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The studies of African peoples, history, and philosophy; arts, literature, and culture; political, economic, and social organization; geography, ecology, and paleontology are and have long been contested domains of intellectual inquiry. In the modern era this is perhaps best represented by the 1969 annual meeting of the (American) African Studies Association (ASA; founded in 1957 by the anthropologist Melville Herskovits) in Montreal, at which the “highly charged emotional atmosphere” (Cowan 1970, p. 344) “came as an earthquake to Africa scholars” (Wallerstein 1983, p. 14). The outcome of an unsuccessful negotiation between the ASA and a large group of primarily African American members resulted in most of the latter leaving the ASA for the African Heritage Studies Association (AHTA) (Rowe 1970; Clarke 1976). Many of the AHTA members viewed the ASA as “an organization founded ... by European American scholars for the Eurocentric Study of Africa” that had made itself the “validating agency in the United States for all matters African, political and academic. ... Indeed, some scholars hold that ASA was and is a white, CIA/government-controlled organization” (Gray 2001, p. 70). Nevertheless, dissension in the field is not limited to the United States or the late twentieth century, and the debates continuing into the twenty-first century cannot be neatly packaged into one that is solely about “white versus black” or “African versus non-African” or “Eurocentric versus Afrocentric,” although all of these are part of the story.

The reasons behind the controversies are themselves illuminating. Firstly, European scholarly interest in Africa was in part the outcome of the search for humankind’s origins and the origins of “civilization.” It is now known that Africa was the birthplace of *Homo sapiens sapiens* and that ancient Egypt had great influence on classical Greece (Diop 1967; Bernal 1987). Furthermore the rise of (European) African studies is inseparable from the European concept of race and races and the origins of modern racism (as well as the rise and development of both capitalism and modern science) and even the European self-concept itself. There was no concept of “European” (or “whiteness” for that matter) prior to racist capitalism (Jaffe 1985; Carew 1988; Davidson 1961). The European enslavement of Africans was not the result of racism, but rather racism was an ideological justification of that enslavement, considered necessary for capitalist development (Williams 1944; Cox 1948; Rodney 1972). The ties between anthropology and colonialism are well documented, confirming the role the Euro-American study of Africa played in wresting political and economic control of the continent, its peoples, and its resources (Asad 1973). Sir Frederick Lugard, the first governor of British Nigeria, was head of the Executive Council of the Page 44 International Institute of African Languages and Cultures (IILAC), founded in 1926 (Moore 1993). Another important figure associated with the IILAC was A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, whose functionalist approach dominated anthropological study of Africa: “Functional analyses depend on a contrast between the normal and the pathological. If what is European is defined as normal, then the non-European appears to be disordered, abnormal, and primitive” (Mudimbe 1988).

There are both Eurocentric and Afrocentric versions of Africa prior to European contact. The most extreme Eurocentric versions are of “primitive” (and “backward” and “uncivilized”) “tribes” and worse—the “Niam-Niam” who had tails, according to Count de Castelnau’s 1851 book *Troglodytes*, inhabiting caves and hunting unicorns (Rigby 1996). Spurious claims concerning “Hamitic” and “Caucasoid” Africans accompanied the attempts to de-Africanize ancient Egypt. The African-centered versions focus on ancient Egypt (Kemet) and Ethiopia and the empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai in the West and the Zimbabwe, Monomotapa, and Rozwi kingdoms in the South (Williams 1974; Du Bois 1965). Of course there are both oral and written indigenous African and Afro-Arab literatures and histories, including the writings of Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Battuta and works such as *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali* (Niane 1965). Since not all whites or Europeans are Eurocentric and not all black or African scholars are Afrocentric, the issues are not at all easy to disentangle. In addition African studies is not simply another branch of an “area studies” curriculum that would include Asia, Latin America, and so on. Each has its own unique history and motivations driving its research. There are also important methodological issues at

stake in the various debates. These came to the fore especially during the struggles that gave rise to black studies programs, in many cases resulting in departments and programs that combine African and African American studies, such as Africana, Pan-African, and black global studies programs.

There are Euro-centered frameworks that supported African liberation or that reject race as a biological or natural category, including many Marxian approaches to African studies (of particular note are the French structuralists, e.g., Bonte 1975, 1981). There are on the other hand a variety of African-centered paradigms, some of which reject Marxism, and some that do not necessarily reject the idea of race. A number of periodizations of African studies have been put forward (e.g., Copans 1977; Temu and Swai 1981; Moore 1993), and they are in general agreement concerning colonization, decolonization, and the post-political independence periods, the latter dominated by neocolonialism and imperialism. In the face of ongoing crises on the continent (civil war, famine, epidemics, and so forth), the 1990s saw a surrender to an "Afro-pessimism" (Hyden 1996) that ignored many important victories, large and small, from the end of apartheid in South Africa to the successes of grassroots organizations (e.g., the Green Belt movement).

Postcolonial approaches (Eze 1997) combine materialist and discursive components into an analysis that rejects determinist Marxism, while their qualms about the Afro-centered frameworks are concerned more with the "centrist" part than the African. Just as distinctions must be made between liberatory and fascist nationalisms, one may utilize Afrocentricity in a "strategic essentialist" fashion. In addition a wave of "Afro-Oriental" approaches have been increasingly appearing, going back at least as far as the Bandung Conference of 1955, promoting Afro-Asian unity and international anticolonialism based on the common historical experiences of colonialism and racism while respecting the integrity of cultural differences (e.g., Mullen 2004). "African womanism" offers a wide range of uniquely African-centered feminist perspectives (e.g., Dove 1998). These encouraging developments are examples of the vitality, originality, and creativity of African studies in the twenty-first century.

SEE ALSO *African American Studies ; Afrocentrism ; Anticolonial Movements ; Black Nationalism ; Civilization ; Colonialism ; Diop, Cheikh Anta ; Functionalism ; Ibn Khaldūn ; Pan-Africanism ; Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. ; Slave Trade ; Slavery Industry*

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