

A Commentary on Anthropology and Africa*¹

Preamble

First, it is important to note that this paper is not a book review but rather a review article which aims at discussing the major ideas and perspectives which emerge from Sally Moore's book. Although no special effort will be made to follow the exact format of the book, every attempt will be made to follow through the ideas presented in a systematic way. Second, such an undertaking might serve as an advertisement of Sally Moore's ideas about Africa and anthropology which, I daresay, are not familiar to most African scholars. In fact, it came as a surprise, at least to me, that of all the anthropologists who have worked in Africa she was the one who elected to make the final pronouncement on anthropology and Africa. Perhaps, this should be taken as a sign of her courage and deep commitment to her craft.

Nevertheless, this is not to say that in certain situations a fine distinction between courage and foolhardiness could not be made. This is meant in both the professional and the political sense.

The history of anthropology in Africa is one thing; its ideological import and prac-

Archie Mafeje
American University
Cairo, Egypt

tice in modern Africa is another. Besides, the question of which anthropology and which Africa is still far from being resolved. Probably, the younger generation of anthropologists and what Sally Moore contemptuously refers to as the 'colonial mentality' advocates are less sanguine about the future of their craft than her. The African anthropologists who do not feature at all in her book are still in a political and intellectual quandary. In South Africa and its environs *volkekunde* anthropology is part of the bitter past and at present is being rejected by Africans as colonialist and racist. It transpires, therefore, that 'anthropology' and 'Africa' are abstractions which could refer to any number of things at the concrete level. In this context it is interesting to note that Euro-Americans can easily talk and write about 'African studies' but not 'African anthropology'. The difference in connotation is not in the phraseology itself, which is perfectly symmetrical, but in the noun agency. In African

studies, Africa is unambiguously the object whereas 'African Anthropology' could, among other things, refer to a specific claim by Africans. Although not recognised by the proprietors of anthropology, this impulse exists and is probably strongest in southern Africa. According to this reckoning, the alternative is the abolition of anthropology which, as is well-known, is exactly what African nationalists did elsewhere in Africa.

It is apparent, therefore, that in the present epoch scholars, whoever they are, have to contend with the antimony between intellectual imperialism and the desire by Africans for self-liberation. This is not merely a matter of 'framework of thought', as Sally Moore might suppose, but actual politics of knowledge-making under conditions of global imposition and its antitheses. In this respect a certain sense of sociology of knowledge even among anthropological stalwarts might be of value. Who are the makers of anthropology in the 1990s and for whom? Who are the objects of anthropology and why? Why 'Anthropology and Africa' and not 'Anthropology and Europe or America'? A number of answers to these questions are implicit in Sally Moore's text? It is the

intention in this review article to make them explicit?

The orientation

Anthropology and Africa is obviously not meant for an African audience. Nonetheless, it is the author's particular hope that it will be read in Africa (Moore 1994:vii). By whom and what for, it is not clear. Nor could have the book been intended to be a guide to anthropology for the creators of anthropology in Africa – the British. Therefore, one can only surmise that it was written largely for the benefit of the American anthropologists, old and young, who are late-comers to Africa and might not be so well-versed with the inside story of British anthropology in Africa. Even so, looked at from a perspective of an African who was nurtured in the best Oxbridge anthropological traditions, the whole book could be described as a lie intelligently told. This does not reside so much in what the book says but in not saying what it means, which is the opposite of tendentious historiography. This might be a clever strategy for denying potential opponents of easy targets or a diplomatic ploy for avoiding being too obvious.

If an established lady from Harvard such as Sally Moore wishes to tell her fellow-anthropologists that:

- a) they should not concern themselves with anti-colonial 'noises', because they are antiquated and that colonialism itself was not the evil it has been made out to be but simply a product of its time, which nonetheless created unlimited access to the colonised (p.20);
- b) they should pay no attention to crude radical upstarts within the ranks who are obsessed with the 'colonial connection' in the constitution of anthropology and that anthropology was a noble profession, despite colonial meddling (p.20);
- c) it should be recognised that anthropology from start and by definition is an imperialistic discipline which studies 'others' (p.9) and that the anthropologist always comes from the imperialist world (p.2);
- d) Africa is by its very nature an anthropological laboratory which is destined to yield 'a bountiful harvest of studies of non-European cultural ideas and practices' in which no social or intel-

lectual issue that exists cannot be explored (p.1) (It reminds me of tropical diseases and Africa);

- e) Africans should stop crying and whining about colonialism because it was their own condition which made it possible and at present, without colonialism, this is manifesting itself in unpayable national debts to AIDS, famines to population explosions, and in political violence to refugee camps; and
- f) Under the circumstances the rich and the dominant cannot help using Africa as a playground and anthropologists have no reason to be self-effacing but instead should march forward and only be wary of capricious African governments (p.117), would not this throw everything into relief and make existing contradictions more apparent? Instead of beating about the bush, is it not better that the candid self is revealed so that we all know what we are about? For an anthropologist, it is well to remember that one thing 'primitives' do not know is how to fight in the dark.

The Colonial Legacy

Anthropology and the colonial era constitutes half of Sally Moore's short survey and rightly so. Before anything else it should be granted that there is no drama, without characters. There is no question about it, the colonial anthropologists were great characters and personable persons. I got to know personally the succeeding generations of British Anthropologists since Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, and Evans-Pritchard. I do not remember disliking any of them, except Henry Forsbrooke, the last colonial Director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute and a former District Commissioner in Tanganyika – a half-baked colonial anthropologist by all counts. The anthropologists I knew in Britain and in Africa such as Audrey Richards, Fortes, Leach, Goody, Firth, Schapera, Gluckman, Mitchell, Beattie, Victor Turner, Mary Douglas, Lucy Mair, Phyllis Kaberry, Monica Wilson, Philip Mayer, Southall, Gulliver, Maquet, Jappie van Velsen, Gutkind, Apthorpe, Blacking and a few other less well-known figures were, indeed, liberals. But once in a light conversation Mary Douglas reminded me that, that was a swear word and that it was 'kosher' to be left.

Whether this was a friendly dig at me or not, the fact of the matter is that I used to

have bitter arguments with some of them on the colonial question and white racism. In one occasion the exchange became so intense that one of my mentors, Audrey Richards, had to remind me that during the Second World War they sweat blood in the colonies, presumably for the colonised. Yet in another meeting in Lusaka Max Gluckman, the Zulu warrior, feeling betrayed shook his fist at me warning me that my strictures against them would not do because only yesterday they were being accused by colonial whites of being traitors and now independent Africans are accusing them of being colonialists. Richards and Fortes eventually disowned me whereas Monica Wilson prayed for my soul and told the others that if they wanted to know what the other side thought I was one of the people to listen to. In contrast, Sally Moore (p.20) makes it appear tranquil and blissful:

Despite the fact that the anthropologists came from the dominant society, they were preoccupied with the dominated population, its affairs, and its well-being. Anthropologists mixed freely with the Africans among whom they worked, often living among them, acknowledging no colour bar and respecting none of the many social boundaries between rulers and ruled that were conventional among white administrators and settlers.

Sally Moore's claim is as unanthropological as it is false. Everywhere they went, the anthropologists were *Bwana Mkubwa* or *Mama* by virtue of their skin colour in a colonial setting. They commanded the attention and the services of the natives at will. The fact that some of them were more gentle than others and did not use Nadel's 'bullying method' whereby he ordered his informants to his tent and hotly interrogated them is irrelevant. What remains is relations of superordination and subordination or social and political exploitation. At the formal level there is yet another distinction that should be made. By virtue of their class background, the first generation of British anthropologists in Africa enjoyed as much power as the colonial administrators with whom they collaborated in developing what became known as applied anthropology. There are well-known examples such as the Seligmans, Nadel, and Evans-Pritchard in the Sudan, J.G. Jones in Nigeria. Audrey Richards in Uganda, Mitchell in Rhodesia, Lestrade, van Warmelo, Odendaal, and Hammond-

Tooke in South Africa. Likewise, Daryll Forde did his best from the Royal Anthropological Institute in London. Sally Moore (pp.19-20) is our witness:

In London, the profession tried intermittently to persuade the government that anthropology could indeed help in the affairs of colonial rule. By the mid-1920s the nature of the interface between scholarly and administrative interests in Africa had become clearer (pp.19-20), (note the choice of words).

This did not apply to the next generation of British anthropologists who went to Africa in the period leading up to independence e.g. Victor Turner, Mary Douglas, John Beattie and a number of their contemporaries from the Manchester School. Not only were they not empire-builders but not also they took no particular interest in the colonial government. All the same they still enjoyed some prestige and respectability. Things were to change rapidly with the advent of independence. The first generation of British anthropologists who came out to Africa shortly after independence e.g. Caroline Hutton, Ann Sharman, Suzette Heald, Joan Vicent, Rachel Yeld, Sandy Robertson and a few others enjoyed neither prestige nor respectability. They were on their own. The political and ideological environment was hostile. They were under pressure to account for themselves. They responded by being generally anti-colonial, anti-colonial anthropology, and denounced structural-functionalism. They avoided tribal studies like plague and opted for thematic topics which focussed on processes of transformation. Most of them were good researchers but it was never clear whether or not what they did was reproduction of anthropology under changed conditions. One thing certain is that they never enjoyed the same eminence as their predecessors. In fact, by the time I left Cambridge in 1968 none of my students wanted to go to Africa for fieldwork. One of them chose to go to Mongolia, another to the Amazon, and yet another to the Atlas Mountains. So, when Sally Moore refers to a flourishing anthropological enterprise in Africa I truly do not know what she is referring to. In her book she has great problems proving her case. But for the time being, my contention is that the trends I have sketched above marked not only the decline of colonial anthropology in Africa but also the ensuing atrophy of anthropology itself in Africa.

It is obvious that in the context of the foregoing discussion, personalities and individual attributes were not the issue. Colonialism was the issue. Anthropology got identified with colonialism because of its object and epistemology of alterity. It was introduced by people whose professional interests were the same as those of the colonial administrators. The fact that the two shared the same structural position and often collaborated to perfect the desired system of political control made it possible for the Africans to distinguish between them, politically and ideologically. The argument that the anthropologists cared for their objects of study and defended them when necessary misses the point and is too subjective to be useful. Apart from the implicit paternalism, protecting individual groups did not amount to anti-colonialism on a broad front, which is what African nationalism signalled.

Many liberal anthropologist hated black 'agitations' and trouble-makers and did not want them to come anywhere near 'their people' almost in the same way that Sally Moore hates the 'colonial mentality' critics within anthropology. The only two anthropologists I know of who joined the nationalist movement in the countries where they were doing research caused a stir not only among colonial administrators but also among their fellow-anthropologists who felt that it was 'not necessary'. Likewise, when an anthropologist from the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute fell in love with a young woman from the 'tribe' he was studying and wanted to marry her, he was forced to resign and was advised to disappear from Northern Rhodesia. A similar situation occurred in Makerere when a British woman shortly after independence had a child by a Masai elder but this time could insist on keeping it and remain in independent Uganda. Colonialism went hand in hand with racism even among anthropologists. This is to be expected because they were part of the colonial community. If any changes were taking place, they were not due to change of 'framework of thought' among the anthropologists, as Sally Moore is so well aware, but to the dynamics of decolonisation.

Deconstruction or Reconstruction of Anthropology?

Understandably, Sally Moore does not believe in the deconstruction of anthropology as an historical-determined proc-

ess and is obviously contemptuous of those who so believe. In her book she remarks (p.22):

These connections between, anthropology and the colonial enterprise became the subject of considerable invective in the 1960s and 1970s. Thus the 'colonial connection' became a political issue among 'radical' internal critics of anthropology just at the point at which such connection no longer had any practical relevance, i.e. in a post-colonial reaction. Other attacks came from African academics who wanted to repossess control of scholarship concerned with their own societies. This invective went on for decades.

In a book which purports to be a historical guide to anthropology one would have expected that even these bastard children of anthropology would be mentioned as authors in their own right. But none of them features in the text, except James Clifford and Paul Rabinow. Their omission is definitely tendentious. Whatever one thinks of the deconstructionist literature of the late 1960s and the 1970s in anthropology, it is historically and sociologically important. *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (Asad 1973), *Reinventing Anthropology* (Hymes 1974) and 'The Responsibility of the Social Scientist Symposium' in *Current Anthropology*, 9, 1968 probably marked a turning-point in anthropology. Any arguments by people such as Sally Moore that the authors of these texts were merely reiterating what anthropologist had already been doing are misguided and superficial. The intensity of that debate which lasted for 'decades' indicates that there was more than meets the eye.

First, they signalled a growing paradigmatic crisis within anthropology which was brought about by social and economic transformations of anthropological units of analysis. Second, they were a response to the anti-colonial revolution in regions such as Africa. The former colonial subjects were refusing to be treated as objects of curiosity and hence the political intervention by newly independent African governments. Third, there was a political and intellectual ferment in Europe and America in the form of the student movements of the 1960s which questioned traditional forms of knowledge and their organisation, something which threatened an epistemological break, especially in the social sciences. There was also the rise of Black Power which pro-

duced the Montreal hurricane in 1969, and the anti-Vietnam War protest in America. Here, we witness a conjuncture of historical forces which made the so-called invective protracted. One is not sure if the battle is yet over, despite Sally Moore's complacency. For the time being and contrary to what she claims, one notes that there is no observable theoretical framework at the moment which characterises anthropology as a discipline nor are there emerging paradigms at least in Africa which distinguish what passes as anthropology from other social science disciplines. What seems to be the case is that if one declares oneself an anthropologist in advance, then, as if by fiat, one's work becomes 'anthropological'. Also, most interesting from the point of view of Sally Moore's testimony and epistemology of subjects and objects, the anthropological enterprise in Africa is flourishing, without Africans. As if to rub in the point, she does not refer to any African authors, except Mudimbe for negative reasons which will be commented upon later. Suffice it to say, from what one knows about the current situation in African studies the veracity of her claim is in doubt.²

In rejecting the deconstructionist critique as spurious, Sally Moore (pp. 22-23) has this to say:

Apart from the vituperation of the 1960s and 1970s, which often became as drearily conventionalized as the vulgarized conceptual straw men it attacked, there was in addition considerable serious questioning of the models on which so much of anthropological theory had been founded. The ahistoricity and selective constructions of the structural-functional paradigm became strikingly clear. The 'colonial period mentality' critiques represented one dimension of the more general proposal that a new set of problematic be addressed.

This is a grand statement like Sarastro quelling the hysteria of the Queen of Night in the *Magic Flute* – completely unillustrated but commanding. At what point did the ahistoricity of structural-functionalism become strikingly clear and what brought about this new revelation, apart from the 'vituperation' of the 1960s especially? While it is true that structural-functionalism did not mean the same thing to all British anthropologists and that individuals such as Leach, Firth, and Audrey Richards could hardly be described as structural-functionalists, it is also true that

they were not responsible for the demise of the structural-functionalist paradigm. It was the younger generation who mounted a sustained attack on structural-functionalism first as graduate students in the mid-1960s and later as Sally Moore's 'radical' upstarts from within. Among these may be mentioned Adam Kuper, Maurice Bloch, Ralph Grillo, Jim Faris, Jack Stauder (whom they sacked from Harvard for his 'colonial mentality' obsession), and Marilyn Strathern, to mention only those I knew in Cambridge. There were others at University College in London. The Protest of this younger generation had an impact not on the senior generation of anthropologists but on the intermediate generation notably Jack Goody and Mary Douglas. In Oxford to achieve the same effect, it seems that one had to undergo a certain kind of spiritual transformation as in the case of Rodney Needham. But certainly, in seminars and in informal discussions people like Jack Goody and Mary Douglas used to listen with interest to these 'noises' and began to address them indirectly lest (?) they were accused of encouraging rebellion by the old guard. Insofar as this is true, unlike Sally Moore's sages who knew it all from the beginning, they were liberated by the younger generation. In Jack Goody's case one could draw a graph which portrays these changes accurately and which would amuse Enid Schildkrout and Keith Hart who became members of his extended family.

As far as the 'ahistoricity' of structural-functionalism is concerned, it is obvious that one had to stand outside this particular paradigm to be able to accuse its adherents of ahistoricism. The founders of British structural-functionalism were ahistorical by choice and conviction: anthropology was meant to be a science which established causal connections from direct observation, whereas history belonged to the humanities and established casual connections indirectly and through extrapolation. So, history was not and could not be an integral part of anthropology. This has nothing to do with awareness of the 'time dimension' in Sally Moore's simple sense. Of course, every anthropologist was aware of time and change but for structural-functionalism the problem was how to incorporate it into its *theoretical-construct*, without becoming *historical*, probably, in the sense of social history. This had deconstructionist implications which could not be faced,

without radically transforming the discipline itself. To wit every good British anthropologist concluded his/her monograph with an appendix on current changes in the community under study. Some even went further and revisited their 'tribes' after some years so as to get two static pictures separated by time in order to compare them in what was called the diachronic method.

There were also monographs devoted to social change, of which the best known is *Analysis of Social Change* by G. and M. Wilson (1945). As Sally Moore correctly points out, the book was a comparison of two static models or stereotypes of 'primitive' vs 'modern' society. Implicit in this were a number of colonial and Eurocentric presuppositions which were critically reviewed by Ben Magubane in his article, *A Critical Look at Indices Used in the Study of Social Change in Africa* (1971). His critique included some of the works by the members of the Manchester School, to which Sally Moore is unmistakably partial. The amazing thing, perhaps not so amazing, is, that she does not even mention Magubane's work, despite the impact it had on the younger generation of anthropologists both in Britain and in America.

Sally Moore believes that 'situational analysis' and 'extended-case method' introduced by the members of the Manchester School helped anthropology to move away from the 'closed system' version of functionalism. However, she does not say whether or not they remained functionalist or became historical. No doubt, 'situational analysis' was dynamic and exciting like all drama. But where did it lead to? It led to confirmation of functional equilibrium through ordered or ritualised conflict. As Sally Moore acknowledges, most of this was inspired by Gluckman's work and ideas as are found, for instance, in *Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa* (1952), *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (1955), and *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa* (1963). Victor Turner's *Schism and Continuity in an African Society* (1957) was in the same mould. Even in his later work which was on symbolic systems, e.g., *The Forest of Symbols* (1967), and *The Drums of Affliction* (1968) he never abandoned the idea of structural reconciliation or respite by affirming community solidarity through ritual. In this sense he was more Durkheimian than Levi-Straussian. Another

interesting example from the Manchester School is *Tribal Cohesion in a Money Economy* by William Watson (1958). He sought to show that Mambwe in then Northern Rhodesia participated in a money economy without losing their tribal cohesion i.e. they managed to maintain dynamic equilibrium under changing economic conditions. As would be noticed, the referent in all these studies is the 'tribe'. This means that, far from transcending the tribal framework, situational analysis succeeded only in recognising rhapsodic explosions with the same melodic lines as in medieval motets.

Sally Moore credits Gluckman for having planted the seed, referring in particular to the analysis of a situation on the bridge in Zululand and his assertion that an African miner is a *miner*, meaning that once they sell their labour in the urban areas Africans cease to be tribesmen but become urban proletarians as everyone else. But in the context of discussions about 'detrribalisation' in Africa, Gluckman was not able to sustain his position in the historic symposium on social change in modern Africa in Kampala in 1959 because he granted that once an African worker returns to his village he is 'retribalised' (Southall, 1961). It was Watson who gave a clearer answer to this apparent paradox by arguing that the African migrant worker did not have to choose between these two worlds; he belonged to both. Gluckman could not have liked this much because his subjective position (stated to me in several occasions) was that either the Africans were left alone to enjoy their traditional splendour or, if that could not be sustained, that there was a complete revolution. To this extent he sympathized with the South African Communist Party. Even so, he remained a colonial rebel, something he could never understand or accept. Neither would Sally Moore because of an inability or unwillingness to see history as so many interpretations of reality and also because of a deep-seated belief in the absolute objectivity of their own perceptions.

Social Change as Unrecognized History

In her book Sally Moore sees some significance in the fact that Gluckman was brought up in South Africa, where the confrontation between black and white is more direct and self-imposing? Whether for this reason or another, under the topic 'detrribalisation', she introduces a sus-

tained comparison between the Wilsons and the Mayers. The works in question are *Analysis of Social Change* (1945) by the former and *Townsmen or Tribesmen: Conservatism and the Process of Urbanisation in a South African City* (1961) by the latter. The issue is whether 'culture loss' or 'detrribalisation' on the part of the African signifies that great transformation from 'primitive' to 'civilized'; or conversely whether retention of 'tribal' traditions is a mark of conservatism or unwillingness to be 'civilized'. These are basic and topical issues in Africa. But I would say, the choice of texts by Sally Moore is less than perfect. It is hard to imagine how she could compare a 1945 text with a 1961 text. The counterpart of the Mayers' book is *Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township* (1963) by M. Wilson and A. Mafeje or 'The Growth of Peasant Communities' by Monica Wilson in M. Wilson and L. Thompson (eds), *The Oxford History of South Africa* Vol. II (1971).

In *Townsmen and Tribesmen* the Mayers identified a category of people they call the 'red people' i.e. those who paint themselves with red ochre or dip their traditional shawls and skirts in red ochre (*amaqaba* in Xhosa). According to the Mayers, these people are conservative because they refuse to give up their traditional values and habits and to assimilate to the urban environment. The Mayers admired them for their insistence to be themselves but at the same time admit that in the urban environment they are disadvantaged because preference is given to 'school people'. The latter are Christian converts, otherwise called 'amagqoboka' in Xhosa. At the beginning they were forced to learn the three Rs in missionary schools and hence they were referred to as 'school people' (*abantu basesikolweni* in Xhosa). These represented modernity according to the Eurocentric model and were favoured. However, as time went on and segregation or apartheid took over not all Christian converts had access to education and not all pagans rejected modern education. Consequently, the distinction between the two was getting blurred, especially in the urban areas where everybody wears European clothes. Therefore, the Mayers could only have arrived at their classification by asking projective questions to which they would get answers according to the convenience of the respondents. So, we actually do not know whether the people they interviewed were in fact 'red peo-

ple'. All we know is that they were conservative rural migrants.

In undertaking the Langa study we avoided what we thought was a procedural error on the part of the Mayers. Instead of thinking in terms of 'school' and 'red people', we thought of urban-oriented people. In Langa this was not difficult to determine because the migrant workers were quartered in the barracks whereas the permanently urbanised African population was housed in individual municipality bungalows. The first category was referred to by the people themselves as 'amagoduka' (those who return home) and the second category as 'abantu basekokishini' (location people or townspeople). Secondly, mindful of the fact that labour migration to cities like Cape Town favours those who have some education, we tried to see whether urban-orientedness among the migrants was at all correlated with more than average rates of education among what was called 'amagoduka'. It turned out that the least educated or the uneducated migrants tended to be more conservative and rural-oriented than those who had received better education and found it easy to interact with the location people whose codes they had acquired through modern education. This had nothing to do with 'detrribalisation'. It had something to do with social differentiation or class-formation among urban Africans in Cape Town. For that matter, even the conservative migrants could not be thought of as 'red' or 'school' people or as 'tribesmen'. They were merely peasant migrants who recognised common regions or districts or origin. For this reason, instead of referring to them as 'tribesmen', we adopted the commonly used urban terminology, 'homeboys'.

Clyde Mitchell contended with some of these problems in what was then the Rhodesians. Sally Moore refers to his *Kalela Dance* (1956) but not so much to his *Tribalism and the Plural Society* (1960). There were often questions as to whether Mitchell's work was anthropological or sociological. In his urban studies Mitchell frequently used 'tribalism' as a term of reference but maintained that substantively it referred to more than one thing. For instance, he believed that in the Kalela dance the Bisa were not asserting their tribal identity but rather their ethnic identity in a multi-ethnic environment in the Copperbelt. He contended

that ethnic identity in everyday interaction in the Copperbelt was more important than anything else. Even this claim he qualified by pointing out that his observation applied only to inter-African relations and not to black and white relations. In the latter case ethnic differences were of no consequence. He elaborated on this theme in his *Tribalism and the Plural Society*. This was effectively about the interaction between race, ethnicity, and class in a colonial society. In the context of this late analysis Mitchell had the opportunity to decide whether his term of reference was going to be 'tribalism' or 'ethnicity' and 'class', but he did not. His Kalela dancers in the Copperbelt could have been looked upon as rural-oriented peasant migrants as against the urban-oriented, educated, and non-ethnic trade union leaders who were destined to be among future nationalist leaders who led the anti-colonial movement. In Southern Rhodesia and South Africa once again it is the urban-oriented, educated class which spear-headed the struggle against racial domination and oppression under white minority regimes. So, the Wilsons could not have been altogether wrong in supposing that the modernizing African elites were antithetical to pre-colonial social formations. Their major crime was Euro-centrism. They supposed that these elements would be European-like and not just be modern Africans with their own social peculiarities. In a surprising outburst in a seminar in Leiden some years ago Adam Kuper accused the Christian anthropologists in Africa of proselytizing in that they used conversion to Christianity as an index of modernity or civilization. Although he did not say as much, this indirectly explained why Jewish anthropologists, at least in South Africa, identified more with the conservatives than 'school people'. To an African, this was not immediately comprehensible because most Africans do not know who is a Jew or a Christian. They simply know of whites in Africa. Whether this indicated a subtle competition among anthropologists for the souls of Africans, it is unknowable and probably is inconsequential.

The review above shows that the so-called urban studies in Africa were a mixed bag. Some of them were anthropological only in name and not in subject matter. But in all of them the major referent was 'tribe', 'tribal', or 'tribalism' (I might have prevailed on Monica Wilson not to do the same in *Langa*). Why is this the case?

Sally Moore (p. 92) in a rather annoying and self-satisfied manner proclaims:

The idea of the 'tribe' was firmly fixed in the consciousness of African and outsiders, but was far from a natural unit of analysis. It was patently not 'natural' and for many issues did not represent the most meaningful unit of study.

This is in contrast to an honest declaration by Gulliver (p. 92) whom she quotes. In his words: "The natural 'unit' of study for the anthropologist in Africa has been the tribe – not the 'tribe' under colonial rule but the 'tribe' *tout simple*." Despite Sally Moore's Euro-centric pretensions, they did not deconstruct the concept of 'tribe' in anthropological discourse. The Africans did in my person in 1971 when I published my article on 'The Ideology of Tribalism'. It is interesting that my starting point was not Gulliver's (1965) article quoted above but the 1969 treatises entitled *Tradition and Transition in East Africa: Studies of the Tribal Element in the Modern Era*, of which he was the editor. In his introduction Gulliver explained that:

We do not continue to use it (the term 'tribe') in any spirit of defiance, let alone of derogation and disparagement. We use it simply because it continues to be widely used in East Africa when English is spoken... among the citizens there (p.2).

In 1994 Sally Moore offers the same justification. How often must it be pointed out that in African languages there is no equivalent of the term 'tribe' and that the concept of 'tribe' is a European imposition in Africa? What is ethnographically known is that Africans like everybody else are conscious of the linguistic and ethnic group to which they belong. The theoretical question then is how do we know that this predicates 'tribal consciousness' or that the collectivity to which they claim affinity is necessarily a 'tribe'? The fact that English-speaking Africans and foreigners use the term does not prove anything anthropologically and in fact conceptually it might be a confirmation of my contention. The second theoretical question which follows is; in the absence of conceptual 'tribes' or real tribes what semantic categories are there for the anthropologist to use to designate her/his unit of analysis?

Sally Moore has no answer to the above question. Instead, she takes refuge into thematic issues such as gender, food systems, land reform, legal history, some social history, guerrilla warfare, and devel-

opment studies. But then she admits that the discipline has broken up into subspecialisations which have proliferated to the point where they often have more in common with parallel topics in other disciplines than with other sectors within anthropology' (p.122). This contradicts her claim that anthropology as such is flourishing more than ever before in Africa. Out of approximately 500 references cited in her book, there are only about 40 studies on Africa by anthropologists since 1986. This paucity had already been foreshadowed in her discussion of anthropology after 'African Independence' in which she warns her readers that: '...there will be a certain amount of *tackling* back and forth from earlier to later monographs...' (p.87). In the event she invoked the names of the anthropological ancestors in vain for there was not much to go 'forth' on. When the chips were down and she had to demonstrate the current presence of anthropology, she cited only five works to illustrate the exuberance of the anthropological enterprise in Africa. Realizing that even these did not cohere in the disciplinary sense, she indulged in special pleading:

Their authors have three things in common – a knowledge of the earlier anthropological literature in Africa a familiarity with the general theoretical problems addressed in the discipline and a commitment to the fieldwork method (p.122).

In the context of deconstruction of colonial anthropology and anthropology at all, this is methodologically and epistemologically naïve because background to anthropological literature and the fieldwork method is now given to Africanist social scientists of all kinds and the theoretical issues which are supposed to be addressed by anthropologists are now common property, as her own testimony shows. Therefore, there is no place to hide!

Finally, on the question of 'Africanity', Sally Moore is in all probability right in describing Mudimbe's text in *The Invention of Africa* (1985) and in general as 'complex, indigestible, and highly opinionated'. But Mudimbe's hostility to colonial anthropology is shared by many African scholars. To harbour such feelings an African scholar does not have to be a trained anthropologist. Familiarity with classical anthropology texts is sufficient. What is important is the images of Africa they conjure up and their association with



the colonial past. Sally Moore mistakenly thinks that this does not matter any longer in the post-colonial era and pours scorn on the 'colonial period mentality' critique. These issues are still very much alive among African intellectuals, to whom she seems to pay no attention as is reflected in her references in which African are conspicuous only by their absence. This might confirm existing beliefs among Africans about white racism and Eurocentrism. The insistence by writers such as her that anthropology is, not in so many words, a study of the uncivilized by the civilized is likely to aggravate such feelings. Independent Africans are in a position to de-

cide what kind of relations in knowledge-making will be tolerated and which will not be tolerated. Mudimbe's apparent obsession with the problem of alterity is not socially uninformed, despite the fact that he is resident in the United States. What interests me in his book is not his grasp of anthropology or otherwise but his command of the etymology of the *Africanus* alterity as perceived by Europeans over ages. The classical texts (which I have no problem in decoding having wasted my youth learning classics in a missionary boarding school) have one advantage, namely, that their authors had no inhibition about expressing their prejudices concerning Africa. It

was simply a continent of savages (read 'tribes') and venomous beasts. I do not mind such candour; I got used to it in Southern Africa. As a matter of fact, I like black mambas lethal as they are and wish Africans could learn from them. Perhaps, in the circumstances their continent would cease to be a playground for knowers of absolute knowledge and they in turn would lose their absolute alterity.

Notes

1. Sally Falk Moore, 1994, University Press at Virginia, Charlottesville
2. For collaborative views, see special edition of Issue, Vol xxiii, Winter/Spring, 1995.

*CODESRIA Bulletin, Number 2, 1996, (p. 6-13).