...

Our professional commitment should concentrate on building a strong, African-based anthropology, with all the trimmings of first-class libraries and collections, material research facilities, international and intercontinental academic leadership. If we love Africanist anthropology, we should create, much more consistently and wholeheartedly than we have done so far, the conditions under which African colleagues can take over the subject, or most of it. Once that has happened, we need not to worry about our own occasional access; as Africanists, we all know African hospitality from experience!

The easy way out? Africanist anthropology and development

Probably to the surprise of my audience, I have failed to link the future of anthropology in Africa to the study of development and to the implementation of development projects. Contrary to the many other omissions in my argument, this one was deliberate.

Yet the dominant discourse within which Africanist research from the North Atlantic area is now being proposed, funded, executed and written up is that of development, development co-operation, policy relevance.[32] Often the issues concerned have some theoretical basis in the anthropological tradition, or could be linked to such a basis, but neither detached ethnographic description nor theory formation feature any more as manifest primary motives in Africanist anthropological research. Even if there is an implicit orientation towards anthropological theory and

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32 See below, Postscript 2002.

description, the idiom of development relevance tends to be adopted in applications for research funding since that forms now simply an absolute condition for sheer admittance to the very strong competition over research funds.

It would have been praiseworthy if behind this trend there was an awareness (based on open and passionate intellectual debate) of the obvious intellectual limitations of anthropology. But the real driving force behind this trend seems to lie in the growing disenchantment, and subsequent financial dissociation, between North Atlantic political elites and the universities; academic freedom in the selection and execution of research requires a context of material security, but in stead researchers are forced to operate as entrepreneurs on a partly non-academic market of research funds voted in a context of development co-operation. Even in specific cases where the actual financial pressure is not particularly acute, subtle mechanisms of self-censorship and mutual social control at work among the academic community make sure that research proposals tune in with the dominant ideology of developmentalism — the current ideological framework for North Atlantic dealings with the rest of the world. As researchers and academic administrators we have become rather good at identifying and selecting research topics whose development potential and societal relevance is unmistakable, and at re-phrasing our academic pipe-dreams, pruning the theoretical and ethnographic interest and processing an original inspiration into the jargon of fundable proposals.

Over the past quarter of a century we have seen plenty of anthropologically-inspired missions, explorations, surveys, reconnaissance studies, feasibility studies, etc., all conceived within a context of development co-operation. Their logic, time schedule, perception of the local societies under study shows a wide range of variation, and often the professional idiom and even the fieldwork praxis of anthropology may have been adopted. Still, I cannot think of these attempts as anthropology in terms of the definition offered above. The role of intercontinental dependency relations in development cooperation; the mediating and often exploitative role of post-colonial states and their bureaucratic and political elite in the implementation of development projects; the pragmatic, goal-orientated, routinized, level of intellectual production in development contexts; the massive consensus as to the primacy of the capitalist and bureaucratic logic and the desiderata they prescribe — all this may constitute an increasingly dominant, competent, complex, perhaps even a legitimate, intercontinental discourse,[33] but it is not the discourse of anthropology. To the development discourse anthropology remains an auxiliary subject, offering among other things ready-made, digestable and respectable (but already obsolete) models of interpretation for impatient and overworked development workers.

To claim a more central position for anthropology in the development context, — to advocate climbing the development band-wagon as anthropologists, would simply mean to leave the intercontinental class implications of anthropology unanalysed, and trading them for another, now more fashionable version of intercontinental domination. The best anthropology could offer in this context is a profound and systematic critique of the development discourse; however, considering the impressive amount of political power and material resources that is invested in the development industry, it is hardly

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[33] For a fundamental critique of development from an anthropological perspective, cf. Hobart, M., ed., 1993, An anthropological critique of development: The growth of ignorance, London/ New York: Routledge. For my own views, cf. van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1991, 'Religion and development: Contributions to a new discourse', Antropologische Verkenningen, 10, 3: 1-17 — a greatly expanded version to be found at: http:// **[add detail]** ; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1999, 'Globalization, consumption and development', in: Fardon, R., van Binsbergen, W.M.J., & van Dijk, R., 1999, eds., Modernity on a shoestring: Dimensions of globalization, consumption and development in Africa and beyond: Based on an EIDOS conference held at The Hague 13-16 March 1997, Leiden/ London: EIDOS [European Interuniversity Deveopment Opportunities Study group] , pp. 1-7 **[check pages]** , also at http:// **[add detail]**

realistic to base the future of anthropology on such a desirable critical role.

Some indication of the future relations between anthropology and development can already be gleaned from the debate on 'culture and development', now gaining impetus in many European countries:[34] without context, ideological history or critique, without any situational analysis of the multiplicity of culture nor any perspective on the politico-economic conditions under which culture may, or may not, take on a relative autonomy, a dated, fossilized concept of (other people's) culture is now being proposed as a panacea when it comes to the explanation of the relative failure of a quarter of a century of development aid: 'they may not have developed as stipulated, but that is because all the time they had their own culture, and that may yet be a positive sign of identity...' Anthropology ought not to lend itself, but to challenge, to such a new form of paternalism and ideological mystification.

However, the situation is not always so clear-cut as I suggest it to be here. For often it is not distant outside agencies, but African institutions and the informants themselves, who expect 'development action' from the anthropologist, during or after the fieldwork. Then the anthropologist is in a position to bring to bear the best his profession has to offer, in terms of local knowledge, systematic analysis and communication skills, and use that to negotiate between development agencies and bureaucracies, and the people who extended their hospitality and co-operation in the course of fieldwork. They should not become the victims of an intellectual quest for purity such has dominated the present argument.

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When I went through the above text in order to add, fifteen years later, the bibliographical references it lacked it its originally published form, I was torn between two impressions. On the one hand the text seemed to survive as a summary of the beauty and the pitfalls of anthropology. On the other hand the text appeared as remarkably dated, throwing in relief the many developments which, over the past one and a half decades, have taken place in Africa and in Africanist anthropology. A full account on these points would mean a new paper. Let me merely indicate a number of points that readily come to mind.

Developments in and around Africa

The resilience of historic African institutions even without any preservation attempts on the part of anthropologists

In my 1987 argument I sketched a positive picture of the unique contribution of anthropology as giving a voice to the voiceless, representing peripheral institutions and people who otherwise would perish unnoticed. I am afraid that this well-intended

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34   Cf.: Banuri, T., 1990, 'Modernization and its discontents: A cultural perspective on the theories of development', in: Marglin, F.A. & Marglin, S.A., eds., *Dominating knowledge: Development, culture and resistance*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 29-101; Okolo Okonda W'Oleko, 1986, Pour une *philosophie de la culture et du developpement: Recherches d'hermeneutique et de praxis africaines*, Presses Universitaires du Zaire, Kinshasa ; Uhlenbeck, G.C., n.d. [1986] , ed., *The cultural dimension of development,* Den Haag: Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO; Verhelst, T., 1990, *No life without roots: Culture and development*, Londen: Zed Books; Worsley, P., 1984, *The three worlds: Culture & world development*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson.

position, largely inspired by my experiences among the Zambian Nkoya, carried more of the 'White man's burden' than I cared to admit at the time.[35] Subsequent developments have shown that many African institutions, even those peripheral to the postcolonial state and its imported rationality, can surprisingly well take care of themselves and show a remarkable power of resilience, even without of any preservation attempts on the part of anthropologists. If we may concentrate on the two topics mentioned in my article: chieftainship and puberty, far from disappearing under modern conditions, have made a remarkable come-back in the 1990s, and the main contribution of North Atlantic research on these topics has been to record this resilience and identify its probable causes. The available research suggests two major factors among others: the fact that these institutions are time-honoured ways, of proved effectiveness, to deal with perpetual central issues local societies (authority, order, the management of conflict role preparation, gender and age differences, the acquisition of an effective social identity); and the fact that they draw on sources of cosmological meaning and self-identity whose continued relevance may have been eroded by modernisation, the advent of capitalism etc. in the course of the twentieth century, but far from destroyed.[36]

Developments since 1987 in the localisation of African anthropology

Also in the beginning of the third millennium, it remains difficult for a scholar working in Africa, to compete with those stationed in the North Atlantic. Yet, since the late 1980s a number of positive developments have taken place concerning the localisation of African anthropology, and largely in the direction indicated in my 1987 paper, with African anthropologists' having Internet access, attending intercontinental conferences, obtaining temporary fellowships in the North Atlantic, being the objects of positive discrimination on the part of well-intending government agencies in the North, and especially developing their own continental and regional platforms of scholarly co-operation, such as CODESRIA, with their own fairly localised and independent systems of funding, publication, awards, definition of continental and regional research

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[35] The expression 'the White man's burden' summarised the White colonialists' legitimation for their involvement with societies in Africa and Asia: given the privileged levels of civilisation, social and political organisation, science and technology, Europe simply had no choice to help bring the rest of the world on its own exalted level; of course, this was an elegant dissimulation of the North-South exploitation involved, even though in individual cases (e.g. Lord Lugard) the ideology of the White man's burden, with all its condescension, may have produced a respectable moral stance. Cf. Jordan, W. (1974) The White Man's Burden, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Davidson B., 1992, The black man's burden : Africa and the curse of nation-state, London: Currey; Harlan L., 1988, 'Booker T. Washington and the White Man's Burden', in R. W. Smock, ed., Booker T. Washington in Perspective, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, pp. 68-98.

[36] Cf. Rasing, T., 1995, Passing on the rites of passage: Girls' initiation rites in the context of an urban Roman Catholic community on the Zambian Copperbelt, Leiden/ London: African Studies Centre/ Avebury.; Rasing, T., 2001, The bush burned the stones remain: Women's initiation and globalization in Zambia, Ph.D. thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam; Hamburg/ Muenster: LIT Verlag; van Rouveroy Van Nieuwaal, E.A.B. & Van Dijk, R., 1999, eds., African Chieftaincy in a new Socio-Political Landscape, LIT Verlag, Hamburg.; Van Rouveroy Van Nieuwaal, E.A.B., & Ray, D.I., 1996, eds., The New Relevance Of Traditional Authorities for Africa's future, special issue, Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law, 37-38; Nana K. Arhin Brempong, D.I. Ray, & Van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, E.A.B., eds., Proceedings of the Conference on the Contribution of Traditional Authority to Development, Human Rights and Environmental Protection: Strategies for Africa, Accra-Kumasi, 2-6 September, 1994, Leiden: ASC; van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, E.A.B., & J. Griffiths, eds., Chieftaincy and the state in Africa, Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law, special issue, nos 25 & 26, 1987.

priorities, international conferences etc. And there is much more. African academic philosophy, having started in the 1950s with the works of Kagame and Diop,[37] has further established itself as a globally recognised expression of self-identity.[38] Cosmopolitan philosophers from Africa, foremost Mudimbe and Appiah, have successfully broken through the continental boundaries of African philosophy's orientation, illuminating both Africa's predicaments as (especially in Mudimbe's work) providing a sound epistemological critique of North Atlantic knowledge production on Africa.[39] Afrocentricity[40] and the Black Athena debate[41] (intellectual developments

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[37] Kagame, A., 1955, La philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l'Etre, Bruxelles: Académie royale des Sciences coloniales; Diop C. A., 1948, 'Quand pourra-t-on parler d'une Renaissance africaine ?', Le Musée vivant, n° 36-37, novembre, pp. 57-65; Diop, C.A., 1955, Nations nègres et culture: de l'antiquité nègre-égyptienne aux problèmes culturels de l'Afrique noire d'aujourd'hui, Paris: Presence Africaine, 2d ed., first published 1954.

[38] Like for all the various domains of academic production paraded in my 1987 article and the present postscript, it is strictly impossible to give a reasoned bibliography without writing another article, or book, on the subject. My aim is merely to indicate a body of literature which the reader may further explore. For African philosophy, cf. Coetzee, P.H., & Roux, A.P.J., 1998, eds., The African philosophy reader, London: Routledge; Eboussi Boulaga, F., 1977, La crise du muntu: Authenticité africaine et philosophie, Paris: Présence africaine; Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi, 1997, Postcolonial African philosophy: A critical reader, Oxford: Blackwell, ; Gyekye, K., 1995, An essay on African philosophical thought: The Akan conceptual scheme, revised edition, Philadelphia; Temple University Press, first published Cambridge University Press 1987; Gyekye, K., 1997, Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience, London: Oxford University Press; Hallen, B. and J.O. Sodipo, 1986 Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft: Analytical experiments in African Philosophy, London: Ethnographica; Hountondji, P.J., 1976. Sur la 'philosophie africaine': critique de l'ethnophilosophie, Paris: Maspero. Translated as African Philosophy: Myth and Reality. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983, revised edition 1996; Keita, Lansana. 1985. 'Contemporary African Philosophy: The Search for a Method.' Diogenes 130: 105-28. ; Masolo, D.A., 1994, African philosophy in search of identity, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, & Edinbrgh: Edinburgh University Press; Mbiti, J.S., 1990, (1969) African religion and philosophy. Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.; Mudimbe, V.Y., 1988, The invention of Africa: Gnosis, philosophy, and the order of knowledge, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press/London: Currey; Odera Oruka, H., 1975, 'The Fundamental Principles in the Question of African Philosophy', Second Order, 4, 1: **[add pages]** ; Odera Oruka, H., 1990, ed., Sage philosophy: Indigenous thinkers and modern debate on African philosophy, Leiden: Brill; Okafor, F. U., 1993, 'Issues in African Philosophy Re-examined', International Philosophical Quarterly, XXXIII, 1: **[add pages]** ; Okere, T., 1983, African Philosophy: A Historico-hermeneutical Investigation of the Conditions of its Possibility, University Press of America, Lanharn, MD, 1983.; Oluwole, S. B., 1992, 'The Africanness of a Philosophy', in H. Nagl-Docekal and F. M. Wimmer (eds), Postkoloniales Philosophieren: Afrika, Wien: **[publisher]** ; Ramose, M.B., 1999, African philosophy through ubuntu, Avondele (Harare): Mond; Serequeberban, T., 1994, The hermeneutics of African philosophy: Horizon and discourse, London: Routlegde; Sogolo, G.S., 1993, Foundations of African philosophy, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press; Tunde Bewaji, 1994, 'Truth and ethics in African thought: A reply to Emmanual Eze', Quest: Philosophical Discussions, 8, 1: 76-89; Wamba-dia-Wamba, E., 1992 (June), 'Beyond Elite Politics of Democracy in Africa', Quest — Philosophical Discussions: An International African Journal of Philosophy, VI, 1.; Wiredu, K., 1972, 'On an African Orientation in Philosophy', in, Second Order, vol. 1, Nr. 2, 1972.; Wiredu, K., 1980, Philosophy and an African Culture: The Case of the Akan, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980.; Wiredu, K., 1990, 'Are there cultural universals', Quest: Philosophical discussions: An International Africn Journal of Philosophy, 4, 2: 4-19; Wright, R.A., 1977, ed., African Philosophy. An Introduction, Washington.

[39] Cf. Appiah, K.A., 1992, In my father's house: Africa in the philosophy of culture, New York & London: Oxford University Press.; Mudimbe V. Y,1994, The Idea of Africa, Bloomington, Indiana University Press. ; Mudimbe, V.Y., & Appiah, K.A., 1993, 'The impact of African studies on philosophy', in: Bates, R.H., V.Y. Mudimbe & Jean O'Barr, 1993, eds., Africa and the Disciplines:

independent both African philosophy and frowned upon by the cosmopolitan philosophers from Africa) have created a framework in which new and inspiring questions can be asked about Africa's place in global cultural history — questions which have since been picked up in the political arena around the concept of the African Renaissance (first formulated by Diop, now reformulated by the South African president Mbeki).[42] This last points reminds us of the fact that, in ways totally unpredictable in 1987, South Africa's attainment of majority rule in the early 1990s has in principle put the most developed material and intellectual national infrastructure of the African continent at the serve of Africa as a whole — albeit at the risk of a South

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The contributions of reseach in Africa to the social sciences and humanities, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 113-138; Mudimbe, V.Y., 1988, The invention of Africa: Gnosis, philosophy, and the order of knowledge, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press/London: Currey; Mudimbe, V.Y., 1997, Tales of faith: Religion as political performance in Central Africa: Jordan Lectures 1993, London & Atlantic Highlands: Athlone Press; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 2001, 'An incomprehensible miracle': Central African clerical intellectualism and African historic religion: A close reading of Valentin Mudimbe's Tales of Faith, paper read at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London, 1st February, 2001, as the opening lecture in a series of four, entitled 'Reading Mudimbe', organised by Louis Brenner and Kai Kresse; and again at SOAS, 15 May, 2001, in the presence of an with stimulating comments from, Mudimbe himself, also at: http:// **[add detail]**

[40]   Seminal Afrocentrist writings include: Diop, *Nations nègres et culture, o.c.*; Diop C.A., 1959, *L'unite culturelle de l'Afrique noire: Domaines du patriarcat et du matriarcat dans I'Antiquite classique*, Paris: Présence africaine; Asante M.K., 1982, 'Afrocentricity and Culture', in : Asante, M.K., & Asante, K.W., eds, *African culture*, Trenton, Africa World Press, pp. 3ff; Asante M.K., 1987, *The Afrocentric idea*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press; Obenga, T., 1990, *La philosophie africaine de la periode pharaonique: 2780-330 avant notre ère*, Paris: L'Harmattan; Obenga, T., 1995, *Cheikh Anta Diop, Volney et le Sphinx: Contribution de Cheikh Anta Diop à l'historiographie mondiale*, Paris: Présence africaine. For well-documented but largely dismissive critical assessments, cf. Fauvelle, F.-X., 1996, *L'Afrique de Cheikh Anta Diop*, Paris: Karthala; Fauvelle-Aymar, F.-X., Chrétien, J.-P., & Perrot, C.-H., 2000, eds., *Afrocentrismes: L'histoire des Africains entre Égypte et Amérique*, Paris: Karthala, English tr. in preparation; Howe, S., 1999, *Afrocentrism: Mythical pasts and imagined homes*, London/ New York: Verso, first published 1998; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 2000, 'Le point de vue de Wim van Binsbergen', in: 'Autour d'un livre. Afrocentrisme, de Stephen Howe, et Afrocentrismes: L'histoire des Africains entre Egypte et Amérique, de Jean-Pierre chrétien [*sic*] , François-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar et Claude-Hélène Perrot (dir.), par Mohamed Mbodj, Jean Copans et Wim van Binsbergen', *Politique africaine*, no. 79, octobre 2000, pp. 175-180, also at: http://come.to/black_athena.

[41]   Bernal, M., 1987, Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, Vol. I, The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1787-1987, London: Free Association Books/ New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press; Bernal, M., 1991, Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization. II, The Archaeological and Documentary Evidence. London: Free Association Books; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press; Lefkowitz, M.R., & MacLean Rogers, G., eds, 1996, Black Athena revisited, Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press; Berlinerblau, J., 1999, Heresy in the University: The Black Athena controvery and the responsibilities of American intellectuals, New Brunswick etc.: Rutgers University Press; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1997, ed., Black Athena: Ten Years After, Hoofddorp: Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society, special issue, Talanta: Proceedings of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society, vols 28-29, 1996-97; W.M.J. van Binsbergen, 2000, 'Dans le troisième millénaire avec Black Athena?', in: Fauvelle-Aymar, F.-X., Chrétien, J.-P., & Perrot, C.-H., *Afrocentrismes: L'histoire des Africains entre Égypte et Amérique*, Paris: Karthala, pp. 127-150, also at: http://come.to/black_athena.

[42]   Cf. Diop , C.A., 1996, Towards the African renaissance: Essays in African culture & development 1946-1960, tr. from the French by E.P. Modum, London: Karnak House; Mbeki, T., 1999, 'The African Renaissance, South Africa and the world'. In: Hadland, A., and J. Rantao, The life and times of Thabo Mbeki, Rivonia (S.A.), 1999, 170-183)

African hegemony. The blessings of the Internet have been appropriated African intellectuals so that they can participate in these developments much more directly and centrally.

Developments in and around Africanist anthropology

The depressing results of anthropology contributing to the development industry

In my 1987 article I wrote:

> The prolonged and humble exposure to a specific local interaction setting is not only salutary and illuminating to the individual researcher no matter from what continent — it may also help to restore a general respect for peasants and urban proletarians in the intellectual and political debates concerning the planning and implementation of development in Africa today.

On second thought, this passage (directly inspired by my own research among the Zambian Nkoya) seems unrealistically utopian. In the 1980s the international development industry and the World Bank discovered the local aid recipients' culture (conceived in a remarkably reified and fragmented format) as the black box that explained why North Atlantic development projects seldom produced the intended results. But instead of adopting the standard anthropological methods of prolonged and profound, methodologically informed local immersion, the development industry decided it would have cultural knowledge without paying the usual anthropological price. Rapid Rural Appraisals and similar quick assessment methods were to convey the illusion of valid knowledge of, and about, local peasants, without any danger of upsetting the development experts' time-table, comforts, preconceived ideas, and other forms of North Atlantic one-way intervention.[43] The appeal to anthropology has thus become counter-productive, serving to conceal the continued reliance on an one-sidedly imposed hegemonic rationality from the North. And although in recent years the World Bank has employed anthropologists and has been inspired by an actor-orientated approach like Sen's at the centre of its models of South poverty and economic action, there is still no coherent vision as to how anthropology is to be combined with the kind of knowledge production needed to underpin policy decisions like the World Bank's, which profoundly affect the economic situation of many hundreds of millions of people.

Beyond development research: The increased accommodation between Africanist research and government in The Netherlands

In my 1987 paper I gave a bleak picture of the relations between anthropologist and the development industry, which then was largely dominated by government ministry to which non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were affiliated, both in the North and in the South. Soon NGOs were to become a hot topic in development studies and policy,[44] without however far-reaching effects on the relations between governments

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[43] Cf. Geschiere, P.L., 1993, 'Wetenschap en ontwikkeling. Scheiden of lijden?', in: W. van Binsbergen, ed., Maatschappelijke betekenis van Nederlands Afrika-onderzoek in deze tijd, Leiden: Werkgemeenschap Afrika, pp. 63-80.

[44] Bratton, M., 1990, 'Non-governmental Organizations in Africa: Can they Influence Public

and anthropologists. It is my, no doubt myopic, impression that this situation has undergone considerable improvement over the past decade and a half. If we may take the, relatively ideal, situation of the African Studies Centre, Leiden (the national institution for Africanist social research in the Netherlands) as indicative of more general trends in the North Atlantic, a number of interesting points may be made. The Netherlands government support for professional Africanist research has grown, rather than dwindled. But whereas in the late 1980s government saw such research as more directly and recognisably ancillary to its own bilateral development endeavours in the Third World (a situation little conducive to academic independence, and breeding a mercenary genre of research proposals predictably geared to the research priorities known to be temporarily in fashion at the ministry for development co-operation), in the course of the 1990s relations between researchers and the government became much more relaxed and trustful at the personal level, while at the same time government pressure upon researchers to pursue readily applicable forms of research gave way to the awareness, among civil servants, that more fundamental and theoretically orientated research defined primarily by academic priorities had a far greater power of inspiration and illumination for them. The trend of disenchantment between academia and government, signalled in the main text for the 1980s, has not persisted in the next decade, or at least not consistently for Africanist research. I believe that here specific praise is due to Stephen Ellis and Gerti Hesseling, the two directors of the African Studies Centre in the 1990s, who each in their own very different way contributed to effective state/ research relations without in the least sacrificing academic independence.

The decline of fieldwork

My 1987 paper depicts an anthropology that is still liberating itself from the limitations of the classic model as emerged in the second third of the twentieth century. In this form of anthropology, fieldwork was all-important, and many of the nice and the critical things I say about anthropology revolve on fieldwork. Since 1987 however, the tradition of extensive, prolonged fieldwork has considerably declined in anthropology, for a number of reasons:

•   increased health risks (especially AIDS, ebola, cholera etc.),

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Policy?', Development and Change, 21; Cernea, M.M., 1990, Non-governmental organisations and local development, World Bank Discussion Papers 40, Washington: World Bank; Fowler, A., 1985, 'NGOs in Africa: Naming for what they are', in: Kinyanjui, K., red., Non-governmental organisations' contribution to development, Nairobi: Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi, pp. 7-30; Fowler, A., 1991, 'The Role of NGOs in Changing State-Society Relations: Perspectives from Eastern and Southern Africa', Development Policy Review, 9, 1; Fowler, A., 1993, 'Non-governmental Organizations as Agents of Democratization: an African Perspective', Journal of International Development, 5, 3; Kothari, R., 1988, 'The NGOs, the state and world capitalism', in Rajni Kothari, The State Against Democracy: In Search of Humane Governance, Delhi: Ajanta; NGO Landenstudie, 1991, Impactstudie Medefinancieringsprogramma, n.p. [The Hague]; Shaw, T.M., 1990, 'Popular participation in non-governmental structures in Africa: Implication for democratic development in Africa', Africa Today, 36, 3: 5f; Thomas, A., 1992, 'Non-governmental organizations and the limits to empowerment', in M. Wuyts, M. Macintosh and T. Hewitt, eds, Development Policy and Public Action, Oxford: Oxford University Press; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1992, a , ' ''NGO's'' tussen wetenschappelijke kennisproduktie en beleid: Enige sociaal-wetenschappelijke opmerkingen over niet-overheidsorganisaties in Afrika, inleiding voor de conferentie: 'Het Medefinancieringsprogramma: Perspectieven en bevindingen', Den Haag, 15 oktober 1992, georganiseerd door Interuniversitaire Onderzoeksschool CERES/CIRAN (Centre for International Research and Advisory Networks)/NRC-Handelsblad, reprinted in: *Literatuur behorende bij de cursus 'Ontwikkeling en debat/debatten in ontwikkeling: Problemen nu en perspectieven voor de toekomst', georganiseerd door CEBEMO in samenwerking met de vakgroep Culturele Antropologie/ Studie der Niet-westerse Samenlevingen van de Vrije Universiteit*, Amsterdam, deel II, pp. 68-84, Den Haag: CEBEMO.

- lack of funding,
- the increased actual globalisation of the contemporary world, which makes repeated short visits to the field much easier than in previous decades, but also creates the illusion of recognisable similarity across cultural situations world-wide and is less conducive to an massive investment, spanning several years minimum, in the investigation of cultural specificity
- the rapidly increasing spread of world-wide linguae francae, especially English, adding to this illusion and making it possible to conduct fieldwork in local settings yet through the time-saving medium of a lingua franca which implies the distortion of a double translation filter: both on the part of the researcher and of the research participants
- the overestimation of theory at the expense of empirical studies in the social sciences today
- the emergence of globalisation as a field of study, stimulating multi-sited field research which follows culturally and linguistically accessible, for globalised, participants in their peregrinations, but which in each location achieves less than extensive and prolonged exposure
- the revival of comparative and diffusionist studies,[45] which cannot possibly rely on the results of extensive fieldwork in any one place.

One could appreciate this decline of fieldwork as a timely methodological adjustment of the anthropological discipline to an unmistakably changing research object; or regret this development for the furtive superficiality it occasionally allows to pass for decent research. Meanwhile, however, we have become aware[46] of theoretical and epistemological disadvantages of the classic fieldwork format. When a foreign researcher has to invest years of her life in mastering a local linguistic and cultural domain, chances are that this disproportionate investment (often at great personal costs of frustration, conflict, health risks, broken relationships at home, etc.) leads to personal reification of that domain and its perceived boundaries -- hence a reification of culture, ethnicity and identity, rather than an awareness of the way in which cultural and ethnic identity claims are political statements within a politics of difference, against the background of multiplicity of identities, and far greater cultural similarity and continuity that such politics of difference could gainfully accommodate.[47]

My 1987 argument reveals a fundamental crisis in my identity as a North Atlantic anthropologist

In 1987 I had been one of the two academic directors of the African Studies Centre, Leiden, for six years. My being invited to the sister-institution at Edinburgh, in 1987, to officiate on the future of anthropology of Africa, was in itself a sign that by then I was recognised, at the age of 40, as a leading European anthropologist. There had been other such signs, such as my election to the highly prestigious Simon professorship at Manchester, which even had to be postponed because I was younger than the stipulated thirty years old. Yet my 1987 paper reveals, on re-reading, a tremendous uncertainty of

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45 On this point, cf. Amselle, J.-L., 2001, Branchements: Anthropologie de l'universalité des cultures, Paris: Flammarion, who signals this recent development (partly by reference to my own neodiffusionist studies) even though he frowns upon it.

46 Cf. my 'Cultures do not exist', *o.c.*

47 On these issues extensively in my: 'Cultures do not exist', and my forthcoming Intercultural encounters.

my identity as an anthropologist: that identity is said to have been exploded by the interdisciplinary nature of my pursuit of African Studies; more important, Africanist anthropology is better left to those who, as Africans, have a birthright no North Atlantic anthropologist can ever claim; and, at the personal level, the built-in contradictions of the anthropologists' role can only temporarily overcome in the concrete interaction during fieldwork, but continue to add an almost unbearable burden of hegemony and exploitation to any North Atlantic anthropological professional practice. No wonder that soon after this was written, when I undertook prolonged fieldwork in a new setting, in urban Botswana, those contradictions landed me in a personal crisis . From this crisis I emerged, first as a Southern Africa diviner-priest (thus seeking to transform myself into a honorary African, for whom the problem of birthright in Africanist knowledge production would be solved in an effective though unexpected way), and subsequently (resigning myself that I could not revolve the unbearable contradictions of anthropology from within that discipline) as a professor of intercultural philosophy seeking to develop a theory of interculturality where I use philosophy to critique anthropology, and anthropology to critique philosophy.[48] That trajectory, and its possible relevance for others than myself, is not the point here. But I may be forgiven for signalling, with reference to my 1987 paper, a temporarily forgotten landmark that makes my subsequent itinerary much clearer at least to myself.

Not just a personal crisis

That I was not the only one to suffer under the contradictions of the anthropological discipline including the shallow, largely neo-positivist epistemology underlying much mainstream anthropological work, was already obvious by the late 1980s.[49] As a result, the orientation of anthropology has somewhat changed since then, and not only because of the demise of then flourishing paradigms (such as that of the articulation of modes of production) and the decline of prolonged fieldwork.

The globalisation of the world has led to a globalisation of anthropology, with new questions and new challenges.[50] The 1990s saw a spate of social-science research

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[48] Cf. my: 'Cultures do not exist', and my forthcoming Intercultural encounters.

[49] Similar misgivings were phrased, e.g., by Fabian, Time and the other, *o.c.*; whereas the postmodernist critique of anthropology was to insist that anthropology's claim of constituting a science was in itself part of its narrative conventions as, essentially, a genre of creative literature, prone to levels of imagination and psychoanalytical transference hitherto unsuspected and certainly unmentionable in anthropological circles; cf. Clifford, J., & Marcus, G., eds., 1986, Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography, Berkeley: University of California Press; Clifford, J., 1988, The predicament of culture: Twentieth-century ethnography, literature and art, Mass.: Harvard University Press; Sangren, P., 1988, 'Rhetoric and the authority of ethnography: ''Postmodernism'' and the social reproduction of texts', Current Anthropology, 29, 3: 405-425; Pool, R., 1991, 'Postmodern ethnography?', Critique of Anthropology, 11: 309-332; Polier, N., & W. Roseberry, 1989, 'Tristes tropes: Postmodern anthropologists encounter the other and discover themselves', Economy and Society, 18: 245-264; Geujien, K., 1992, 'Postmodernisme in de antropologie', Antropologische verkenningen, 11, 1: 17-36; Abbink, J., 1989, 'Historie, etnografie en ''dialoog'': problemen van het antropologisch postmodernisme', in: A. Bosboom, ed., Liber Amicorum A.A. Trouwborst: Antropologische essays, Nijmegen: Instituut voor Culturele Antropologie, pp. 3-24.

[50] Cf. Appadurai, A., 1997, Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization, Delhi etc.: Oxford University Press; first published 1996, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Bauman, Z., 1998, Globalisation: The human consequences, London: Polity Press & Blackwell; Fardon, R., van Binsbergen, W.M.J., & van Dijk, R., 1999, eds., Modernity on a shoestring: Dimensions of globalization, consumption and development in Africa and beyond: Based on an EIDOS conference held at The Hague 13-16 March 1997, Leiden/ London: EIDOS (European Interuniversity Development

on globalisation. While the specific theoretical harvest in terms of new concepts and theories to understand a multicultural, globalising, meta-local world has been limited, a number of interesting trends have either been initiated in the context of globalisation studies, or have been strengthened by them:

- The critique of fieldwork as a naïvely localising strategy
- The rise of neo-diffusionism
- The emphasis on global religious movements as important vehicles for the movement of ideas, people and organisational forms
- The elaboration of (problematised, and actively constructed) *locality* as a critical concept in the light of which to re-read and re-analyse much of the pre-existing anthropology
- The elaboration of virtuality as a new focus on the relation between the imaginary, the ritual, and the social organisational
- The increased emphasis on commodities and commodification (hence consumption) as a key to understanding processes of localisation and globalisation
- The closer approchement between anthropology and contemporary philosophy (critique of the concept of culture; increased epistemological sophistication; the adoption of post-structuralist models for thought)
- The acknowledgement of other, para-academic forms of globalising knowledge construction and representation, facilitated by the technologies of globalisation (ICT, international travel etc.), with an increasing impact on identity, performance and conflict (Afrocentricity, Islam, diasporic ethnic networks etc.)

Opportunities Study network); Featherstone, M., 1990, ed., Global culture: Nationalism, globalisation and modernity, London/ Newbury Park: Sage; Featherstone, M., 1995, Undoing culture: Globalization, postmodernism and identity, London: Sage; Griffin, K., & Rahman, A., 1992, Globalization and the developing world: An essay on the international dimensions of development in the post-cold war era, Geneva: United Nationals Research Institute for Social Development; Hirst, R. & Thompson, G., 1996, Globalization in question, London: Polity Press; Kearney, M., 1995, 'The local and the global: The anthropology of globalization and transnationalism', Annual Review of Anthropology, 24: 547-565; King, A.D., 1991, Culture, globalization and the World-System: Contemporary conditions for the representation of identity, Binghamton: Macmillan; Meyer, B., & Geschiere, P., 1999, [check 1998] eds., Globalization and identity: Dialectics of flows and closures, special issue, Development and Change, 29, 4, October 1998, pp. 811-837; also separately published, Oxford: Blackwell's, 1999 [check 1998]; Nederveen Pieterse, J., 1994, Globalization as hybridization, Institute of Social Studies Working Paper 152, The Hague: Institute of Social Studies; Robertson, R., 1987, 'Globalization theory and civilizational analysis', Comparative Civilizations Review, 17: [add pages]. [Louise niet gevonden]; Robertson, R., 1992, Globalization: Social theory and global culture, London: Sage; Robertson, R., & Lechner, F., 1985, 'Modernization, globalization, and the problem of culture in world-systems theory', Theory, Culture and Society, 2, 3: 103-117; Soares, L.E., 1997, 'Globalization as a a shift in intracultural relations', in: Soares, L.E., ed., Cultural pluralism, identity, and globalization, Rio de Janeiro: UNESCO/ ISSC/ Educam, pp. 363-392; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1995, 'Popular culture in Africa: Dynamics of African cultural and ethnic identity in a context of globalization', in: van der Klei, J., ed., Popular culture: Beyond historical legacy and political innocence, Utrecht: CERES, pp. 7-40; also at: http: **[add detail]** ; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1997,Virtuality as a key concept in the study of globalisation: Aspects of the symbolic transformation of contemporary Africa, The Hague: WOTRO, Working papers on Globalisation and the construction of communal identity, 3. **[add detail]** ; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1998, 'Globalization and virtuality: Analytical problems posed by the contemporary transformation of African societies', in: Meyer, B., & Geschiere, P.L., Globalization and identity: Dialectics of flows and closures, special issue, Development and Change, 29, 4, October 1998, pp. 873-903; also separately published as Meyer, B., & Geschiere, P., 1998, eds., Globalization and identity: Dialectics of flow and closure, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 273-303. **[add detail]** ; van der Veer, P., 1996a, Conversion to modernities: the globalization of christianity, New York/ London: Routledge; Warnier, J.-P., 1999, La mondialisation de la culture, Paris: Découverte; Waters, M., 1995, Globalization, London/ New York: Routledge.

After a decade in which globalisation has been a major shibboleth for the organisation and funding of research, we are faced with the challenge of defining the priorities, blind spots, red herrings and dead ends of social research, especially of research with a regional more specifically Africanist focus. And with increasing globalisation, cultural relativism, while remaining the cornerstone of the anthropological discipline, has come under attack for political, intercultural philosophical, and epistemological reasons.[51] In this overall climate of internal contradictions and external changes, intercultural philosophy has emerged as a major critique of and step forward from anthropology, ready for me to step into and to further develop there, under new inspiration, with a new set of colleagues and a new context of ongoing debates, the older and more persistent questions of anthropology whose perplexing nature led to a stalemate when I wrote my 1987 article.[52]

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[51]   Cf. van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1999, 'Culturen bestaan niet': Het onderzoek van interculturaliteit als een openbreken van vanzelfsprekendheden, inaugural lecture, chair of intercultural philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam: Rotterdamse Filosofische Studies; English version: 'Cultures do not exist', in press in: Quest, also at: http:// **[add detail]** ; van Binsbergen, W.M.J., forthcoming, Intercultural encounters: African lessons for a philosophy of interculturality.

[52]   Cf: Kimmerle, H., 1991, Philosophie in Afrika. Annäherungen an einen interkulturellen Philosophiebegriff, Frankfurt a. M. 1991; Kimmerle, H., 1994, Die dimension des Interkulturellen , Amsterdam/ Atlanta: Rodopi; Kimmerle, H., 1996, ed., Das Multiversum der Kulturen, Amsterdam/ Atlanta: Rodopi; Kimmerle, H., & Wimmer, F.M., 1997, eds., Philosophy and democracy in intercultural perspective, Amsterdam/ Atlanta: Rodopi; Mall, R.A., 1995, Philosophie im Vergleich der Kulturen: Interkulturelle Philosophie, eine neue Orientierung, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft; Mall, R.A., & Lohmar, D., eds., Philosophische Grundlagen der Interkulturalität, Amsterdam/ Atlanta: Rodopi; my 'Culturen bestaan niet' / 'Cultures do not exist', *o.c.*, and Intercultural encounters, *o.c.*