

Shared Visions and Challenges in Publishing Africa: Henry Chakava and CODESRIA

*This essay was initially published in: **Coming of Age: Studies in African Publishing. Essays in Honour of Dr Henry Chakava@70**, edited by Kiarie Kamau & Kirimi Mitambo, East African Educational Publishers: Nairobi (2016), pp. 159-186.*

It is shared here as a tribute to Dr Henry Chakava, following his death.

By Francis B. Nyamnjoh
Department of Anthropology
University of Cape Town
5.23 AC Jordan Building
Private Bag X3
Rondebosch 7701
Cape Town
South Africa
Tel: +27 21 650 3681
Email: Francis.nyamnjoh@uct.ac.za
Nyamnjoh@gmail.com

It is more than an honour for me to say a few words about Henry Chakava, retiring veteran Nairobi-based innovative, enterprising, indefatigable colossus of African publishing and publishing Africa. Chakava has influenced the Kenyan and African publishing landscape for nearly half a century in his tireless crusade to ensure the sustainable development of the book industry on the continent. I first met him in 2004 at the African Books Collective (ABC) board meeting in Oxford. I had just been appointed Senior Programme Officer in charge of publications at the Council for the Development of Social Science Research (CODESRIA), headquartered in Dakar, Senegal. Chakava was on the ABC board in his capacity as a founding member and chairperson of East African Educational Publishers (EAEP), while I was representing CODESRIA, another founding member. It did not take more than an initial conversation for me to see that Chakava's vision and commitment to promoting African writers and publishing African scholarship dovetailed perfectly with CODESRIA's own vision, on which I come back below in some detail. During my six years on the board of ABC, it was an infinite pleasure and privilege to work with Henry Chakava, a man of great wisdom and experience, who inspired and spurred me on in my own dedication to help fulfill CODESRIA's ambition and mission as a leading scholarly publisher in Africa, and eventually as well, my enthusiasm and dedication to Langa Research and Publishing Common Initiative Group, an institute I co-founded in 2004.

Chakava belongs with the generation of African scholars who created CODESRIA, and it is striking how similar their concerns have been through the years since the early 1970s. Just as Chakava has invested in promoting African voices and publishing especially in indigenous African languages, CODESRIA has sought to explore similar opportunities and overcome kindred challenges in the field of scholarly knowledge production in Africa.

CODESRIA was created in 1973 (around the same time that Chakava joined publishing) for the purpose of promoting multidisciplinary social research which derives from and is relevant to the experience of the African continent and its peoples. As a pan-African organization,

CODESRIA was and still is expected to fulfil this mission on a continent in which knowledge production, academic and scholarly activities was, and still is, very much conducted in what is generally termed colonial languages (mainly English, French and Portuguese¹). With little success in the development of indigenous and endogenous languages despite early and repeated clarion postcolonial calls to this end, much scientific production, activity and collaboration among scholars across the continent continues to be mediated by these so-called colonial languages. Headquartered in Dakar – the capital city of Senegal, a former French colony – and with a secretariat peopled by scholars and support staff speaking English or French or both, CODESRIA was faced with the imperative of operating in English and French from the outset. Conscious of the need to fulfil its pan-African mission with a constituency that draws from different linguistic repertoires, and to encourage greater communication and interchange among African scholars, CODESRIA embraced the “early bilingualism/un bilinguisme de bonne heure” Bernard Fonlon (2010[1964]) argued forcefully for with regard to Cameroon – a former German colony entrusted to Britain and France by the UN following the defeat of Germany in World War II. Thanks to its early recognition of the importance of multilingualism (albeit one highly dependent on colonial languages), CODESRIA has over the years developed a framework for undertaking its research, training and publications activities in English, French, Portuguese and Arabic. It operates from a secretariat that is truly pan-African both linguistically and in terms of personnel, junior and senior, academic and administrative.

English, French and Portuguese languages are given status associating them with science, progress, civilization and enlightenment, while every attempt is made to confine the relevance of African languages to rhetoric and porous claims on their critical importance to nation-building and development. In reality, African languages are reduced to gibberish and chased out of the mouths, ears and minds of African students and scholars born into these languages. This legacy has left an indelible mark on the continent. Writing about Kenya, Ngugi wa Thiong’o shows just how widespread this practice was. The postcolonial instructors who inherited condescending English attitudes toward local languages, continued ‘to ban African languages in schools and to elevate English as the medium of instruction from primary to secondary stages’, and did not hesitate to mete out corporal punishment to and extort fines from students ‘caught speaking their mother tongues’ (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1997: 620).

African intellectuals who want to take the valorisation of endogenous African languages seriously have found themselves swimming against the tides. Invited to address the OAU (Organisation of African Unity) [now AU (African Union)] at Addis Ababa, Ali Mazrui insisted on doing so in Kiswahili, but there was neither translator nor switch button envisaged for one of Africa’s most widely-spoken languages. ‘You needed to see how the Heads of States were bewildered, but I had passed my message across’ (Mazrui, 1986). This situation has hardly changed since Mazrui published his *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* in 1986. Indeed, as if to demonstrate that a solution to this predicament is not, realistically, envisaged in the next generation or two, in January 2014, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, delivered her statement to the Twenty-second Ordinary Session of the Heads of State and Government through an imaginative “e-mail from the future, written from the year 2063”, that contained the following passage on the language question in Africa:

¹ Spanish was and still is limited to Equatorial Guinea and the Western (Spanish) Sahara, long contested by Morocco and Spain; and Germany, having been forced to give up its colonies after World War I and II, also lost its linguistic foothold in much of Africa, with the exception of Namibia, a resident colony.

“Our eldest daughter, the linguist, still lectures in Kiswahili in Cabo Verde, at the headquarters of the Pan African Virtual University. Kiswahili is now a major African working language, and a global language taught at most faculties across the world. Our grandchildren find it very funny how we used to struggle at AU meetings with English, French and Portuguese interpretations, how we used to fight that the English version is not in line with the French or Arabic text! Now we have a lingua franca, and multi-lingualism is the order of the day.”²

Unlike Somalia, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Mali, Burkina Faso, Botswana and South Africa, many an African country has yet to demonstrate in principle and in practice that literacy, even at primary school level, does not necessarily mean knowing how to read and write a European language.

Only a few African countries have bothered to adopt policies that encourage education in African languages. And even these countries tend to confine the importance of local languages to adult literacy training and to primary and secondary school education, thereby accentuating the remoteness and irrelevance of universities to the bulk of the population. With perhaps the exception of Tanzania and Ethiopia (and to some extent South Africa, if Afrikaans is considered an indigenous/endogenous African language), there is hardly a single sub-Saharan African university that ‘offers a full diploma programme with an African language as principal medium of instruction’ (Crossman and Devisch, 1999: 7; Chumbow, 2005, 2009).

In many countries, there are ongoing debates on use of mother tongue in the early years of schooling. In some where state policies already exist encouraging mother tongue education, these policies are yet to be effectively implemented. There is resistance from stakeholders who believe mother tongue education will dilute education standards, as students are called to operate in a globalized world and may eventually proceed to universities where instruction is almost invariably in the colonial languages. This navigation within an increasingly interconnected world is, in and of itself, indicative of the hegemony that exists.

Language is the lifeblood through which we operate and its absence in any given configuration is just as significant as its presence. Cosmopolitanism, a common national citizenship and mobility have meant increasing spatial integration for peoples of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, thereby posing the question of whose mother tongue qualifies where, as well as whose mother tongue has top billing? Moreover, children of policymakers and many an elite group, like potted plants in greenhouses, attend private schools that follow not the national curriculum, but the so-called international curriculum of European and North American schools. Without a personal interest in mother tongue education and national curricula, it is hard to see how policies in favour of endogenisation can be implemented.

It is true that in many a context, Africans (students, scholars and in general) have succeeded in domesticating these colonial languages, such that – like the domestication of Dutch by Afrikaners and other Afrikaans-speaking South Africans – French, English or Portuguese Africans speak or write would send many a so-called native speaker back to school. Such domestication, however successful, is often at the expense of the development of the languages in which the cultural experiences and world views of the wider populations targeted by the scientific and

² <http://cpauc.au.int/en/content/statement-he-dr-nkosazana-dlamini-zuma-chairperson-african-union-commission-twenty-second-ordinary-session> accessed 12 February 2014.

scholarly curiosities of many a scholar have been expressed, documented, archived and transmitted. This, perhaps, translates as well into a profound and immeasurable loss within the economy of understanding.

CODESRIA's Response to the Language Problem in Africa

The above is the context and background against which CODESRIA was created and has operated as a network of scholars and scholarship committed to African value-added in knowledge production and consumption. This paper looks at how CODESRIA has navigated, negotiated and sought to reconcile this challenging linguistic landscape in the interest of its mission. Compelled to work almost exclusively in colonial languages (domesticated or otherwise), CODESRIA has invested resources and creative energy in promoting dialogue and collaboration across the different linguistic zones of the continent, namely:

- English Speaking (Anglophone) Africa (22 countries)
- French Speaking (Francophone) Africa (20 countries)
- Portuguese Speaking (Lusophone) Africa (5 countries)
- Arabic Speaking (Arabophone) Africa (12 countries)

Two or more of these languages are considered official languages in a handful of countries, such as French and English in Cameroon and Mauritius, and French and Arabic in North African countries such as Morocco, Mauritania, Tunisia, Algeria and Libya.

To address the challenge posed by linguistic or language barriers to the fulfilment of its pan-African ambitions, CODESRIA has sought to increase the percentage of its activities with participants coming from several linguistic zones, as well as the percentage of its bilingual activities. It has also sought to provide for translation of its documentation and interpretation at its meetings, workshops, seminars, conferences and general assemblies. As a pan-African organization with a constituency that draws from different linguistic repertoires, and conscious of the need to encourage greater communication and interchange among African scholars ((Nyamnjoh and Shoro 2011), CODESRIA publishes and encourages publications in Arabic, English, French and Portuguese.

Mechanisms used by the CODESRIA Publications and Dissemination Programme to realise its mission and objectives include, *inter alia*: publication of books, textbooks, monographs, working and discussion papers, and journals which are fed mainly by the various research programmes financed by the Council; an annual conference of editors of CODESRIA journals; the organisation of scholarly writing workshops for various CODESRIA institutes, research networks (Multinational Working Groups, National Working Groups, Comparative Research Networks), groups of scholars struggling to publish in CODESRIA journals, and laureates selected from universities across the continent; participation at book fairs and dissemination events; and, through the CODESRIA Documentation and Information Centre (CODICE) and the other scientific programmes of CODESRIA, feeding into and from the various networks and the scholarly debates which animate their existence and activities. A vigorous dissemination drive ensures that research produced by Africans in and on Africa is accessible in both electronic and non-electronic versions of CODESRIA journals, conference papers and reports.

The Council sends free copies of its major publications to African university libraries, subsidises the cost of its publications marketed in Africa, and offers free copies to review outlets.

It also undertakes a regular dissemination exercise at which selected titles from its recent publications list are presented to a critical audience of scholars, policy makers, students, journalists and representatives of international organisations. While the various book, monograph, and working document series have served as outlets for CODESRIA-sponsored research, conferences, workshops and seminars, the journals, often published in collaboration with or on behalf of various professional scholarly associations on the continent, have facilitated debate and interchange more generally. In some cases, CODESRIA has assisted networks with the creation of and setting up of peer-review structures for their journals. This was the case with the Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa (ERNWACA), which launched its journal – *Journal of Educational Research in Africa / Revue africaine de la recherche en éducation* – in 2009 with funding from SIDA of Sweden, channelled through CODESRIA.³ CODESRIA in this case was sharing expertise accumulated over many years with junior organizations on the continent in relation to the launch of scholarly publications

The creation of CODESRIA was also partly motivated by a perceived need for greater recognition and representation for what Africa and African social scientists had to offer in debates where they were often reduced to passive observers whose role was to implement and not to think. The prevalent high rejection rate for African scholarship in Northern journals and books, for example, meant that African scholars had basically to choose between bending over backwards to accommodate debates in colonial languages, whose origins and assumptions were at variance with the burning questions and concerns of their continent, or to create and sustain alternative outlets for their own research informed by greater relevance in theory and practice, and in tune with the diverse expectations and aspirations of Africans. This alarming incongruence between experience and mode of representation seeks further inquiry and contemplation (Nyamnjoh 2004; 2012). Providing for a strong publications and dissemination component of CODESRIA was a clear indication that the founding fathers and mothers of this pan-African organisation had opted for independence of thought and scholarship – even if these continued to be articulated in colonial languages –, as well as a critical engagement with the African world.

CODESRIA has, over the past 40 years established itself as the leading scholarly publisher in the social sciences on the African continent, with 90 per cent of what it publishes fed directly by the research and activities it sponsors among various social research networks in universities and research institutes throughout the continent and increasingly in the diaspora. Since 2000, CODESRIA publishes – significantly in collaboration with scholarly professional associations in most cases – over six bilingual (usually in French and English) and a few multilingual journals covering various aspects of the social sciences and humanities.

CODESRIA also undertakes special programmes targeting marginal language communities, such as Portuguese or Lusophone Africa. CODESRIA launched its Lusophone Initiative in 2004, a year before its 11th General Assembly which took place in Maputo in December 2005. Until then, CODESRIA's main working languages were English and French. In 2008, for the first time in CODESRIA's history, "the programme announcements were issued in three languages: English, French and Portuguese, with Portuguese being the new language added to the programme announcement strategy in order to ensure that researchers working in that language enjoy a more level playing ground for participation in all CODESRIA activities."⁴ This drop in the ocean is by no means enough, but indicative of the mammoth task ahead for mutual intelligibility and

³See www.ernwaca.org/web/spip.php?article334, accessed 23 February 2014

⁴ Minutes of the 68th Executive Committee meeting of CODESRIA, Dakar, 21 – 22 July, 2008

collaboration among African scholars. All CODESRIA programme announcements have, since this modest gesture, also been issued in the Portuguese language, to enhance participation of scholars from Lusophone African countries in CODESRIA research, training, grants, fellowships and publications programmes. This initiative aimed at providing greater inclusion for scholars from Portuguese speaking Africa, was meant to address the problem of poor scholarship and poor scholarly production in the countries involved. The Lusophone initiative also involved a working visit by the Executive Secretary and the President of CODESRIA at the time, to Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique for the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding which provided, inter alia, for collaboration in the hosting and management of an annual methodological and writing workshop for postgraduate students and junior-to-mid-career teaching staff in Lusophone Africa. On the back of that mission, agreements were also concluded with a local publisher and translator-editor for the processing of CODESRIA documents for production in the Portuguese language. This was followed by a contact, familiarisation and outreach visit to the University of Luanda and the Catholic University in Luanda as part of a long-standing institutional commitment to mobilise the participation of Angolan researchers in CODESRIA's work. Meetings were held with the vice-chancellors of both universities, the deans of faculties, senior academic staff and a selection of postgraduate students.

CODESRIA has occasionally (e.g. at the 66th Executive Committee meeting in Dakar in 2007) discussed incorporating African languages, but the challenge has always been that of choosing among the competing indigenous/endogenous African languages, as well as finite resources and the reality of ever dwindling donor funding. At one Executive Committee meeting, there was no such hesitation or indecision on the need to explore possibilities for translating African scholarly publications into Chinese and putting them online, especially as the Chinese government seems to be willing to fund such an endeavour; universities in Senegal have announced their decisions to start Chinese language programmes, so translation should become more important and much easier to do.

Planning and preparing for a CODESRIA activity (General Assembly, conference, Seminar, workshop, institute, Executive Committee or Executive Committee meeting, etc.), must of necessity include budgeting for interpretation in two, three or four languages (English, French, Portuguese and Arabic) depending on the languages of participants, as well as for translation of documents into the appropriate languages. In some cases, key documents, however voluminous, have to be translated into all four languages. This was the case, for example, of the *CODESRIA Strategic Plan 2007 – 2011*, which was translated from its English original into French, Portuguese and Arabic – the first time in CODESRIA's history that its strategy document was issued in all of its four working languages.

Translation Dilemmas

Investing in translation does not imply that these translations are going to be well done, because it is difficult to come by accomplished and competent translators. During my stay at CODESRIA, Executive Committee members often complained that translations into French and Portuguese of various documents originally written in English – the working language of the Executive Secretary at the time – were poorly done or inaccurate, and much time was spent correcting minutes and commenting on this aspect.⁵ It was often observed that though there was

⁵ On reading an earlier draft of this paper, Edith Félicité Koumtoudji, a doctoral student in Translation at the University of Witwatersrand, made the following pertinent remark, "Quality translation requires sufficient time to

need to seek to avoid disjuncture in documents, translation should seek more to reflect the spirit of a document than to be academically correct. To this concern, the Executive Secretary would apologize, sometimes adding that problems of translation are always delicate, even when done by expert translators. It should be added, however, that the documents were not often ready in time to ensure quality translation even by expert translators; and often translation of documents for meetings was done in-house under the coordination of an accredited translator employed by CODESRIA to head its translation service.⁶

Within the CODESRIA Publications Programme proper, work plans can at best only be indicative, as publishing a book has more imponderables than organising a conference, running an institute or following up on a research network. For one thing, a good translator CODESRIA regularly uses might not be available when CODESRIA comes knocking with an urgent manuscript, thereby forcing it to go shopping for expedient alternatives. It is true that CODESRIA needs to have, on its books, as many translators as possible for each of the language combinations so that when a translator is not available, he can easily be replaced. It is true that freelance translators are not always available when their clients need their services, but having long term contracts with translators is a very expensive arrangement for an organisation like CODESRIA, that depends almost exclusively on donor funding to run its activities and publication programme. Even when a translator indicates their availability, his or her workload might be such that they simply cannot meet CODESRIA deadlines. In this situation, the alternative is hardly one of cancelling the contract and starting afresh with someone else who might not exude the same competence or deliver in time either. Since translation is not everyone's expertise and because translators with good working knowledge of the social sciences and their jargons are not easy to come by, it is difficult to plan with certainty even with a pool of regular translators. CODESRIA is not their only client, and in some cases, not even their best paying. CODESRIA's work might be urgent, but it may not always be competitive for various reasons.

As the experience with the Africa Review of Books demonstrates, coordinating a collaborative endeavour between four institutions situated in four different countries – CODESRIA in Dakar, FSS in Addis Ababa, CRASC in Oran and the University of Southern Africa (UNISA) Press in Pretoria – and all expected to communicate effectively without necessarily evidence of mastery of both languages, can be most challenging. Thus, the very maiden issue of the review put together by FSS and printed by UNISA, had many glitches, including the omission of the French name '*Revue Africaine des Livres*', thereby giving the misleading impression that Africa Review of Books was an English language publication only. Perhaps in anticipation of these problems, from the inception meeting in 2003 at Addis Ababa, the review was expected to have separate English and French editions after the first two issues. The relevant section of the minutes of that meeting read thus:

This item was discussed in detail and it was agreed that, for the first two issues, a single *Review* will be published in English and French in a joint format to reflect the continent's

translate, among other things. Are the translators given enough time or documents are sent to them at the last minute? It is also always important to indicate the brief for any translation project: who is the target audience and what purpose the translated document is going to serve.”

⁶ Given the volume of translation CODESRIA regularly does, the need for such an in-house translation unit with someone to coordinate the work carried out by the various translators is clearly preferred rather than merely having to depend on freelance translators on an ad hoc basis. Over the years, the CODESRIA translation unit has compiled its own terminology database to assist translators working for the organisation

linguistic diversity. In the long term, efforts will be made to explore the possibility of producing separate English and French versions of the *Review*, with FSS being responsible for the former and CRASC for the latter. In this particular case, Editorial messages and landmark articles will be translated interchangeably and featured in both versions to ensure a balanced coverage.

The problems and difficulties of translation, as well as possible solutions to them are well known to students and professionals of translation (Venuti 2004; Ndi 2008), who understand only too well the limitations of a decontextualized and dehistoricised word-for-word rendering of the original, and who advocate privileging the spirit over the letter of the text. Indeed, the concomitant issue of understanding context comes to the fore, as meaning is so composite that relaying information proves tricky when the understanding of concepts in one language cannot necessarily be transposed onto another. In his article – “Language Imperialism, Concepts and Civilization: China versus The West”, Thorsten Pattberg uses his estimate of “over 35,000 Chinese words or phrases that cannot properly be translated into the English language,” and the fact that the histories and traditions specific to European languages mean that “they cannot sufficiently render Chinese concepts”, and should therefore not seek to translate the most important foreign concepts at all⁷. Instead, they should adopt them. Pattberg’s point finds comfort in the argument that “the idiosyncratic use of language makes it difficult for linguistic concepts to be universalised” (Ndi 2008:113). Such caution notwithstanding, translation continues to take place, sometimes as a form of credentialism or crave for legitimation, that, as Pattberg argues in: “China: Lost in translation”, claiming a word such as “philosophy” in a context where it does not quite apply, “involuntarily supports Western sovereignty over the interpretation of Chinese thought”. Such efforts at translation by local Chinese scholars that caricature, mimic or reproduce in the image of the West, voluntarily or otherwise, often results in the legitimation of “the Western onslaught on Chinese terminology and, without giving too much thought to it, enabling the Western hold for power over the history of thought.” Given the lesser of the two evils – bad translation for the sake of surface-level understanding as opposed to no translation at all – the power and stature of such local scholars desperately seeking to be relevant to the West and the debates it originates and oversees grows, and attention is often taken away from “thousands of Chinese scholars who still fight for Chinese terminologies, but who will not be given a voice in Western mainstream media. Such Chinese are virtually unemployable globally, as they do not conform to Western standard.”⁸

A similar argument can be made of the myriad indigenous African languages, many of which, unlike Chinese, are yet to develop into written languages. In this regard, Munyaradzi Mawere, Associate Professor at Universidade Pedagógica in Mozambique, while recognising the important role played by CODESRIA in promoting African scholarship since 1973, is however frustrated by the failure by CODESRIA to adopt major indigenous African languages for its activities, knowledge production and dissemination. He writes:

Given such problems of translation as those highlighted by Thorsten Pattberg with regard to Chinese, what is the vision of CODESRIA in relation to African indigenous languages? Should Africa, forever, use colonial languages in research and dissemination of her own ideas? In fact, while CODESRIA is playing a pivotal role in fostering a spirit of

⁷ <http://www.globalresearch.ca/language-imperialism-concepts-and-civilization-china-versus-the-west/28940>

⁸ See Thorsten Pattberg, “China: Lost in Translation” <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/NG24Dj02.html>, accessed 20 February 2014.

research in and on Africa especially by African scholars, I think it still has a lot to do as far as African indigenous languages are concerned. For all these 40 years (since its establishment in 1973), I think by now it should have published or at least started publishing in some (of course not all as they are too many) of the African indigenous languages, such as Swahili, Shona, Hausa etc to show that it has a ‘true’ inclination towards the promotion of African indigenous languages. As the situation stands right now, one could say CODESRIA has an inclination towards colonial languages given that it only publishes in colonial languages (such as English, French, and Portuguese). My view is, if in the name of globalisation, those who speak African indigenous languages (indigenous Africans) are ‘compelled’ to feed in colonial languages, why cannot those who speak colonial languages (from Europe and America) feed in one or more of the African indigenous languages when they want to know, hear or read about Africa at least to show that we are TRULY in a global world? I, therefore, think that besides publishing in the four working languages (English, Portuguese, French and Arabic), CODESRIA should also publish in African indigenous languages such as Swahili, Zulu, Gikuyu, Hausa, etc.

Mawere’s concern echoes similar sentiments of those who have repeatedly critiqued the privileging of the English language in Kenya, where the educational system inherited condescending British attitudes toward local languages and continues “to ban African languages in schools and to elevate English as the medium of instruction from primary to secondary stages” and do not hesitate to mete out corporal punishment to and extort fines from students “caught speaking their mother tongues” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 1997: 620). Leading by example, Ngugi wa Thiong’o writes and publishes his novels in Gikuyu, his mother tongue, and only then has them translated into English. He speaks metaphorically of colonial languages as a third leg and compares Africans’ adoption of them as having to ‘borrow a third leg’ (Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 2005). This concern is not to deny the fact that many Africans beyond the elite are like octopi in their facility with language and the cohabitation of the multiple worldviews they reflect.

Notwithstanding the challenges and shortcomings of translation, verbal communication between two linguistically different individuals and communities – or even different dialects within the same language – is absolutely necessary. Important though sign, body and other symbolic forms of communication are, they are not totally satisfactory to our communicative needs and aspirations. There might be much truth in the claim that to translate is to betray, misrepresent, distort or assimilate (*traduire c’est trahir*), few of us would want to give up entirely. We would rather be betrayed or misrepresented than give up entirely on developing our multilingual skills and on translation. As I prepared this paper, I stumbled on “Found in Translation” by Hamid Dabashi⁹ in which I found much comfort. Using philosophy and literature as examples, Dabashi argues that philosophical and literary works “gain far more than they lose in translation”. He writes:

Works of philosophy — and their readers — gain in translation not just because their authors begin to breathe in a new language but because the text signals a world alien to its initial composition. Above all they gain because these authors and their texts have to face a new audience.

⁹ Hamid Dabashi is the Hagop Kevorkian Professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York. See <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/author/hamid-dabashi/> accessed 18 February 2014

Dabashi argues that in some instances translations, however poorly done, bring a work, a philosopher or a literary figure, into the limelight, thereby saving it or him from the obscurity that would otherwise be it or his fate. By way of example, he writes:

Consider Heidegger. Had it not been for his French translators and commentators, German philosophy of his time would have remained an obscure metaphysical thicket. And it was not until Derrida's own take on Heidegger found an English readership in the United States and Britain that the whole Heidegger-Derridian undermining of metaphysics began to shake the foundations of the Greek philosophical heritage. One can in fact argue that much of contemporary Continental philosophy originates in German with significant French and Italian glosses before it is globalized in the dominant American English and assumes a whole new global readership and reality. This has nothing to do with the philosophical wherewithal of German, French or English. It is entirely a function of the imperial power and reach of one language as opposed to others.

In this way, translation has a collaborate effect which could be seen as valuable for its own sake.

Drawing on this to understand African scholarship, and CODESRIA's investments in translation, what would our knowledge of the most misrepresented continent be without the capacity to access (mis)representations of our own, even if only in one colonial language or the other? Works by leading African scholars (Paulin Hountondji, Mahmood Mamdani, Achille Mbembe, etc.) and classics such as *The Meanings of Timbuktu* (Jeppie and Bachir 2008) have been translated into French or English, and in some instances into Arabic and Portuguese, thereby making it possible for students and scholars of Africa to access and claim knowledge of other parts of Africa than their own. Similarly, by encouraging research and publications in its four working languages, CODESRIA is able to promote intellectual networking, collaboration and conversation among Africans who would otherwise dramatize the hurdles of cross-language interaction in their research and scholarship. Translation makes it possible to be truly pan-African in African scholarship, by enabling access to knowledge without the a priori consideration of whether or not one belongs in primary or primordial terms, to the linguistic community of origin of the text in question. Although peppered by unintended misinterpretation or mistranslation, the contribution of translated text should not be underestimated. The philosophical debate over understanding language leads one to accept that translation is always a process of negotiation, re-evaluation and revalorisation of meaning. Humans being fundamentally dissimilar in what informs their understanding, no translation is perfect even in its perfection. From this (albeit optimistic) perspective, translation does more good than harm. While still recognisably trapped in colonial geographies and languages, African scholars, as the CODESRIA experience suggests, are able at the same time to defy the confines of these languages and geographies.

Publishing and Translating CODESRIA Publications

Quality translation informs quality debate, but it takes quality research to yield both.

The CODESRIA publications programme, as I have already alluded to, was created to support social research and knowledge production and consumption in Africa and by Africans, in line with the CODESRIA's vision and mission as articulated in its Charter in 1973.

CODESRIA publications have the formidable task of promoting greater visibility and accessibility of African scholarship in and outside Africa. But not just scholarship for the sake of scholarship, rather, scholarship in tune with African values, revelatory of social theory and practice in African contexts, and relevant to the developmental needs of the continent. What is needed is theoretically and methodologically creative and innovative scholarship, not unquestioning or unproblematised adoption and reproduction of conceptual and methodological outfits designed with scant regard for the lived experiences of Africans.

CODESRIA stresses the need for critical rethinking of development and related concepts and conceptualisation of social phenomena, thus emphasising thinking over doing, creative appropriation over mimicry and production over reproduction. The research projects supported by CODESRIA are meant to deliver scholarship that asserts African humanity and creativity while respecting the highest standards of scientific excellence and rigour. In turning to the wider social research community, beyond its immediate membership, the idea is to shop around for excellent scholarship that showcases the best from and on Africa and that is relevant to her peoples and their needs and aspirations.

Since journals are particularly adept at promoting and encouraging topical debates, CODESRIA has invested in publishing, often in association with professional scholarly associations on the continent, a significant number of journals. The current number of journals published by CODESRIA totals 11. The role of CODESRIA journals, editors, and editorial advisory boards, for example, is detailed in CODESRIA's Publications and Dissemination Policy, last updated in 2005 and available in hard copy and from the web. They are expected to promote African scholarship relevant to African predicaments and aspirations. They also help CODESRIA orient the intellectual agenda on the basis of which Africa is studied. I invite us all to reread CODESRIA's 2007-11 strategic plan, anchored in how to promote rethinking of African development. Rethinking requires support for scholarship that deconstructs epistemological fallacies informed by ambitions of dominance that have sustained the caricaturing of African social realities. Such scholarship should legitimize African encounters and forms of knowing and knowledge construction.

What CODESRIA prescribes and expects of its journals is therefore quite clear. Because we are not here simply to rehash and re-enact those prescriptions and expectations, I would like us to dwell on the heart of the future: How to go about fulfilling the CODESRIA vision and mission beyond sterile rhetoric on the need for African scholarship and African voices in the marketplace of ideas. How do we translate our wishes into horses in real terms? For 36 years we have persevered in trying to create space for an alternative world through alternative research into alternative voices by alternative researchers. How will we fulfil CODESRIA's mission through its journals going forward? How alternatively will we ask the questions to ensure that we do not simply reproduce conventional wisdom and business as usual in the name of the African Alternative in scholarship and in the journals that communicate that scholarship?

There have been, and indeed, continue to be great debates in CODESRIA journals in the form of book reviews, review articles, thematic and special issues and reports on innovative research. We only need to flip through the pages of the *CODESRIA Bulletin*, *Africa Review of Books*, *Africa Development*, *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, *African Sociological Review*, or any other CODESRIA journal to appraise some of these debates. Many of us would recall the Archie Mafeje/Ali Mazrui debate in the pages of the *CODESRIA Bulletin* (see No.3&4 2008), and are of course familiar with the attention and commentary received by Thandika Mkandawire's critical commentary on the

intellectual itinerary of Jeffrey Sachs, published in the *Africa Review of Book* of March 2006. However, the quality of debate in CODESRIA journals and other publications depends on the quality of research and thought produced. For the research it sponsors, CODESRIA should provide quality assurance at each stage, from calls for proposals and abstracts, to methodology and writing workshops, fieldwork, and the submission of reports or articles for publication. Even before manuscripts are submitted for peer-review, coordinators of CODESRIA networks and journal editors play an important role in verifying that work rhymes with CODESRIA's strategic orientations, and that authors are sufficiently familiar with local and global debates that relate to African realities and that their scholarship is cognizant of the complex and nuanced nature of such realities.

This ensures that the peer-review process focuses more on how to enrich manuscripts than on having to eliminate scholarship running counter to the vision and mission which CODESRIA funds and supports and for which it receives core funding and other support. It is simply naive to presume that because someone looks or passes for African (by accident of phenotype or geography), their scholarship and intellectual habitus necessarily demonstrates deep understanding or meaningful representations of African realities. Similarly, it is not because someone espouses rhetoric about challenging paradigms that tend to caricature and misrepresent Africa that that person necessarily produces rigorous scholarship to help upset those paradigms.

A danger in preaching to the converted is that critical instincts are blunted by all the alleluias and amens that come in sharing the same basic faith, beliefs and assumptions. While there is a compelling need, both scientifically and politically, to continue to promote African voices articulating African predicaments, CODESRIA should augment attention to the scientific quality and social pertinence of research and scholarship. What is published should be in line with CODESRIA's mission. Every time we publish counter to it, we retard development and also jeopardise CODESRIA. CODESRIA must practice what it preaches. The quality and pertinence of the research questions we ask and encourage will determine the quality and pertinence of intellectual arguments and debates reflected and circulated in CODESRIA's publications and to some extent even in other social science journals on the continent.

Henry Chakava's Legacy

Chakava has been unwavering in his zeal to promote African publishing and the rights and dignity of African writers in a global context where western models and values predominate and others are reduced to the status of hapless mimics of these. Through his East African Educational Publishers, Chakava has stressed the need for greater accommodation of African perspectives and outlooks in African education through African stories and African voices. He has argued without relent that African Publishers have a responsibility to provide the type of books and stories that will inform and enlighten the younger generation of Africans often caught betwixt and between the imperatives of reviving dying African traditions and values systems on the one hand, and the lure and allure of a streamlined and aggressively globalised mass-mediated western consumer culture on the other. The story of his involvement with publishing since his days as representative of Heinemann publishers in Africa can be compared a devoted struggle to confront and surmount a kilimanjaro of economic, cultural and political challenges to writing and publishing Africa in a manner relevant and sympathetic to the everyday experiences and predicaments of Africans.

Chakava's message, unfortunately, has often fallen on deaf ears, just as his efforts have been greeted by a myriad of cul-de-sacs. Forced to bend over backwards simply to survive, many an African publisher has chosen the often safer option to focus on publishing standardised and routinised textbooks with predictable content that what bring them profits, however modestly, without unsettling the waters, in a publishing industry where it is all too easy to perish economically even as a multinational publishing corporation. As a consequence Works of fiction well-tailored or predicament-oriented to African concerns or emphasising alternative voices to proliferated conventional accounts are overlooked because, to quote Chakava, editors "do not have the time and patience to advise authors on how to revise and rewrite to an acceptable level."¹⁰

Writing in 2008, Chakava argues that although some progress has been made, the general picture of African publishing since the 1973 Ile-Ife conference on the theme of the coming of age of African publishing is blurry. Growth in the 1970s was followed by decline in the 1980s, then by measured resurgence since the 1990s. While associational life among writers, publishers and book dealers has increased, as has the number of book fairs within countries and across regions, associations and organisations remain weakly structured and poorly managed, and the majority cannot survive without donor support. Notwithstanding the support and initiatives witnessed since the 1990s, Africa is yet to achieve its potential and remains at the bottom of the world book production chart. The problems that plagued publishing in the 1970s and 1980s – lack of capital, training, equipment and raw materials, an underdeveloped market, and competition from multinationals – may have diminished but have not disappeared.

Chakava has remained hopeful, despite factors that conspire against publishing in Africa, such as mediocrity of content and technical quality, language difficulties, invisibility, poor reputations of publishers, and insufficient marketing, distribution and readership. If these problems are universal, they are exacerbated in Africa. In addition to technical and financial difficulties, the publishing industry in Africa faces censorship and repression, limited investment in training, lack of incentives and conducive environments, as well as political bottlenecks. Governments are more concerned about, as Henry Chakava puts it, ensuring that children get books on their desks, regardless of their origin or content or language, than in ensuring development of local publishing industries. In many a country, the climate of repression since independence has meant a dearth of local publishing in general and of quality in particular. The few existing publishers have had to steer clear of controversial material, which, given the sensitivity of government to anything mildly critical, has forced them out of business or reduced them to printers of inoffensive but unprofitable literature.

All these factors militate to make the African publishing and book industry the underdeveloped underachiever that it is. It contributes a meagre three per cent to the total world publication output and is heavily dependent on school textbook publishing and donor-driven book procurement programmes. Well over 90 per cent of books published in Africa are school textbooks, and the majority of these are published by multinational companies. In South Africa for example, 60 per cent of educational publishing (i.e. 80 per cent of the entire publishing industry) is controlled by multinationals, and the remaining 40 per cent almost exclusively by local white-owned companies. Publishing of books of interest and relevance to the majority of Africans is rare. Multinational

¹⁰ According to Henry Chakava, Chairman of East African Educational Publishers, Nairobi, Kenya, on page xxxix in "Introductory Essay to African Publishing: From Ile-Ife, Nigeria to the Present," in Hans M. Zell (Ed.), *Publishing, Books & Reading in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Critical Bibliography*, Lochcarron, Scotland, United Kingdom: Hans Zell Publishing.

publishers target the elite few who can read and write European languages and – for economic, cultural or political reasons – reproduce work informed by a global hierarchy of creativity in which Africans are perceived to be at the very bottom. Most sub-Saharan African publishers north of the South African Limpopo River might have the will to promote alternative work, but they simply do not have the means to do so – or to survive doing so.

Created in the late 1980s and early 1990s to strengthen African writing, publishing and book distribution networks such as the African Writers Association (PAWA), African Publishers Network (APNET), African Booksellers Association (PABA), and African Books Collective (ABC) have certainly increased awareness and accessibility. The challenge remains, however, of ensuring the visibility and recognition of African publications as vehicles of African creativity and cultural content in Africa and beyond. This would require, among other things, creating space for ordinary people to contribute through the stories of their lives in shaping the book industry in Africa.

Writers suffer administrative censorship or high rejection rates at the hands of commercial multinational publishers. However, African publishers, through sheer resilience and commitment, have brought to the limelight books that otherwise would never have made it into print, though the quality of printing and binding leaves a lot to be desired. As Henry Chakava highlights in his introduction to this bibliography, many African writers of fiction and faction, from novelists to academics through poets, playwrights and journalists, seek visibility through publication yet perish, and not necessarily because of poor content. They perish because publishers simply do not have the capacity to guarantee quality and disseminate their publications. Things are particularly difficult for those writing and trying to publish in indigenous African languages.

In the social sciences, where objectivity is often distorted by obvious or subtle ideology, African scholars face a critical choice between sacrificing relevance for recognition or recognition for relevance. The politics of the cultural economy of publishing prevents them from achieving both recognition and relevance simultaneously. Yet Africa is suffering from famine – a famine of books grounded in and relevant to the cultures of Africa. Starved of their own culture, people have difficulty garnering confidence and strength. And like with every famine, Good Samaritans and enterprising opportunists are seldom too far away. Armed with good intentions or the rhetoric thereof, at least, the book famine in Africa has unleashed a tsunami of purported do-gooders all committed to curing Africans of cultural poverty by flooding them with books – most of which were conceived, written and published with scant regard to their or to their needs as defined and prioritised by themselves, and many of which were written to strip the continent of any sense of self-worth, pregnant as the books often are with unexamined assumptions and pretensions of a civilising mission targeted at Africans as the scum of the earth. In this regard, most of what comes to the continent in the form of book donations is the result of stiff prescriptiveness that is hardly amenable to the idea of a world that privileges creative cultural diversity. Little wonder that some critically minded Africans have tended to relate to such book donations as an exercise at dumping or flooding Africa with cultural and intellectual toxic waste from Europe and North America, the main origins of such book donation programmes. Even those who would otherwise be supportive of book donations, if well-tailored, have had reason to criticise the lack of carefully thought out strategies in many of such endeavours. Hans Zell, a foremost proponent of the development of the book industry and publishing in Africa, recently complained about the continued dependence on exogenously generated and coordinated book donations, instead of developing their own capacities in tune with locally engineered needs. How can African libraries remain eternally

desperate for donated printed books (which usually come from outside the continent) despite over half a century of independence, and irrespective of the effort made by crusaders of African publishing such as Henry Chakava? Zell is right to worry if anyone is genuinely interested in an independent African library when he writes:

... I believe legitimate to ask why large scale book donation programmes should continue to be necessary today, after millions of books have been shipped and donated to African libraries, schools and other recipients every year, and over the last three decades or more. Just when can we expect African libraries to become independent of large scale foreign book aid and create their own sustainable library services? (Zell 2015: 43)

Yet more and more commissioned studies seem to indicate that no one is in a hurry to rethink this sense of business as usual around book donations to Africa (Gray et al 2010), a practice that continues to exclude books by African publishers, despite what African Books Collective has done to market and distribute titles published by 155 publishers from 24 African countries with over 200 new titles being added every year.¹¹ This is all the more perplexing as even the World Bank has reported that locally published books are the cheapest and most suitable, and that the capacity is there in Africa to people the reading landscape on the continent with relevant books locally published (Fredriksen et al. 2015: 33) What could account for this stubborn resistance on the part of book donors to consider the possibility that something good or worthwhile could come out of Africa beyond famine and a predisposition to be assumed as fodder for those with ambitions of dominance? Why should donors assume, a priori, that African content is not there, or not easily available? This weakens local publishers and therefore the output of African publishing. The distribution solutions, especially with the advent of the technology of electronic publishing are there; what is missing are the budgets. This, unfortunately has gone backwards since Henry Chakava's heydays, where the Intra-African Book Support Scheme (IABSS), operated from 1991 to 2004, was running and there was a lot of co-publication happening with other African and international publishers. As Hans Zell explains,

Established with the generous financial support from several donor organisations and foundations, the principle aims of this scheme were to help overcome shortages of culturally relevant African-published books in African libraries, to promote an intra-African trade in books, raise awareness of African-published material, and support autonomous African publishers through sales via African Books Collective, who operated the scheme from 1991 to 2004, in later years in cooperation with Book Aid International (see Profile). The scheme consisted of two components: (1) The supply of adult fiction and children's books/teenage fiction to African public, school and community libraries. (2) Provision of scholarly/tertiary level African published titles to university libraries in Africa. Both components of the scheme were completely recipient-request led, through provision of catalogues and other selection tools made available to recipient libraries. By the scheme's end, an average of some 12,000 literary and children's titles and 7,000 scholarly titles had been donated each year (Zell 2015: 34)

¹¹ See <http://www.africanbookscollective.com/about-us>, accessed 01 February 2016.

This is definitely an initiative in the right direction, as it brings donors into conversation with Africa publishers and libraries around felt needs identified and articulated by African themselves, and supported or facilitated by donor funds in a manner that is not as prescriptive as the approach by donors who claim to know best and would engage Africa purely on their own terms.

With such stereotypes, prescriptiveness and general lack of encouragement vis-à-vis Africa and its creativity, it is hardly surprising that even the most non-commercial, ‘progressive’ or ‘independent’ publishers and university presses hesitate to promote diversity of content because they run the risk of putting themselves out of business by venturing away from the standardised, routinised and predictable menus the readership has been socialised to expect. Publishers uncritically recruit reviewers – who are arbitrators of taste, standards and knowledge – regardless of ideological leanings or cultural backgrounds. This implies that publishing is about policing ideas to ensure plurality without diversity in national, regional and global book markets. The future of African publishing must go beyond the market in its fundamentalist sense. Scholarly and other traditions are invented and reinvented. It is the place and duty of scholarly publishers, in and outside Africa, to populate a global marketplace with multiple identities and cultural conviviality and provide space for unique and powerful voices.

Current investments in knowledge and cultural production by Africans are insufficient to ensure production informed by the lived and dynamic realities of Africans. Outside Africa, knowledge of Africa beyond popular stereotypes is poor. Given that perceptions are shaped and reshaped over time and given the importance of cultural diversity in a fast globalizing world, conscious efforts should be made to develop policies aimed at eradicating ‘cultural poverty’ in and on Africa. Such policies should encourage the production and consumption – in Africa and the rest of the world – of cultural products created by Africans who are crying out for the space and means to tell the story of African creativity in dignity. This mission is not achievable in a context where the global cultural industries are driven by the desire for profit with few incentives for ensuring representation for the world’s cultural diversity. Publishers could contribute to the eradication of cultural poverty through publication and dissemination of African books as cultural products. African publishers have a long way to go to provide for a rainbow continent.

Harnessing e-publishing and print-on-demand technology will make it possible to publish books that would otherwise be too costly to print in large quantities where markets are not assured. With African Books Collective, a brain child of Henry Chakava and his peers growing from strength to strengthen, distribution is no longer the weakest link in African publishing. What Chakava would like to see in his retirement, I venture to guess, is the day those who genuinely want to see African writing and publishing flourish, begin to put their money where they have so far put their rhetoric: ensuring that Africans do not publish and perish, and that African children eager for education and self-cultivation are not eternally fed books with scant relevant to their lived experiences.

References

- Chumbow B.S (2005) The language question and national development in Africa. In: Mkandawire T (ed.) *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development*. Dakar: CODESRIA/Zed,165–192.
- Chumbow BS (2009) Linguistic diversity, pluralism and national development in Africa. *Africa Development* 34(2): 21–45.

- Devisch R (2002) *Endogenous Knowledge Practices, Cultures and Sciences: Some Anthropological Perspectives*. Unpublished paper.
- Devisch R (2007) The university of Kinshasa: From Lovanium to Unikin. In: Afolayan MO (ed.) *Higher Education in Postcolonial Africa: Paradigms of Development, Decline and Dilemmas*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 17–38.
- Fonlon B.N (2012 [1964]) “A Case for Early Bilingualism/Pour un Bilinguisme de bonne heure” in: *The Task of Today and Other Seminal Essays*, Bamenda : Langaa, 193-269.
- Fredriksen, B. Brar, S. and Trucano, M. (2015) *Getting Textbooks to Every Child in Sub-Saharan Africa Strategies for Addressing the High Cost and Low Availability Problem*, Washington DC: World Bank.
- Gray, E., Rens, A. and Bruns, K., (2010) *Publishing and Alternative Licensing Models in Africa: Comparative analysis of the South African and Ugandan PALM Studies*, Creative R&D/IDRC: Canada.
- Jeppie, S. and Diagne, S.B. (eds). (2008). *The Meanings of Timbuktu*, Pretoria: HSRC & CODESRIA.
- Mazrui A (1986) *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*. London: BBC.
- Ndi, W. (2008) Venuti, L. (ed.) “The Translation Studies Reader (New York: Routledge, 2004, PP.Vii, 541)” *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* 31(1):111-114.
- Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1986) *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: James Currey.
- Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1997) Detained: A writer’s prison diary. In: Grinker RR, Steiner CB (eds) *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation*. Oxford: Blackwell, 613–622.
- Ngugi wa Thiong’o (2005) Europhone or African memory: The challenge of the pan-Africanist intellectual in the era of globalization. In: Mkandawire T (ed.) *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development*. Dakar/London: CODESRIA/Zed, 155–164.
- Nyamnjoh FB (2004) A relevant education for African development – some epistemological considerations. *African Development* 23(1): 161–184.
- Nyamnjoh, Francis B. (2012), Potted Plants in Greenhouses: A Critical Reflection on the Resilience of Colonial Education in Africa, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 47(2): 129-154.
- Nyamnjoh, Francis B., and Katleho Shoro (2011), Language, Mobility, African Writers and Pan-Africanism, *African Communication Research*, 4(1): 35-62.
- Venuti, L. ed. (2004) *The Translation Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Zell, H.M., and Thierry, R. (2015) *Book Donation Programmes for Africa: Time for A Reappraisal? Two Perspectives*, Hans Zell Publishing, Lochcarron, Wester Ross, Scotland.