



Program Point Sud 2015

Africa N’Ko: Africa in the World Translation: disputing the sense of African social realities Dakar, 3- 6 December 2015

Report



1 Conveners

Prof. Mamadou Diawara, Anthropology, Goethe University, Frankfurt, Point Sud Bamako
Prof. Frieda Ekoto, Literature, University of Michigan
Prof. Jean-Bernard Ouédraogo, Sociology, CNRS, Paris
Prof. Ebrima Sall, Sociology, CODESRIA, Dakar

2 Themes and Objectives

The 2015 Africa N’Ko conference took place from December 3-6 at the UCAD/FASTEF campus in Dakar. The theme of this year’s conference was “Translation: Disputing the sense of African Social Realities.” The goal of the conference, to paraphrase from the Call for Papers, was to discuss the modalities of translation from one social system to another, particularly their relationship to the construction of knowledge, and to put forward conditions that allow human societies to connect meaning without having to give up their identities.

According to the organizers and participants, the conference achieved its main goals. It widened the development of a highly international research network on the workshop’s Africa N’ko. It encouraged and created contacts with local Senegalese scholars working in the field, and it put together a wide range of research materials which will be published.

3 Methodology and Results

The presentations included research coming from the fields of history, anthropology, political science/political philosophy, international relations, law, sociology, literary and comparative literary studies, linguistics, education, and more. While there was a broad range of topics and research questions broached by the presentations, there were a few resurging themes of discussion that emerged each day and cut across the presentations. These have been captured as follows:

- Social context in which act of translation of translation takes place
- Adaptation vs Translation
- Translation as hegemonic or pluralistic
- Role of the Archive & Methodology
- Translation of personhood
- African, Panafrican, Afrocentricity

Recommendations were made to consider translation as an object and a method of inquiry and to move away from the static, binary model original versus copy, since the passage from one to the other is never a simple one: both the original and the alleged copy are complex and multilayered objects conditioned by history and power. This view was supported by the idea that language itself is complex and that there is a risk of idealization and fetishization if language is seen as a transparent medium producing objective knowledge, as it often happens in the social and human sciences, or as an expression of indigenous authenticity unaffected by historical change.

The panellists also addressed the relationship between excluding violence and disclosure at work in translation and suggested that the two are interrelated: while translation operates through violence, since it involves some form of forced transformation, it also opens up possibilities for resistance and creative reconfiguration of language through the invention of new vocabularies.

The positioning of the investigator as a question of ethical responsibility was raised as a key theme. In particular, the panellists called for vigilance about the implicit ethical-political projections involved in the relationship between the situated subject doing the inquiry and its object of study.

The idea of 'Africa as engagement' was also included in questions of responsibility and conceived of as involving a commitment to study Africa and to generate scholarly work about it. The panellists pointed to the potential of considering this engagement as motivated by the responsibility of owning the process of knowledge production and by the aim to move the debate forward, that is beyond the colonial library and its authority.

Emphasizing the gendered character of the colonial library, several panellists advocated for a greater attention about how we think and represent gender in African scholarship.

Being in Dakar for the second time was the opportunity to interact more closely with the Codesria, whose faculty participated to the whole conference which the Codesria co-organized. This offered the opportunity to show the pan-African dimension of the workshop. A core of scholars who met in 2013 gathered again and developed a common spirit of debate on the issue related to Africa Nko.

4 Sustainability of the Event

The conveners plan a publication at Cambridge University Press. The conference series of Africa N'ko will continue.

5 Participants

Thirty-two international scholars took part in the workshop. Also, three representatives of the Codesria (Ebrima Sall, the Executive Secretary, Sozinho Francisco Matsinhe, the deputy Executive Secretary, the vice-Executive Secretary and Carlos Cardoso) and the co-director of Point Sud Moussa Sissoko from Bamako also took part.

The participants were drawn from twenty-seven universities from Europe, America and Africa and seventeen countries: Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Zambia, Egypt, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Gabon, Ethiopia, South Africa, Germany, Italy, France, Canada, United States of America. The workshop was thus a highly international gathering, which encouraged and promoted international dialogue and collaboration among scholars coming from three continents. The workshop has either fostered or initiated collaborations that cut across the Arabophone/Anglophone/Francophone linguistic and cultural divide inherited from European colonialism. To bridge the language gap, the workshop organizers encouraged the use of both English and French languages, and look forward to publishing the workshop's outcomes in bilingual journals.

The participants and their papers:

1. Ramy Magdy Ahmed (Cairo University, Political Science): Politics Lost In Translation: African Political Metaphysics as an Approach to Understand African Politics and Conflict
2. Alioum Idrissou (University of Yaoundé 1, History) : Toponymie et asservissement : dire le déclassé social dans les sociétés camerounaises
3. Semeneh Ayalew Asfaw (Makerere University, Social Studies): Social and cultural change in urban space and the question of who were the cultural brokers of revolution in Ethiopia
4. Justin Bisanswa (University of Laval, Quebec, Literature): Social and cultural change in urban space and the question of who were the cultural brokers of revolution in Ethiopia
5. Lawrence Ogbo Ugwuanyi (University of Abuja, Philosophy): Illustrating the Challenge of Translating and the Question of Epistemic Justice through the translation project on the Anglo-Philosophical Essays of Thadeus Metz on African Philosophy into Igbo Language of Nigeria
6. Silvana Carotenuto (University of Naples, Literature): Responsibility and the Compositional Drive: How Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie Translates African Theory on the Planetary Space
7. Andrea Cassatella (University of Toronto, Political Science): Secular translation: neutrality or hegemony?
8. Abigail Celis (University of Michigan, Language): Translations, exhibitions, diasporas : negotiating across visualities
9. Fatimata Diallo (University of Cape Town, Law): Revisiting restatement of customary law in modern Zambia: is codification of African indigenous norms translation or transgression?
10. Mamadou Diawara (Goethe-University Frankfurt, Anthropology): Interpretatio africana ou l'art de se traduire à travers les âges
11. Christelle Amina Djouldé (Ngaoundere University, History): Cyber-picturalité satirique et transcription de l'imaginaire occidental sur l'Afrique subsaharienne : rémanences colonialistes à l'ère post-indépendance.
12. Dotsé Yigbe (University of Lomé, German Studies): Traduction et conversion: l'impudente entreprise des missionnaires protestants allemands au Ghana et au Togo

13. Rita Kiki Edozie (Michigan State University, International Relations): Afri-capitalism and Ubuntu Economics: “Converting and Translating” Normative vs Pan African International Political Economic Discourses and Practices
14. Frieda Ekotto (University of Michigan, Literature): The Courage de Tell the Truth is an Act of Activism: A Reading of the Film Sisters in Law
- 15-16. Augustin Emane (University of Nantes, Law) and Virginie Yanpelda (University of Douala, Law): La traduction une question récurrente en droit : illustrations en droit social camerounais et gabonais
17. Peter-Jazzy Ezeh (Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Sociology): Talking Out: An Indigenous Remedy to Losses through Translation
18. Henry Kam Kah (University of Buea, History): Converting and Disputing the Role of Cultural Institutions in Cameroon’s Cross River Basin, 1916-1961
19. Julien Kilanga (University of Angers, Language): Problématique du passage des schèmes conceptuels aux schèmes linguistiques en science(s) africaine(s)
20. M’Bra Kouakou Diedonné Kouadio (University Alassane Ouattara Bouaké, Sociology): «Nous, on ‘gère’, ‘maladie d’en bas, on s’en gnanhi’ !»: Pièges de l’étiquete et de l’émique dans les études sur les IST/VIH/SIDA en milieu des professionnelles du sexe à Yopougon (District autonome d’Abidjan)
21. Mary Mbewe Amachona (University of the Western Cape, History): The making of an urbanised African subject in colonial Zambia
22. Caroline Mose (SOAS London, Language): “Hash-tag othering”- translating culture on micro-blogging spaces in Africa
23. Aymerou Mbaye (University Cheikh Anta Diop Dakar, Language): Translating beyond language in teacher preparation: Cases-in-point, dilemmas, and questions
24. Mor Ndao (University Cheikh Anta Diop Dakar, History): Recherche médicale et colonisation. Le discours pastorien et sa « traduction-trahison » en AOF : le cas du Sénégal, 1895-1958
25. Ambe J. Njoh (University of South Florida, Environmental Studies): Non-translation in urban vocabularies as an instrument of Western power in built space in Africa: The case of toponymic inscription
26. Dion Nkomo (Rhodes University, Sociolinguistics): Reflections on the Translation of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland into Ndebele: Can Alice Really Become African?
27. Laury Ocen (University of Michigan, Literature): Author, Text, and Object: Literary Translation of War Monuments in Northern Uganda

28. Bacary Sarr (University Cheikh Anta Diop Dakar): The African intellectual in the journey across local indigenous African and Western knowledge: critical stand and discourse on Africa's future
29. Alena Thiel (GIGA Hamburg, Anthropology): Translating grounds of entitlement: collective claims making in Accra's Makola market association
30. Joseph Tonda (University of Libreville, Sociology) : Traduire sur les seuils. Le paradigme de Modogo à Kinshasa
31. Zubairu Wai (Lakehead University, Political Science): On the Aporia of Translation: African Gnosis and Epistemological Difference
32. Gosnell L. Yorke (McGill University, Religion, Theology): Translating the bible in Africa: An ideological and postcolonial interrogation of a long-standing tradition