



Indigenising Eurocentric sociology: The 'captive mind' and five decades of sociology in Nigeria

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journals.sagepub.com/home/csi**Ifeanyi Onwuzuruigbo**

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Abstract

Over the years, the social sciences and related disciplines in postcolonial societies have agitated against the dominant Eurocentric mode of knowledge production. In this case, the grouse against Eurocentric knowledge production is that it undermines attempts at indigenising Eurocentric sociology in Nigeria. This article is an engagement with efforts to evolve a Nigerian sociology. It draws upon the concept of the captive mind, developed by Syed Hussein Alatas, a Southeast Asian intellectual, to critically explore the indigenisation of sociology in Nigeria. In doing so, the article explores the development and entrenchment of Eurocentric sociology as well as attempts at indigenising it over five decades of the production of sociological knowledge in Nigerian universities. It portrays the ways in which the 'captive' Nigerian sociologists, students of sociology and the antagonistic material conditions of producing and propagating knowledge connive against the indigenisation of sociology in Nigeria.

Keywords

Captive mind, Eurocentric, indigenisation, knowledge, Nigeria, social science, sociology, universities

Introduction

In 2014, the Sociology Department of Nigeria's premier and most prestigious university, the University of Ibadan, turned 50. Considering its leading role in sociological research, teaching and training of sociologists, the department organised a commemorative

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conference. The conference turned out to be a solemn period of soul-searching and reflection on the contributions of sociology to national development and the challenges of indigenising sociology in Nigeria. There were diverse opinions on the many topical national issues discussed. But there was consensus on one: sociology was yet to be indigenised.

The bastion of orthodox social science, the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment developments, were entirely a European project and experience. To the extent that the existing corpus of social science knowledge tends to arrogate to Euro-American societies and cultures the attributes of the advanced or ideal societies and create the impression that the ultimate purpose of all other human societies is to emulate Europe and America or adopt their structures and processes, it has been described as Eurocentric. Eurocentric imagination of the world began with ancient Greek philosophers, reaching its apogee in the nineteenth century as Hegel, Kant, Marx and Weber provocatively articulated an ideological framework that imagined Europe as superior to the 'Others'. Europe was blessed with inherent virtues: it was rational, productive, liberal-democratic, progressive and civilised. Others – especially Africa – were the villains: they were irrational, unproductive, unprogressive, despotic and barbaric. This ideological framework was vitally important to produce an immanent and ingenious legitimating rationale for European colonialism. Having undermined the indigenous mode of knowledge production, colonialism imposed a form of social science that orientated the psychology, intellect and mind of Africans to the behest of Europe and America (Ake, 1979; Chinweizu, 1987; Taiwo, 1993).

Over the past 200 years and the last 70 in particular, the social science literature and its related disciplines have bemoaned the dominant Eurocentric mode of knowledge production (Alatas F, 2003). Expressed in several terminologies and nomenclatures, such as 'autonomous social science tradition', 'academic dependency', 'post-colonizing knowledge', 'southern social science theory', 'decolonization and nationalization of the social sciences' (Ake, 1979; Chinweizu, 1987; Connell, 2007), the complaints respectively and collectively constitute different proposals for indigenising the social sciences. While the indigenisation project is on course and making gains in Asia and Latin America, regrettably, in much of Africa indigenisation appears to have faltered. The success of the Subaltern Studies group, an interdisciplinary organisation of South Asian scholars led by Ranajit Guha, has inspired the formation of a similar project committed to studying the subaltern in Latin America. Subaltern studies interrogate the master paradigms used in representing colonial and postcolonial societies in the disciplinary discourses of the humanities and the social sciences. Despite the initial efforts in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s to sustain indigenisation discourses in Africa and particularly Nigeria, the production of indigenous sociological knowledge has completely lost steam and remained a dream.

This article is an engagement with efforts at evolving a Nigerian sociology. It draws upon the concept of the 'captive mind', developed in 1968 by Syed Hussein Alatas, a Southeast Asian intellectual, to critically explore the challenges of indigenising sociology in Nigeria. The captive mind refers to a way of thinking that is dominated by Eurocentric thought in an imitative and uncritical manner. Although the concept was developed to justify the need for an autonomous development model in Asia, it may well

be relevant in making sense of the lethargy observed in growing a Nigerian sociology. Following the introduction, the first part of the article illuminates the concept of indigenisation; it discusses the debates around indigenisation and locates the dominant indigenisation proposal in Nigeria. The second section explores the development and entrenchment of Eurocentric sociology and the indigenisation initiative. The aim is to map out the historical trajectories of Eurocentric sociology and further the discussion on indigenisation by foregrounding steps taken within the academy to indigenise sociology in Nigeria. While the third section discusses the structural problems inhibiting indigenisation, the fourth focuses on the psychology, the mindset, of the 'captive' Nigerian intellectual as an additional impediment to indigenisation. Essentially, it portrays the ways in which the 'captive' Nigerian sociologists, students of sociology and the antagonistic material conditions of producing and propagating knowledge connive against the indigenisation of sociology in Nigeria. The last lap of the article wraps up the discussion.

Indigenisation: Conceptual clarification

Scientific concepts and theories, ideally, ought to command universal validity. However, one of the most important epistemological questions in the social sciences and especially sociology is whether western sociological theories and concepts are truly universal. The question of universalism has become pertinent because the production of knowledge generally but, in this case, western sociological knowledge is not value free; it is loaded with western values and interests which, in turn, drastically limit their universal applicability. Attempts to respond to the question have given rise to the universalism and indigenisation debates (Park, 1988; Sanda, 1988). Since exploring the debates is not our major concern, the article focuses on the concept of indigenisation.

There a sense in which the foundation of the indigenisation discourse in the International Sociological Association is traceable to the scholarly interventions and discourses initiated in the 1980s by the Nigerian sociologist Akinshola Akinwowo. A problematic and hotly contested concept, indigenisation has promoted intellectual bickering among sociologists. Such wrangling centres on what should be the appropriate conceptualisation of indigenisation and how to achieve it. Besides, some scholars have queried the whole essence of indigenisation, insisting that 'there is, and can be, only one sociology studying many social worlds' (Sztompka, 2011: 389). These altercations, nevertheless, have spawned different discourses of indigenisation (Atal, 1981; Sanda, 1988).

For Farid Alatas (2003), indigenisation is predicated on the fact that much of conventional sociology thrives on a form of academic dependency characterised by the concentration of research resources, foremost institutes and notable universities, state-of-the art training facilities and reputable academic journals in Europe and America. The fundamental motive of this pattern of knowledge production is to preserve colonial structures of knowledge and keep the mind of the non-western scholar in perpetual captivity (Ake, 1979; Alatas S, 1974; Chinweizu, 1987). As Farid observes, non-western scholars cannot get rid of this pattern. Yet, liberating the captive mind is a necessary condition for indigenisation.

To resolve the dilemma, Asian scholars, the primary focus of Farid's analyses, can draw from a wide range of home-grown theories, propounded by scholars like Ibn

Khaldun, to study their different worlds. The question is not about supplanting Eurocentric theories but enriching them with alternative, locally generated theories, a point he illustrated by linking Khaldun's cyclical view of history with Marx's theory of mode of production (Burawoy, 2009). In his words, 'indigenisers of knowledge generally do not wish to discard Western social science, but wish to open up the possibilities for indigenous philosophies, epistemologies and histories to become the basis for knowledge' (Alatas F, 1995: 133).

Another way of resolving the dilemma is through constructive imitation (Alatas S, 1974). It is prudent, according to Syed Alatas, to imitate because it saves time. Nevertheless, the following principles enunciated by Syed must guide constructive imitation. It must be based on a conscious and rational choice; it must support existing sound values; it must consider the problems, if any, surrounding the adoption of the innovation; its non-adoption must be inhibiting to society; it must increase the understanding of phenomena surrounding the innovation; it must not disrupt other valuable aspects of social life; it must enter the collective value system in the sense that it is recognised as valuable by large groups of people; and it must not be the effect of manipulation by external groups motivated by their own interests to the detriment of the adopter.

The indigenisation proposal advocated by the Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell is diametrically opposed to that of Farid. She proposed a 'Southern Theory' to deal with the historical and sociocultural peculiarities of the Global South (Connell, 2007). Her proposal is anchored on the works of a wide range of southern scholars – historians, psychologists, philosophers, economists, but regrettably few sociologists – whose scholarship has equally been influenced by western intellectual tradition (Burawoy, 2009). Scholars have expressed scepticism about such binary visions of a Southern and Northern theory. Not only are there diverse traditions between the North and South, there are also crisscrossing connections between the North and South divide, 'connections that stem from patterns of global domination' (Burawoy, 2009: 41).

Yet another strand of discourse interrogates the crux of indigenisation. Some scholars insist that indigenisation is impracticable and ridiculous (Sztompka, 2011; Zaidi, 2011). They argue that the very conceptual foundation of the human sciences does not allow for an authentic project of their indigenisation. Some Muslim scholars have argued that any attempt to indigenise or Islamise sociology or the human sciences will only amount to changing the external garb without fundamentally reformulating their worldview (Zaidi, 2011).

In any case, indigenisation is neither treated as a theoretical perspective nor as an intellectual movement. Instead it is concerned with the problem of irrelevance and the urgent need for alternatives or, better still, a contextualised knowledge. The ultimate aim of indigenisation is then to localise or regionalise the production of sociological knowledge in ways that address peculiar cultural complexities and developmental challenges of nations and regions of the world, especially nations in the Global South. Additionally, indigenisation recommends caution in the deployment of knowledge appropriated from western experiences to non-western societies; it encourages the application of endogenous knowledge to indigenous sociocultural and historical realities. It is conceived as antidote to the challenges of developing Third World societies. Broadly defined, indigenisation implies the contextualisation of sociological knowledge in order to respond to

the unique features of neocolonial and postcolonial societies. Apart from enhancing the utility value of sociology, indigenisation guarantees a certain degree of impetus to the emergence and development of genuine national sociologies.

This trend of thinking formed the conceptual framework and intellectual conviction driving indigenisation in Nigeria. Although Nigerian social scientists have launched acerbic criticisms against western social science, dismissing it as imperialistic and colonising the African mind (Ake, 1979; Chinweizu, 1987), Nigeria's indigenisation agenda does not seek to jettison Eurocentric sociology. Rather it makes a case for contextualising received sociological knowledge. Its proponents interrogate orthodox sociological notions, received theories and concepts while articulating the basis for localising the concepts and theories by infusing indigenous sociological knowledge into conventional sociology. In spite of the laudable benefits it holds out, the dream of indigenising Eurocentric sociology is yet to be realised.

Eurocentric sociology and the indigenisation initiative

Studies have historicised the development of sociology in Nigeria (Ekpo, 1985; Erinsho, 1994; Oloruntimehin, 1999). What is yet lacking is the articulation of the process of developing sociology within the framework of the globalisation of the Eurocentric mode of knowledge production. Tertiary education in Nigeria was not the result of a concatenation of revolutionary impetus as was the case in the West but the prestige attached to it and flaunted by its source, the colonial power. Therefore, the history of the study of sociology is in part the history of colonialism and the globalisation of Eurocentric social science; in part the history of decolonisation politics and the establishment of university education in Nigeria. For if colonialism was the context of implanting western social science in the Third World, decolonisation provided the backdrop for establishing universities in the colonies.

Colonial policies on education were reluctant in establishing higher education institutions (Altbach, 1987), and local agitation for an increase in the supply of higher education did not always elicit positive and urgent responses (Anyanwu, 2011; Obidi, 1990). Charles Wood, India's Secretary of State (1859–1866), mooted the ultimate philosophy of British colonial higher education policy when he asserted:

I do not see the advantage of rearing up a number of highly educated gentlemen at the expense of the State, whom you cannot employ, and who will naturally become depositories of discontent. If they choose to train themselves, well and good, but I am against providing our own future detractors and opponents and grumblers. (Anyanwu, 2011: 2–3)

The resultant paucity of trained professionals and skilled personnel among the colonised promoted by the policy did not escape the prying eyes of anti-colonial forces whose demand for higher education and professional training was a recurring theme in anti-colonial musings, discourses and agitations. Under intense pressure from nationalist forces and the growing need for skilled manpower in the colonies, the British did rethink its policy on higher education. It adopted a new policy which favoured the provision of higher education.

Writing on the new policy, Ashby (1966: 224) noted: ‘underlying British enterprise in providing higher education for her people overseas was one of massive assumption’. The policy assumed that the ‘pattern of university appropriate for Manchester, Exeter and Hull was *ipso facto* appropriate for Ibadan, Kampala and Singapore. If we are going to export universities to our overseas dependencies’, Ashby observed, ‘they would of course be British universities, just as the cars we export there are British cars.’ There is no neutrality in scholarship; the proposed universities were intended to be platforms for propagating the western mode of knowledge production. By the end of the Second World War, Britain took concrete steps to establish higher institutions of learning in its colonies. The Asquith and Elliot Commissions set up for the purpose strongly recommended the creation of a university in Nigeria. The University College Ibadan – now University of Ibadan – was founded in 1948 as a campus of the University College of London. This was necessary to keep faith with the new thinking on higher education and the idea of cultural diffusion that characterised colonialism.

In 1960, a sub-department of sociology was carved out of the Department of Economics and Social Studies of the new university. Earlier in the same year, the University of Nigeria in Nsukka commenced the study of sociology in its Department of Sociology and Anthropology, thus becoming the first department of sociology in Nigeria (Erinosh, 1994; Otite, 2008). Both universities and their faculties were dominated and controlled by expatriate scholars. Western scholars and Nigerians trained in western institutions formed the bulk of sociology teachers, several of them were anthropologists, who had obtained doctorates in anthropology and sociology in the 1930s (Oloruntimehin, 1999). Gradually, anthropology began to dominate Nigerian sociology. Sociology departments in Nsukka and Ife universities had anthropology attached to their official nomenclature. In Ibadan, Peter Lloyd, an anthropologist, headed the fledging sub-department of sociology until 1964 when it matured to a full-fledged department. Ulf Himmelstrand, a Swede, took over from Lloyd before handing over to Francis Okediji, a Nigerian, trained abroad, as the first indigenous Head of Sociology. In addition, the availability of massive and easily accessible anthropological works produced by colonial officials and anthropologists in the 1920s and 1930s coupled with the absence of a sociological corpus compelled sociology faculties to rely on anthropological works for training sociologists. As is well-known, anthropology was the handmaid of colonialism and no less Eurocentric than sociology (Otite, 1971).

These events were taking place in the heat of the Cold War and the need to contain the spread of communist ideas in the colonies (Hakeem, 2009). Taking advantage of the situation, American government and scholars pushed for a reform of the British system of university education by extending American social values in emerging universities in Nigeria. As a result, the impetus for educational development and training in the social sciences came largely from America’s Carnegie Corporation and Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, which provided funds for the development of higher education in postcolonial Nigeria (Anyanwu, 2011). Scholarship and fellowship opportunities, flowing from these organisations, were made accessible to Ibadan sociology graduates who trooped to American and Canadian universities to receive training in sociology, the kind of training and sociology that emphasised western culture. These foreign-trained sociologists returned to strengthen the staff capacity in Ibadan and promoted the teaching of

Eurocentric sociology. Ibadan has since then maintained a strong sociology department, providing the greater proportion of academic staff of the ever increasing sociology departments in Nigerian universities. Its postgraduate programmes remain the first choice for students seeking postgraduate sociology training.

What is revealing in this analysis is that doing sociology and anthropology in Nigeria was not motivated by passion for the development of Nigeria but compassion for a hegemonic western agenda. The political arm of that agenda was designed to keep the colonies as an extension of the metropole, even after the former secured independence from the latter. Its cultural arm ensured the overwhelming influence of Eurocentrism in the teaching of sociology, the training of sociologists and the orientation of sociology in postcolonial Nigeria. This way Eurocentrism not only suppressed endogenous knowledge and impeded the development and growth of indigenous sociology in Nigeria, but also agitated the minds of quite a few Nigerian sociologists and social scientists who had taken up teaching and research appointments in universities and research centres within and outside Nigeria.

Beginning from the late colonial era, Nigerian scholars became conscious of the need to indigenise the focus and orientation of the production of social science knowledge. In 1959, a group of Nigerian social scientists convened in London to discuss the preponderance and subsequent dominance of social science research by foreign scholars whose explanation of Nigeria's developmental challenges tended to perpetuate western hegemonic and imperialistic control of the emergent Nigerian state. The outcome of that meeting was the founding of the Nigerian Economic Society (NES) and the *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies*. NES galvanised the support of a greater number of Nigerian social scientists for a compassionate study of Nigerian social affairs (Nzimiro, 1971). The scholars lamented the shallow quality of scholarship by foreigners, and the desperation in adopting foreign models by local scholars who trained abroad (Nzimiro, 1971).

Motivated by these developments, some Nigerian sociologists, meeting in Dapers Hall of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, in 1971, founded the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association (NASA) and the *Nigerian Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* (Otite, 2008). The imperative of disentangling sociology from the excesses of western influences was not lost on NASA, whose members earnestly began to scrutinise its pedagogical instruments, interrogate its methodological approaches and review its research vision. NASA's inaugural conference was preoccupied with finding answers to the crucial question: *Sociology and Anthropology for What?* (Erinosho, 1994; Otite, 2008). Akinwowo, President of NASA, set the mood of the conference when he indicated the need to consider the direction 'social scientists are going in Nigeria, to review our course offerings and to assess the relevance or irrelevance of their content to a deep understanding of our society' (Akinwowo, 1974: 4). Dennis (1974: 83) articulated the intellectual underpinning of the conference and the subsequent call for indigenisation. Attributing the development of sociology in the nineteenth century to the disruption of European social order, she argued:

But to understand post-colonial societies through the perspective of nineteenth century European or twentieth century American social theory is, as it were, to look at them down the

long end of a telescope. If theories were studied to apply them to Nigerian society, there would be little point in studying theorists who were concerned to explain a very kind of different society.

The functionalist thinking of consensus, order and ordering of the part to the whole, for instance, will hardly be applicable in Nigeria and much of Africa. This is because of the more visible social tensions and disorders associated with allegiance to ethnic and ethno-religious groups to the detriment of the nation-state as well as primarily self-interested political elites and parasitic ruling classes, whose attitudes are antithetical to the public interest. As Onyeonoru (2010: 275) argues further, 'the character of the parts is in contradictory relation to the whole, suggesting difficulties in the operation of the Western-dominated sociological paradigm for explaining and interpreting emergent structures in Africa'. Hence, the need to revisit the theories and, if need be, domesticate them to the point that they become relevant in attending to local problems and challenges of development.

The call for indigenisation elicited a certain kind of radical scholarship. Imported social science concepts, sociological theories and notions considered irrelevant and unsuitable for explaining social realities in the local environment came under scrutiny. Nigerian social scientists and sociologists, in particular, through their seminal works demonstrated the overwhelming distortion of facts and misrepresentation of indigenous reality inherent in western social science, and the writings of foreign scholars who approached the study of local issues from a different cultural lens and so are unable to go beyond the surface and detect their deeper meanings.

In *Social Science as Imperialism*, Claude Ake not only critiques western social science as imperialistic but holds it responsible for distorting values and inducing wrong policy prescriptions in African nations. Ake thinks that western social science is neither valid nor fit for dealing with the myriad of problems besetting Africa; the sociologies of Comte, Spencer, Durkheim and Tonnies, for instance, are Eurocentric. The intention and effect of sociological scholarship on Africa, Ake contends, is to assert the superiority of western societies and inhibit the autonomous development of African societies (Ake, 1979). Focusing on the theory of political development, he observes that the notions of political culture and political structure are riddled with conceptual vagueness; they lack operational definition and are conceptualised in a manner that promotes domination as an essential value. Hence, western social science theories and notions constitute ideological tools of manipulation and exploitation. The theory of political development, Ake concludes, offers very little utilitarian value.

In his several interventions, Akinwowo (1974, 1978, 1986, 1991, 1999) emphasises the need to domesticate sociological knowledge by incorporating indigenous concepts and knowledge into mainstream sociology. Moving beyond theory, he meticulously shows how this can be achieved. The central gist of Akinwowo is articulated in one of his numerous works on indigenisation, 'Contributions to the sociology of knowledge from oral poetry'. Here, Akinwowo submits that Yoruba oral poetry and African oral literature provide linguistic and metaphysical representations of knowledge for the development of a body of explanatory principles of sociology. *Ajobi* (lineal and collateral relationship) and *Ajogbe* (relationship based upon co-residence) inform daily life in

Yoruba communities and, as Akinwowo contends, can be used to explain the Yoruba society rather than alien concepts and theories that are valid to the structure of another society. Although Akinwowo's contributions to the indigenisation discourse have provoked stimulating intellectual debates (Adesina, 2002; Albrow and King, 1990; Connell, 2007), his proposition has not gone down well with some scholars. Even though Lawuyi and Taiwo (1990), for instance, concur with Akinwowo, they nevertheless contend that such sociology can only be explicated in terms of western philosophy.

Peter Ekeh's seminal work forcefully argues that African social formation is quite distinct from that of Europe and should be taken into consideration in the application of western sociological theories, constructs and concepts to Africa. He articulates his position in 'Colonialism and the two publics in Africa' (Ekeh, 1975). For Ekeh, there is a significant difference between civil society in Europe and that of Africa. Unlike Europe, which has one public realm, Africa, emerging from colonialism, acquired two separate publics: the civic and the primordial publics. Again, unlike Europe where the public realm is governed by a common underlying societal morality, Africa's two publics are governed by varying degrees of morality. The former is amoral and constitutes the realm for group and interpersonal struggles for resources of the state; the latter is moral because it ensures that the behaviour of the individual is moderated by societal norms and morality. It is therefore bound to the private realm. Ekeh attributes Africa's political and socio-economic maladies, like corruption and ethnicity, to the bifurcation of the public realm and the different degrees of morality associated with the two publics.

The theory of the two publics is strengthened by Ekeh's analysis of colonialism and African social formations. In 'Colonialism and social structure', Ekeh (1983) delineates three forms of social formation thrown up by colonialism: the 'transformed pre-colonial institutions', 'migrated social structure and constructs' and 'emergent social structures'. While the first refers to transformed traditional structures which acquired new meaning and became symbols of colonialism, the second consists of models, institutions and ideologies imported from the metropole and implanted into the colonies. The third are structures which are neither indigenous to Africa nor imported from the metropole but developed in the colonial milieu.

Despite the inappropriateness and inapplicability of alien theories, concepts and constructs – demonstrated in the works of Ake, Akinwowo and Ekeh – in explaining local issues, there is continued reliance on western theories and paradigms in the teaching of sociology and training of sociologists. Sociology has remained triumphantly universalistic and uncompromisingly foreign to local cultures and predicaments (Nyamjoh, 2004). Indeed, few practical initiatives have been taken to incorporate the corpus of works of scholars of indigenisation into the mainstream sociology curriculum in Nigeria. Their exclusion, no doubt, enervates the dream of indigenisation.

Challenges and constraints

A host of other structural and psychological factors embedded in the origin of the discipline of sociology and the university in Nigeria, the political economy of the Nigerian university and the existing structure of knowledge production underlie the deplorable state of indigenisation.

Given that the universities and their faculties from inception to the 1980s were managed and controlled by expatriate scholars and Nigerians trained in western institutions, the teaching and study of sociology was conducted with epistemic tools, paradigms and theories imported from Europe and America. Neither the foreign scholars nor the sociology curriculum they designed were enthusiastic about localising sociological concepts and theories. Because the universities were and still are funded as institutions for producing graduates whose numbers usually dilute the quality of education and weaken their capacity for producing (indigenous) knowledge, Nigerian scholars generally spend more time teaching instead of doing research. The result is that both the universities and sociologists are yet to rise to the challenge of decolonising and indigenising received knowledge, and so much of sociological discourses and research remains grounded in the theoretical and methodological orientations of classical western liberal and Marxist sociology. Worse still, sociology appears ever willing to be submerged into the stream of newer forms of intellectual engagement, such as postmodernism, that endlessly flow from the West.

The situation has been made more problematic today by the political economy of Nigerian universities. The political and socioeconomic changes which plagued the national economy since the mid-1970s added to the historic handicaps of underdevelopment inherited from colonialism. To revamp its ailing economy, Nigeria subscribed to a range of neoliberal policies encapsulated in the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) designed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (Olukoshi and Zeleza, 2004). SAP solicited significant reduction in educational subsidies and funding, especially tertiary education (Olukoshi, 1993). The consequences on the teaching of sociology, the training of sociologist and academia generally were disastrous. They worsened the already hostile and unrewarding environment for the production of sociological knowledge: university teachers continued to receive very low and contemptible salaries; environments for teaching and learning increasingly degenerated; research opportunities and funds diminished more and more; and sociological enquiry, according to Erinosh, NASA president, declined to mere descriptive, prescriptive and commonsensical exercise (Isiugo-Abanihe et al., 2002). All of this led to a drastic reduction in the quantity and quality of academic publications and the dearth of sociological texts. Responses to the situation took the form of internal and external brain drain, elongated strikes and all sorts of crises and instability in Nigerian universities.

Under the circumstances, local institutional capacity for creative intellectual works that could advance the initial efforts at indigenisation ebbed away. The dearth of funds compelled local scholars to continue to access scholarships, fellowships, research grants and funds for local and international conferences from external sources. External funding, in turn, further bolstered the hegemonic influence of western sociology and eroded whatever progress indigenisation achieved. In his 1995 Presidential Address, Erinosh drew attention to the decreasing capacity of sociology to articulate and conduct scholarly research. Accusing sociologists of 'recycling old fashioned ideas' and Eurocentric 'concepts and theories', he submitted that 'departments of sociology in Nigeria today are almost bereft of new ideas' which could be employed to contextualise the teaching of sociology and the training of sociologists (Isiugo-Abanihe et al., 2002: xiii). Even though Erinosh's caustic criticisms were made in 1995, positive changes in teaching and conducting sociological research have been scanty and extremely sluggish, particularly in

the context of the extreme hostility exhibited by contemporary Nigerian state leaders to the study of sociology. President Obasanjo, for instance, once chided Nigerian youths for studying sociology and mass communication. Nigerian leaders are yet to see any wisdom in studying sociology, let alone supporting the indigenisation efforts.

Suffice it to say that indigenisation over time has lost its appeal even to the very few scholars who were initially fascinated by it. This is because the existing structures of knowledge continue to produce a sort of path dependency that prioritises externally generated and imposed theories, alien epistemological and methodological frameworks, all of which prove difficult to overcome. Not only do students access and familiarise themselves with the works of foreign scholars and thinkers with relative ease, there is abundant literal infrastructure such as online materials and textbooks around the intellectual products of foreign scholars that is lacking for their Nigerian counterparts. Although there is a growing literature on the scholarly works of local philosophers and theoreticians like Akinwowo, Ekeh, Ake and a host of other scholars whose works appropriate indigenous concepts, philosophies and knowledge to explain sociological facts, there is often limited access to these works. Even at the local level the works of local intellectuals enjoy limited awareness, are missing from the sociology curriculum and therefore rarely recognised as bases for rethinking conventional sociology and invigorating indigenisation.

The psychological factor refers to the mentality of the Nigerian intellectual. Much of the literature on indigenising sociology in Nigeria is yet to focus on the cognitive process of the Nigerian intellectual and the ways in which it interacts and connives with existing debilitating material conditions in the spaces and institutions of knowledge production to frustrate attempts at indigenisation. What this implies is that critiquing the indigenisation initiative must transcend the structural – external and internal – impediments against the production of indigenous knowledge and interrogate the mental disposition of the average Nigerian sociologist to the production of indigenous sociological knowledge. As Arowosegbe (2016: 335) provocatively argues, the best way to defend academics ‘is to open up our practices and scholarship to criticism and radical questioning’, which includes subjecting the mindset of the Nigerian intellectual to serious scrutiny. It is in doing so that we can achieve a more robust and holistic analysis of the challenges and constraints of indigenisation.

In this connection, I employ Syed Alatas’s concept of the captive mind to explain not only the mindset of the Nigerian intellectual and how it interacts with the incapacitated material structure of producing sociological knowledge but, more importantly, how all of these are implicated in the fading interest in indigenisation. The potency of the theory lies in its ability to explain such micro issues like the mindset, mentality and psychology of the colonised, oppressed and exploited intellectual. How does the mind and intellect of the captive intellectual function? How does the captive intellectual in a hostile environment of knowledge production like Nigeria undermine the indigenisation of sociology? And why is the captive mind so difficult to overcome?

The captive mind and indigenisation

The captive mind refers to a way of thinking that is dominated by western thought in an imitative and uncritical manner. Uncritical imitation pervades all levels of the scientific enterprise, thus affecting problem-definition, conceptualisation, description, explanation,

interpretation and generalisation. The captive mind is characterised by a lack of creativity and capacity for raising original problems, as revealed in the inability to create innovative analytical methods devoid of existing stereotypes; and the inability to separate the particular from the universal and localise universally valid knowledge. The captive intellectual, Syed Alatas (1972, 1974) argues further, is unable to relate to national tradition, having been *ab initio* alienated from it. It is unconscious of its own captivity and the factors responsible for it. In addition, the captive mind is fragmented in outlook and alienated from the major issues of society. Found in all fields of knowledge, the captive mind is the result of western dominance over the rest of the world.

Critics have pointed out that apart from the developing countries, the captive mind can be found anywhere, including within western societies. Though Syed Alatas (1974) conceded this point, he insisted that the imitative and alienated mind found in the West is different from the one he addressed in his theory. The idea of the captive mind, he clarifies, can only be appreciated from his conceptual discussion of the kind of social science that can tackle the problems of developing societies. Seen from a broader perspective, the import of Syed Alatas's contention is that the organisation of knowledge production in developing countries cannot but produce intellectuals and students whose mentality are servile to Euro-American interests.

Similar ideas have been expressed by Nigerian intellectuals such as Claude Ake and Chinweizu; African and Africanist scholars like Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986), Frantz Fanon (2008), Philip Altbach (1977) and Steve Biko. The main thrust of their position is that the dominant mode of knowledge production in African societies tends to colonise the psychology and mentality of Africans. The colonised mind suffers from an inferiority complex, develops a very low self-esteem and lacks potential for innovation and agency for pace-setting. As Chinweizu (1987: 339) puts it, African universities and intellectuals manifest a 'colonial mentality that venerates foreign opinion and idolizes the West'. Until the African mind, the African university and, generally, the mode of knowledge production are decolonised, Africa's quest for autonomous and sustainable development will remain elusive. By the same token, Ake (1979) draws attention to the raging battle to dominate and control Africa. While the most important site of the battle is the African mind, western social science scholarship on Africa is the most vicious weapon of the battle.

The point being made is that questions of originality, relevance and autonomy are either undermined or not prioritised in the constitution and delivery of Eurocentric sociology mainly because the mindset of non-western scholars who teach sociology are overwhelmed and enslaved by western ideals and values. This lack of originality and creativity in the teaching of sociology is a symptomatic feature of the captive mind and promotes a way of thinking that is, according to Alatas, dominated by western thought in an imitative and uncritical manner.

To shed more light, I narrate my experience teaching 300-level sociology students. I was assigned to teach a course on social change. While gathering reading texts and materials, I soon realised that the course description handed down to me exposed students to imported theories and explanatory frameworks of social change. I was worried and felt a strong need to balance the themes by incorporating scholarly works of indigenous intellectuals who have theorised on social change from a Nigerian perspective and African experience in the course outline. A section of the course outline was committed to

reviewing the works of two local scholars – Peter Ekeh and Claude Ake – on colonialism as a source of impactful change on the structures, institutions and everyday lived experiences of Africans. The goal was to draw the attention of students to the existence of theoretical works on social change produced by indigenous intellectuals comparable to those of Comte, Durkheim and Weber. That way students would appreciate the utility of home-grown theories in making sense of local phenomena and experiences as well as contextualising global intellectual discourses, narratives and theories.

After taking the first part of the outline, which centred on Durkheim, Marx and Weber's theories of social change, I observed that the interest of the students in the course waned in especially themes focusing on colonialism and the SAP as sources of social change and home-grown theoretical analysis of these phenomena. Further investigation revealed that unlike the conventional theories of change, the students disliked the idea of doing reviews of the works of local scholars because, according to them, there were scanty and inaccessible reviews on the works of home-grown scholars. They wanted these themes expunged from the course content. I refused to yield to the students' request and adhered strictly – without any alteration – to the course outline. Much to my chagrin, the students had complained to a senior colleague who took up the matter with me. He tacitly took sides with the students, encouraging me to accede to their wishes. The colleague was, nevertheless, rattled when I drew his attention to the subject of the staff seminar he presented some time ago. Obviously, he had forgotten that his paper broached on the question of deploying indigenous intellectual resources and local knowledge to the teaching of sociology.

The actions of both scholars and students can be explained at two levels. First, we see various traits of the captive mind reverberating in the story. The instruments of a gigantic intellectual superstructure emanating from the West still holds captive the intellectual potentials of producers of sociological knowledge and deflects their thinking from an independent perspective. The professoriate and students do not show commitment to learning and 'separating the particular from the universal in science and thereby properly adapting the universally valid corpus of scientific knowledge to the particular local situations' (Alatas S, 1974: 691). Students in particular find it more comfortable relating to western ideas and concepts than appreciating intellectual works of local scholars. Even when professors present, discuss and publish research papers on indigenisation, the aim does not go beyond enriching their CVs for the next promotion exercise. Very little practical commitment is invested in translating research findings and intellectual discourses to a platform for forging a sociology that is sensitive to local development challenges.

Second, the apathy towards local intellectual works focusing on the peculiarities of the local milieu is not disconnected from the institutionalisation of the western mode of knowledge production and the material constraints created by SAP. Postcolonial universities, for understandable historical reasons, were perceived as producers of skilled labour. State education policies treated them as institutions for producing workers required to drive the public and private sectors. The role of universities as sites for knowledge production and its application to society was not prioritised and adequately funded. The situation has grown worse in the context of SAP, resulting in teaching in overcrowded classes with dilapidated infrastructures and outdated technologies as well as a dearth of sociological texts and research papers, particularly those focusing on the works of local intellectuals. Perspectives that capture the reality of the Nigerian

predicaments are often rejected by academic peers and reviewers of journal papers and textbook manuscripts. Whereas texts and learning materials elaborating the works of iconic personalities of western sociology like Marx, Weber and Durkheim abound, not much exists on the works of local scholars like Ake, Akinwowo or Ekeh. While it is easier to be published working with widely known western theories, it is harder to be published writing on little known indigenous theories and theorists. As such, it is actually easier to learn and use Marx than to learn and use Ake, Akinwowo or Ekeh.

All of these help to entrench academic dependency, servitude of the mind and complicate the problems of lack of creativity, originality and capacity to devise an analytical method independent of current stereotypes that typify the captive mind. It is in this context that the captive intellectual is implicated in the growing culture of consultancy (Mamdani, 2011) noticed in the production of (sociological) knowledge in Nigeria. Consultants lack the capacity to formulate and articulate research problems relevant to the local environment; they presume that research is all about finding answers to problems already defined for them by foreign scholars and organisations located in New York, Paris, Ottawa, London and Berlin. Consultants do not read because consultancy does not require that one does anything more than gather data and take field notes; reading becomes a luxury, an after-work activity (Mamdani, 2011). Above all, consultancy does not require that one, through painstaking exploration of the literature, identifies researchable local problems since research problems have already being externally determined and articulated by researchers and scholars who are far removed from the local milieu.

Confronted with the stark realities of the market-driven forces of commercialisation and privatisation, dilapidating infrastructure and the underfunding of higher education, sociology scholars and students, like their colleagues in other disciplines, resort to consultancies which further alienate the academe from the major issues of the society and its own national tradition – where it exists at all (Alatas S, 1974). Today, most sociology professors and their students have been reduced to data collectors, not formulators of research problems to be addressed through intensified research. In their desperation to be handsomely remunerated in hard currency for doing the bidding of foreign scholars and organisations, they concoct data and statistics that contradict local realities, that blow the magnitude of local challenges and problems out of proportion. In fact, the production of original knowledge has become a luxury and minimal attempts are made to understand the global from the standpoint of the local. These obstacles to autonomous scholarship remain some of the seemingly enduring threats to the development and growth of indigenous sociology in Nigeria.

For the sociology faculty in Ibadan, one way of redeeming the indigenisation project was to publish an edited sociology text which, in the words of its highly elated editors, concentrated on local issues and ‘in the process a uniquely Nigerian sociology is emerging, although for now still in an embryonic form’ (Isiugo-Abanihe et al., 2002: xiii). The text could represent anything but definitely not ‘a uniquely Nigerian sociology’. Perusing the introductory chapter, one gets the impression that the authors are setting a new agenda for the indigenisation of sociology, something comparable to the mission of the Asian and Latin America Subaltern Studies group. But that again is not the case. Chapter 1 of this 21-chapter textbook, for instance, is a rehash of classical theories of sociology put up by Marx, Weber and Durkheim. Apart from a few chapters that struggled to focus on local issues, the rest treats local developments from the prism of western sociological theories, methodological approaches and paradigms, thus confirming the fears expressed

by Immanuel Wallerstein that ‘if we are not careful, in the guise of trying to fight it [Eurocentrism], we may in fact criticize Eurocentrism using Eurocentric premises and thereby reinforce its hold on the community of scholars’ (Wallerstein, 1999: 169).

Conclusion

Scholars have described the social sciences as Eurocentric and imperialistic. Not only were they conceived and developed in Euro-American societies in the nineteenth century, they provided a platform for the globalisation of Euro-American culture and hegemony. In the case of sociology, the trajectories of its emergence and development as a distinct discipline in several European and American intellectual sites oblige us to practically think and speak of the existence of national sociologies. ‘Sociology’, Smelser wrote, ‘never exists in isolation from the larger society but is embedded in it in complex ways. The differences between national sociologies can therefore be interpreted in part as an outcome of their different national environments’ (cited in Isiugo-Abanihe et al., 2002: xiii). It is possible to refer to a sociology that advances German, French, British and American national and cultural interests in the same way we can possibly think of a Nigerian sociology that projects Nigerian culture and adapts to its local environment.

The call for indigenisation of sociology therefore hinges on the desire to first exorcise sociology of the twin evils of Eurocentrism and imperialism, and second domesticate sociology by making it more responsive to the local peculiarities and challenges of national development. While indigenisation seems to have gained ground in Asian and Latin American scholarship, the initial excitement and interest it elicited in the 1970s and 1980s in Nigeria appears to have petered out. The enfeebled interest in indigenisation has been attributed to a host of incapacitating material conditions aggravated by SAP. In addition to the hostile material conditions, there is also the psychological or ideological factor, ‘the captive mind’. The captive mind is imitative and not creative; it is not critical and original in thinking. The captive intellectual is fixated on Euro-American sociology and lacks the ingenuity required to create a distinct Nigerian sociology. Both factors interact and reinforce one another in a manner that fritters away interest in indigenisation.

Although it is recognised as a problem, the captive mind persists among Nigeria’s intellectuals mainly because it is yet to be engaged and addressed. In Uganda, which shares similar frustrating conditions of knowledge production with Nigeria, there seems to be a conscious effort at dealing with the phenomenon. Mahmood Mamdani’s research vision for Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR), for instance, seeks to galvanise the focus and interest of Ugandan researchers away from the culture of consultancy to genuine problem-solving research (Mamdani, 2011). This way one of the devastating consequences of the captive mind and a notable impediment to the indigenisation initiative in Nigeria and Africa generally could be engaged and tackled.

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Résumé

Au fil des ans, nous avons assisté à une campagne croissante contre le modèle eurocentrique de production des connaissances dans les sciences sociales et les disciplines apparentées dans les sociétés postcoloniales. À cet égard, les griefs à l'encontre du modèle eurocentrique de production de la connaissance mettent l'accent sur son incompatibilité avec les tentatives d'indigéniser la sociologie eurocentrique au Nigéria. Cet article met l'accent sur l'essor d'une sociologie nigériane. Il s'inspire du concept de pensée captive élaboré par Syed Hussein Alatas, un intellectuel de l'Asie du Sud, pour porter un regard critique sur l'adaptation de la sociologie à la culture du Nigéria. Ce faisant, il examine le développement et le retranchement de la sociologie eurocentrique, ainsi que les tentatives d'indigénisation pendant cinq décennies de production de connaissances sociologiques dans les universités nigériennes. Il montre comment la pensée captive des étudiants, des professeurs et des chercheurs en sociologie et les conditions matérielles antagonistes de production et de diffusion des connaissances se liguent contre l'indigénisation de la sociologie au Nigéria.

Mots-clés

Indigénisation, pensée captive, Nigéria, universités, connaissance, eurocentrisme, sciences sociales

Resumen

A lo largo de los años, se han producido agitaciones contra el modo eurocéntrico dominante de la producción de conocimiento en las ciencias sociales y disciplinas afines en las sociedades poscoloniales. En este sentido, la queja contra el modo eurocéntrico de producción de conocimiento es que debilita los intentos de indigenizar la sociología eurocéntrica en Nigeria. Este artículo es un compromiso con los esfuerzos por desarrollar una sociología nigeriana. Se basa en el concepto de la mente cautiva, desarrollado por Syed Hussein Alatas, un intelectual del sudeste asiático, para explorar críticamente la indigenización de la sociología en Nigeria. Al hacer esto, el artículo explora el desarrollo y el atrincheramiento de la sociología eurocéntrica, así como los intentos de indigenizarla en las más de cinco décadas de la producción de conocimiento sociológico en las universidades nigerianas. Retrata las maneras en que los sociólogos nigerianos "cautivos", los estudiantes de sociología y las condiciones materiales antagónicas de producir y propagar el conocimiento conspiran contra la indigenización de la sociología en Nigeria.

Palabras clave

Indigenización, mente cautiva, Nigeria, universidades, conocimiento, eurocentrismo, ciencias sociales