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Postcolonial Geopolitics of Knowledge in the Context of African Studies

Abstract: Epistemological decolonization started in the mid-20th century is still ongoing. At the end of the 20th century, Africa went beyond the framework of Eurocentric ideas, declaring itself not only a continent with a rich and diverse culture and considerable potential, but also capable of shaping a worldview and uniting people all over the world. Africa and the African Diaspora have created a phenomenon known as Trans-Africa. Its intellectual, cultural, gender, personal, everyday histories keep topicality and applicability, engaging people throughout the world.

Keywords: African Studies, postcolonialism, postcoloniality, knowledge, narrative, representations

The concept of the geopolitics of knowledge was coined by Walter Mignolo in 2002. He analyzed economic and political foundations in the production of knowledge and creating of macronarratives in the article “The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference”. The statement about the expansion of Western capitalism implied the extension of Western epistemology in all its ramifications lie at the core of his reasoning. The problem of the geopolitics of knowledge, connected with different aspects of the making of human sciences, in

the field of African Studies remains relevant for most research and educational institution all over the world.

Over the centuries, Africa was considered as a wild backward periphery and Africans as barbarians excluded from knowledge production, from culture and history. The «colonial library» was spread by foreigners – writers, adventurers, missionaries, colonial officers. They were interested in creating «an image of Africa» changed over time, but always remained a cliché transformed in stereotypes.

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The turn of the 20th and 21st centuries was marked by a dramatic change of «discursive formats». Postcolonial discourse has drawn African intellectuals into the field of research and has taken to the forefront of world science and humanities. For more than half a century, African intellectuals have been conducting discussions on the topic of exodus and exile of intellectuals, initiating the study of key problems of our time, including not only globalization and crossbreeding, borderline and hybridity, identity and authenticity, but also issues of intellectual, personal, narrative history, historical and cultural heritage and memory. And although, relying on their own experience and the experience of predecessors, they found their feelings contradictory and changeable and analysis – both from the outside and from the inside – noticeably broadens the horizons not only of postcolonial research but phenomenology, in general.

Frantz Fanon, Ali Mazrui, Abiola Irele, Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Toyin Falola contributed to the transformation of the metanarratives on Africa and African Diaspora. Philip Emeagwali – the Father of the Internet; Dambisa Moyo and her book «Dead Aid» (2009), followed by Leonce Ndikumana; Achille Mbembe and his ideas of Afropolitanism, «necropolitics» and «postcolony»; etc. – have inspired a «cyber attack» on stereotypes as well as the Eurocentric system of knowledge, by suggesting strategic fairness in partnerships, thus opening the portals of the «postcolonial library» opened.

The last decades of the twentieth century were marked by a “postcolonial turn”. Updating the terminological series through the introduction of categories such as intentionality and qualia has designated a new vector of research at the level of self-knowledge and parallel to the personality, universal and unique, creative and engaged in science and art, in power and business. At the beginning of the 21st century the discussion on hybridity and postcoloniality included K.A. Appiah and A. Mbembe. Both relied on the postmodernism assessing the role of intellectuals in contemporary society, focusing on those who feel quite comfortable on the edge of cultures. They led their auditory (readers and listeners) to the realization that belonging to the intellectual community does not depend on ethnicity and race and may gravitate towards Cosmopolitanism and Afropolitanism perceive themselves as different and equal in a world that is not limited to only Europe and North America.

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