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Spring 2017

Introduction _ Politics of African Anticolonial Archive.pdf

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Politics of African Anticolonial Archive

Edited by
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Politics of African Anticolonial Archive

Isaac A. Kamola and Shiera S. el-Malik

On 3 October 1984, Thomas Sankara – former guerrilla fighter and president of Burkina Faso – addressed a rally at the Harriet Tubman School in Harlem. Organized by the Patrice Lumumba Coalition, the rally took place on the eve of Sankara’s address to the United Nations General Assembly. However, prior to leaving for the UN, Sankara purportedly received a request from the Reagan administration for a copy of his speech, perhaps as part of a vetting process concerning whether to extend the new African president a White House invitation. When the Reagan administration suggested Sankara edit out criticisms of Western powers, Sankara ignored their request (Harsch 2014, 17). Effectively turning down a White House visit, Sankara instead planned to spend the days before the UN General Assembly in Atlanta at the invitation of Mayor Andrew Young – the renowned civil rights activist and first African American ambassador to the UN (Harsch 2014, 17). However, barred from making the trip to Atlanta, Sankara instead spent the days at various cultural and political events in Harlem. The previous day he inaugurated an exhibit on Burkina Faso art exhibition at the Third World Trade Centre, telling the crowd that ‘the fight we’re waging in Africa, principally in Burkina Faso, is the same fight you’re waging in Harlem. We feel that we in Africa must give our brother in Harlem all the support they need so that their fight too becomes known’ (Sankara 2007, 143–44). The following night, after a performance by ‘singers, dancers, and musicians’ demonstrating ‘what the revolutions should be’, and before a crowd of approximately five hundred people, Sankara drew further connections between Harlem and the struggles on the African continent, once again pronouncing that ‘our White House is in Black Harlem’ (Sankara 2007, 149). In this speech, he spoke of Harlem as the place that ‘will give the African soul its true dimension’, and declared that ‘our struggle is a call to build. ... As Blacks, we want to teach others

how to love each other' and, in doing so, teach 'the meaning of solidarity' (Sankara 2007, 149–150). He demonstrated what this looks like with the story of his exchange with recently assassinated prime minister of Grenada, Maurice Bishop:

Last year I met Maurice Bishop. We had a lengthy discussion. We gave each other mutual advice. When I returned to my country, imperialism had me arrested. I thought about Maurice Bishop. Some time later I was freed from prison thanks to the mobilization of the population. Again, I thought about Maurice Bishop. I wrote him a letter. I never had the opportunity to send it to him. Once again, because of imperialism. So we have learned that from now on imperialism must be fought relentlessly. If we don't want other Maurice Bishops to be assassinated tomorrow, we have to start mobilizing as of today. *[Applause]*

That's why I want to show you I'm ready for imperialism. *[Unbuckles belt and brandishes pistol in its holster. Cheers and prolonged applause.]* (Sankara 2007, 150)

Today, this speech might seem remarkable – even unimaginable: a president of a small African country, clad in military fatigues, waving a firearm in New York City, and calling for African Americans to stand with him in a united fight against imperialism.

However, during the early 1980s this speech was anything but exceptional. In fact, it was part of a vibrant and powerful contemporaneous practice of thinking, speaking, acting, and world-making. This speech contained many themes of African anticolonial thought, including a critique of colonialism and imperialism, a vision of an alternative world not limited to Western capitalism or Soviet-style communism, an articulation of a politics premised on emancipation and liberation, as well as the existence of dense networks of collaboration and solidarity among different groups, parties, independent states, and organizations. In this tradition, Sankara's speech was like many others in that it offered an alternative future cultivated by an international network of charismatic and national leaders, supported by mobilized populations, and held together by bonds of friendship, solidarity, and militancy. The language is poetic, yet strident. The publicness of the event was possible because of a dense network of institutions and coalitions: the United Nations brought people to New York, the Patrice Lumumba Coalition organized the event, a large crowd turned out for it, and the words, images, and memories created that night in Harlem were recorded, published, circulated, and archived.

In the decades that followed, however, many of the imaginaries and lived worlds articulated that night in Harlem fell under direct, and violent, counter-assault. The economic policies of the World Bank, International Monetary

Fund (IMF), and other major financial institutions demanded that African countries slash their government funding and social services, sell off government enterprises, and 'open' their markets to foreign penetration. The Reagan administration funded covert wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, as well as Joseph Savimbi's brutal Union for the Total Independence of Angola, provided material support for apartheid South Africa, and launched airstrikes against Libya. Starting in 1984, Harlem and other centres of African American politics and culture were transformed by a CIA-sponsored crack epidemic, yet another devastating effect of the America's covert and extralegal war against the Nicaraguan government. Social services and welfare programmes in the United States and around the world were slashed. The economies of many African countries stagnated.¹ In October 1987, Sankara was killed in a coup that brought an autocrat willing to accommodate foreign interests – Blaise Compaoré – to power.

Today, thirty years later, it seems hard to remember, or even imagine, a world in which new economic and political realities still seemed possible. As the adage goes, we are now more able to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism (Jameson 2003). It seems hard to imagine a time when the world seemed more than a gaudy parade of conflict and military intervention, terrorism, civil war, neoliberal economic policies, ecological crises, graft and corruption, and free-market globalization as far as the eye can see. Like today's world, the mid-twentieth century also had its share of profound political and economic crises. However, embedded within these crises – and existing parallel to them – were visions of the world otherwise: strong articulations of a world that had not yet come, a world defined by human liberation and freedom from want. Today, such talk often seems like the lofty, luxurious, and possibly deluded revelry of a long-lost era, of charismatic leaders and revolutionary possibilities – an anachronistic naiveté on the wrong side of history. This suspicion seems confirmed in the observation that contemporary inheritors of these anticolonial struggles – such as the revolutions of Tahrir Square and Zuccotti Park – seem so fragile in comparison, prone to collapse under their own weight.

It is in the spirit of Sankara in Harlem that this book turns towards African anticolonial archive.² We read the intellectual work produced during this time – African anticolonial thought – not as a moment or collection of lost

1. In 1975, sub-Saharan Africa provided 17.6% of the world's GDP; by the end of the 1990s, this number was down to 10.5%. In addition, African countries suffered from high child mortality, low life expectancy, and infant mortality rates of 10.7% (Arrighi 2002, 5).

2. With lower-case designations, we highlight our discomfort with considering as a proper noun 'the African anticolonial archive'. Each of the three main words is open for interrogation; in some contexts, they may also be verbs.

ideas, but rather as an archive that continues to circulate: another horizon for thinking the present. This horizon still very much exists and continues to shape the world around us. After all, African decolonization was one of the crowning achievements of the twentieth century, achieved despite the fiercest opposition by the United States, Britain, France, NATO, and 'the West'. We suggest that reading the archive of this period remains necessary for understanding our present. The hopes, fears, memories, possibilities, texts, sounds, and images of this time constitute an African archive. They also constitute an inheritance for the entire world.

AFRICAN ANTICOLONIAL ARCHIVE

African political thinking of the mid-twentieth century is a vibrant body of work – often scholarly, polemical, and poetic. While the following chapters more clearly draw out the contours of the assemblage that we are naming 'african anticolonial archive', for now a preliminary sketch will do. At its most basic, the african anticolonial archive can be read as a body of work that diagnoses the logics of colonialism in Africa, and does so for the political purpose of fighting colonial rule within a particular historical conjuncture. On the one hand, this collection of texts includes books, articles, essays, speeches, letters, poems, and PhD dissertations that contemplate colonial rule in order to better develop forms of knowledge, politics, and strategies aimed at constructing an alternative. On the other hand, these texts exist in relationship to other practices of thinking, arguing, and working that embody and inform an anticolonial politics, including architectural spaces, song, conversations in courtyards, memories, and images. Unlike 'postcolonial theory', which self-consciously originated within a circle of subaltern scholars seeking an academic intervention within an academic field, we argue that african anticolonial archive must be located (to the degree it has a location) within the political fights against colonial rule during, and after, the period of decolonization. It was produced by a heterodox group of scholars, political leaders, peasants, teachers, journalists, and citizens engaged in the political struggles against colonial powers. As such, it critically engages questions of identity, history, and the state for the purpose of national and human liberation. Because the project of decolonizing African states had to constantly negotiate complex patterns rooted in the haphazard way their borders developed, African anticolonial thought is often concerned with thinking through ways of incorporating different peoples into a common project, united against a common colonial master. This work is fundamentally critical and philosophical. It is also intricately grounded in its condition of place. Or, more accurately, *places* – as its producers lived, worked, and participated in conversations with nodal points across Africa and other continents.

African anticolonial archive, then, does not exist as a single, coherent thing. It cannot be found neatly compiled within a set of document boxes housed within a specific institution. It is an archive that was created in circulation and continues to circulate today. While archives are always problematic objects – defined as much by their exclusions as their contents, and often compiled through horrible expressions of power and violence – we nonetheless find it useful to consider the possibility that there does exist, at least in practice (and even if fragmentary and contested), a phenomenon we can call 'african anticolonial archive'. It is useful to hail the presence of archive because 'the archive' invokes a claim to foundational authority, demanding academic or scholarly attention. Scholars and students have long deferred to, engaged with, read, critiqued, and reread 'the colonial archive'. We would say that the anticolonial archive is also deserving of such care. However, such engagement often takes place without an institutionalized location, a finding key, or a reading room.

This book, therefore, is an act of engaging the political and universal significance of african anticolonial archive, while simultaneously curating an archive that does not necessarily exist as a single, self-evident thing. Our organizing question – What does it mean to 'look back' into archives, and african anticolonial archive in particular? – is inspired by Nigerian historian Yusufu Bala Usman's argument that 'looking back' means being attentive to the power involved in constructing primary sources in the first place (Usman 2006, 2). 'Looking back', then, is neither a nostalgic nor a contemporary act of looking for a moment of authenticity but rather a relationship between a historical moment, its actors and locations, and the present historical moment. Looking back can also be understood as archiving – as archives in processes of production with no end.³ Drawing on such problematics, this book investigates the contours of what might be considered african anticolonial archive, namely the large and often forgotten body of work that formed the intellectual backbone of Africa's many anticolonial struggles during the twentieth century. This archive is seldom conceptualized as coherent for reasons of historical amnesia, ambiguous record-keeping, racial and geopolitical marginalization, the political violence of the Cold War, and the fragmentation of material in different metropolitan, linguistic, and institutional contexts. A number of chapters in this book more carefully examine the various conceptual difficulties arising in efforts to locate a thing called african anticolonial archive.

Recognizing the historicity that gives rise to seemingly incoherent African anticolonial thinking, this book presents two lines of inquiry. First, it asks how – given these realities – might african anticolonial archive be curated within the present. Secondly, it does not read this archive as an engagement in

3. See also Derrida (1998), Stoler (2009), and Hall (2001).

a history of political theory or philosophy ('African', 'global', 'comparative', or otherwise) but rather as a means of speaking to contemporary political issues, including those of identity, sovereignty, inter-nationality, and globality. We read the past through the present and in doing so read the present as an archive. Looking back at (and, therefore, forward from) this body of work focuses our attention on the conditions under which this archive is written and asks to what important contemporary political struggles does this archive continue to speak. We ask: what are the embodied, spatial, temporal, and thematic boundaries of African anticolonialism?

NOTES ON CURATING AFRICAN ANTICOLONIAL ARCHIVE

The purpose of returning to african anticolonial archive is to examine what *future possibilities* still exist within its present. In the same way that one studies the colonial archive to map the power and violence of colonial rule, as well as its silences and possible resistances, anticolonial archive might be read as mapping the unfulfilled, utopic aspirations that existed within the recent past – and, therefore, possibly the present as well. This might be something akin to what Wilder calls 'identifying and fashioning "historical constellations" as one way of writing a "history of the present"' (Wilder 2015, 15). In this way, curating the anticolonial archive is not an attempt to fix a thing or to even provide its genealogy. Rather, like an artist commissioning, producing, collecting, and then installing an exhibit, we see this book as a sort of gallery space – maybe a distant relative, and pale academic equivalent, of the exhibit on Burkinabe art Sankara visited in Harlem.

For the reasons expressed above, 'african anticolonial archive' is not a collection that can be drawn upon – a standing reserve of information ready to be tapped – but rather something that requires curation. Curating an african anticolonial archive, in other words, is not a matter of retrieving from some pre-existing, already collected body of work, but rather the project of locating (and dislocating) texts, ideas, structures, music, images, and the like, and arranging them together in new ways. Martinon describes the process of curating as creating the conditions for

a jailbreak from pre-existing frames, a gift enabling one to see the world differently, a strategy for inventing new points of departures, a practice of creating allegiances against social ills, a way of caring for humanity, a process of renewing one's own subjectivity, a tactical move for reinventing life, a sensual practice of creating signification, a political tool outside of politics, a procedure to maintain a community together, a conspiracy against polices, the act of keeping a question alive, the energy of retaining a sense of fun, the device that helps to revisit history, the measures to create affects, the world of revealing ghosts, a plan to remain out-of-joint with time, an evolving method of keeping bodies

and objects together, a sharing of understanding, an invitation for reflexivity, a choreographic mode of operation, a way of fighting against corporate culture, etc. (Martinon 2015, 4)

Thus, we understand the process of curating as a way to access horizons for thinking the present in ways that are not yet obviously available. To our minds, curating can allow for surprise, counter-intuitive understandings, and creative critical engagements. In the context of this book, many of the authors are writing from departments of political science, international studies, law and politics, law and government, government, history, sustainable development, or from outside of the neoliberal university. We are writing as graduate students, contingent faculty, untenured faculty, tenured faculty, community historians, farmers, and with a multitude of other experiences of situatedness. We met at a workshop held at Trinity College in early November 2015 at which we stumbled upon a collection of guiding premises that informed how we ended up curating this book. We note them here, with the caveat that another collective might draw from a different set of guideposts and that others may choose to curate an african anticolonial archive differently.

Curating Beyond Area Studies

Today, the history and intellectual contributions of African anticolonial struggles are not widely studied, and its authors not widely read (especially in the Western academy where most of the authors included in this book live and work). When African anticolonial movements and thinkers are studied, they are often inscribed within time and place – historical figures, situated within particular events taking place on the continent of Africa. If read at all, one might turn to Kenyatta, Nkrumah, Biko, Sankara, Cabral, or Senghor to better understand a particular time in African history. This book, however, writes against the tendency to read African anticolonial thought within an 'Africa-as-area studies' approach. As such, this book does not claim to represent the entire African anticolonial experience, or even sample representative experiences from across the continent. Rather, we ask: What might these thinkers tell us – an 'us' that might include scholars, students, and activists, anywhere – about the politics of 'our' present conjuncture? How might the African anticolonial travel? We understand this continent of thought as having a wide diaspora.

No one blinks an eye when political theorists or scholars of, say, international politics draw upon a German philosopher (e.g. Kant, Marx, or Weber) or a French theorist (e.g. Foucault or Derrida) to describe the broad contours of the human experience – be it capitalism, the state, power, discourse, etc. In a way, it even sounds silly to conceptualize Marx as primarily a 'German thinker' or Foucault a 'French philosopher'. Despite the fact that these

theorists, as is the case with all thinking people, work within a particular context and conjuncture, we have nonetheless grown comfortable in assuming that some thinkers (and not others) can be easily read universally. In contrast, African anticolonial theorists are often read as products of very specific and exceptional circumstances, exclusively conditioned by those experiences, and therefore the producers of ideas limited to the specificity of time and place. They might be read as sources of data, but not producers of knowledge or intellectuals in their own right. Rather than trying to provincialize the canon of European thought, the authors in this collection wonder what might happen if we universalize, in a grounded way, the experience of African anticolonial thought. What if we suggested that the fight against colonialism in Africa was not only a particular and exceptional experience, but also a universal articulation of the human condition – an experience with insights that might be shared by all people?

This task goes hand in hand with a deliberate effort to expand what counts as african anticolonial archive. After all, anticolonial thought took place not only in the speeches and writings of national and military figures, but also in the homes, conversations, architectures, music, and imaginations of whole populations of peoples, different in many ways but united in a common demand for political, economic, and cultural self-determination. In the same way that Patrice Lumumba imagined a Congolese nation united by the shared experience of Belgian colonialism, we might imagine african anticolonial archive as a body of work held together not by the specific characteristics of its multifaceted elements, but rather by a common rejection of the colonial project. The lessons from this rejection are important because the colonial project continues to thrive to this day, most obviously in its ostensible offshoot: the neoliberal economic and political order.

Curating Beyond the Academy

This book reflects approaches to documents, arguments, and materials that might be considered ‘international relations’, ‘world politics’, and ‘African studies’, but does so in ways that intentionally leave them unhinged from these disciplinary meanings. The form and the content of this book intervene in the dominant academic mode of reproducing historical and political truth. One impetus for engaging with African anticolonial thought is to question our role as academics, pedagogues, and knowledge producers within the present political moment of the neoliberal university. This engagement is an effort to demonstrate the radical plurality of political thought and to develop a response to the prevalent notion that intellectuals can only access Africa through the exportation of data.

One thing we find especially compelling about african anticolonial archive is the way in which it was formed within the context of deep engagements

with the Western scholarly debates of the time (over Hegelianism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, existentialism, etc.) without assuming that the conclusions drawn from these investigations must necessarily be ‘for’ the academy. Rather, ideas were fashioned for the purpose of engaging the immediate, timely, and political questions of colonial rule, economic and political independence, and national identity. In this way, life-and-death debates about political strategy across Africa are often deeply informed by intellectual debates taking place within France, the United States, the Soviet Union, and elsewhere. Even when written as dissertations or as scholarly journal articles, african anticolonial archive bridges the particular conjuncture of struggle and the universalizing language of scholarship, demonstrating the limits of (and also the powerful possibilities implicit within) academic knowledge production.

It is this kind of politics, theoretics, and voice that we attempt to mimic in this book. In this way, the book is not an investigation into the immediate tactics or strategies of anticolonialism, but rather it is an experimental demonstration of how working within African anticolonial thought functions to shift epistemologies. Just as Négritude rethought epistemic claims about race, and *ujamaa* socialism challenged core epistemic claims made by Marxism and Leninism, this book seeks to demonstrate the powerful epistemic politics of this anticolonial thought without ‘retrieving’ these insights for domestication within ‘scholarship’. In short, we seek to model the tension between scholarly and political interventions in ways that borrow explicitly from what we see as core methods and insights of African anticolonial thought itself.

The importance of maintaining this tension – between scholarship and politics, between the production of knowledge and the use of that knowledge within a particular conjuncture – stems from the profound reverence we have for the fact that the authors of this archive attempted to answer problems that actually do not have answers; they asked questions that are fundamentally questions of politics. Those who write with a fiduciary obligation to ‘scholarship’ often miss the fact that some questions – often the most important ones – exist at the interplay of force, and therefore have few, if any, answers outside the effects these ideas have on the arrangement of the political and economic order. Cabral calls a theory ‘revolutionary’ based on what it allows one to *do* within a specific context.

Curating a Failure

One reason African anticolonial thought often goes unread has to do with an anxiety that anticolonialism and the arguments that fall under its oeuvre are generally perceived as failed projects. After the victories of political independence, by the 1980s, the dynamics of anticolonialism seemed to fall apart. Economic development stalled. States ‘failed’. A number of leading

figures became implicated in all sorts of unseemly activities. Populations became disenchanted as the aspirations of newly independent peoples found themselves in conflict with the virulent and uncompromising demands of bond markets, financial institutions, foreign nations, and internal resistances. The political defeats of this time are commonly read as an indication that the ideas embedded within these political projects were 'wrong' or 'dead'. However, it is important to acknowledge that newly independent states actually found themselves pushed and pulled between commitments to anticolonial thought and an externally imposed 'reality' of international finance and the Cold War strategic environment. As a consequence, anticolonial thinking often confronted, blended with, and accommodated ideas produced within Western social sciences, including the disciplines of political science and economics, and disseminated through the Bretton Woods institutions. These ideas produced their own failures, as seen in high levels of indebtedness, poverty, and political instability. However, while the catastrophic and deadly failures of the IMF and World Bank can be forgotten, forgiven, or reformed, the failures of African anticolonialism are commonly deemed an unsalvageable, 'African' problem. The political successes of African anticolonial thought are commonly forgotten, even as those countries and institutions that once reinforced colonial rule across Africa now present decolonization as an inevitability, the outcome of which was spoiled by African governments themselves.

Another anxiety stems from the notion that anticolonial thought is primarily concerned with 'old' arguments. As such, it is less common to find arguments that re-evaluate the 'old' arguments against colonialism, that analyse its forms of governance, social order, and knowledge practices. Grovogui (2009, 330) suggests that we consider these old arguments against colonialism as counterpoints that 'give expression to unique modern experiences through analyses of culture and national politics but also the effects and implications of the "Westernization" of global politics'. Imaginaries that expose other ways of making sense of the world that we inherited are evident in these counterpoints. Something important happens when we ask about how much we do not know (and how these ignorances have been produced).

One can, then, think of neoliberalism as itself the living archive of this defeat. A scattered process that emerged as a response to the market instability of the 1970s, neoliberalism describes elite control of financial markets that protects the processes of capital accumulation and concentration (Harvey 2005, 12). It represents a disconnecting of markets from states by a process of legal and political restructuring of the decision-making capabilities of central government, and by a discursive process that divorces the idea of markets from the ideas of history and culture, and from any embeddedness in geographical, social, and historical context (Harvey 2005, 47). Today,

universities are themselves very much sites of neoliberal transformation – a project possible, in part, because of the defeat of the anticolonial project. Many of the disciplines we inhabit are themselves the direct product of colonialism, and the maintenance of an imperial order during the Cold War (Wallerstein 2006). Reading african anticolonial archive as an archive of a failure also means reading the world of higher education as itself a failure to live up to its highest aspirations and possibilities – choosing instead to focus on 'consumers', revenue streams, and professionalization. Reading african anticolonial archive is, in other words, a chance to read a possible, alternative self. As such, this book cannot be about reaching into the archive of African anticolonial thought and retrieving long-lost gems from a glorious past. Rather, reading African anticolonial thought as an archive of both successes and failures opens up the possibility of considering the humble possibility that, maybe, the most important political questions do not actually have theoretical answers. There might not have been a good theoretical response to the economic, political, and geostrategic crises of the 1970s and 1980s. More perfect theories alone might not have resulted in better political outcomes. Despite this fact, or maybe because of it, we are still well served to push at the horizons and examine again exactly what the important political questions are.

Curating Open Horizons

The project of cultivating and curating alternative imaginaries requires studying what those imaginaries were, where they came from, and how they appeared as possibilities in a particular moment. Our reading of a politics of african anticolonial archive forces us to work with an Africa, an anticolonialism, and an archive all the while recognizing that these three words represent ideas that are produced over time and space. We are engaging them in particular times and spaces, and with particular modes of inquiry. That is, we are engaging them politically. Thus, we avoided definite and indefinite articles in our title. Engagement, contestation, and sense-making are consequential, but they are no single thing in all places or to all people. 'Africa' and 'anticolonialism' can similarly be approached as open for us to make sense of. And the idea of archive, archives, and archiving point to the contingencies of how we make sense of the world we engage.

This edited book collects and curates a broad array of material that reflects on anticolonialism in Africa, broadly defined. Each contribution connects the historical period with the anticolonial present through a critical examination of what constitutes the anticolonial archive. In this sense, seemingly historical themes are reanimated in the present moment, and historical struggles become constitutive of conversations about struggle and emancipation in present. The

book, then, considers african anticolonial archive as always in the process of being constructed such that the assessment of this archive is the one that involves a contemporary process of curating.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The chapters in this book, as well as the book itself, enact different ways of curating material from the period of decolonization. They examine the constitution of archives: how they are formed, by whom, and under what conditions. Following this chapter, Siba Grovogui's chapter (chapter 2) examines the long history of practices of ordering variable connections to similarly varied dynamics of power. He shows how, as contemporarily understood, 'archive' has a totalizing function (connected to modern epistemological practices) that must be negotiated in generative attempts to 'order'. Grovogui argues that decolonizing archives requires refusing the claim that archives are already existing things out in the world, paying attention instead to how material is ordered and retrieved.

Shiera el-Malik picks up this theme in chapter 3. This chapter reflects on her struggle to teach, thematize, and, constitute an african anticolonial archive. She turns to the notion of curating to demonstrate how she might compile a still elusive 'Reader of African Anticolonial Thought'. This chapter represents her attempt to develop a way to think about archiving and curating that works with, rather than in opposition to, practices of ordering that Grovogui interrogates.

Branwen Gruffydd Jones takes up the argumentative thread of this book in chapter 4. She suggests that the archive might not be so totalizing if one starts with the acknowledgement that whole collections of anticolonial thought emerged within personal interactions and communications. Focusing on Lusophone anticolonial thought, she centres the intimacy of interaction among anticolonial thinkers as informing the contingencies within the archives left behind. For her, the anticolonial archive is not just an archive that speaks to the time in which it was created. It also tells us how that struggle can be reinvigorated in our current 'problem-space'.

Isaac Kamola continues with Lusophone material in chapter 5. Kamola seeks ways to use Amílcar Cabral's grounded realism to understand the neoliberal university. Although Cabral is not generally 'applied' outside of his historical context, Kamola undertakes a reading of Cabral's work to show how his insights into the logic of revolution are helpful in thinking about how 'we' in a neoliberal, institutional context might also better understand the reality that concerns us most. He shows how the counter-political cosmology that Cabral constructs offers a new theoretical framework from which to find revolutionary potential with one's immediate reality.

Míde Ní Shúilleabháin's contribution (chapter 6) focuses on imperial archives as juxtaposed against the lived and circulating archives of Congolese Rumba Lingala music. Moving from the Stanley Pavilion to the vibrant dance halls and music venues across Congo and France, Ní Shúilleabháin argues that archives are more than 'document and monument'. Instead, she thinks of archives and archiving as productive spaces that incorporate spaces for *new* kinds of thinking, and that create possibilities for new kinds of political argumentation.

Chapter 7 is written by Christopher Azaare Anabila, a historian and elder living in Northern Ghana who, concerned that the youth are losing their connection to their history, has embarked on the formidable project of compiling a detailed history of the Upper East Region of Ghana. Grounded in interviews with chiefs, earth priests, and elders, as well as his own memories, embodied knowledges, and the writings of colonial administrators, Azaare's work provides a rich understanding of the Gurensi and Boosi people, and the ways in which the legacy of colonial rule, and its resistances, continue to shape the life in Northern Ghana.

Anatoli Ignatov, who works closely with Azaare, examines the history of Gurensi and Boosi people in chapter 8. Ignatov argues that the histories of belonging in Northern Ghana were constituted through physical objects, places, and ways of being that were, and continue to be, greatly affected by the history of the slave trade. He examines how the struggle against colonial rule remains embodied within the material life of Northern Ghana – in its sacred sites, religious practices, clothing, and even architecture.

Chapter 9 by Timothy Vasko is an effort to curate an absence, namely the expected yet missing engagement between African anticolonial thinkers and Native American intellectuals. Despite a common history of dispossession, thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Lakota scholar Vine Deloria Jr. make only passing mention to this shared history. To better understand this absence, Vasko looks at the archive of international law, and specifically how it conceptualizes and constructs sovereignty differently in Africa and North America. Vasko warns that taking conceptions of sovereignty already encoded into international law as the starting point for anticolonial demands risks reproducing colonial power, while missing possibilities for shared political solidarity.

Seth Markle's piece, chapter 10, emphasizes the strategies for constructing shared imaginaries across time and space with an examination of how african anticolonial archive continues to circulate through the work of DJ/producer Madlib. In addition to a politics and aesthetics grounded in collecting, sampling, and repurposing the speeches and music of African anticolonial struggles, Madlib combines these pieces together to tell the story of a Pan-Africanism that does not yet exist. While offering a reading of one album, Markle's chapter nonetheless offers a refreshing argument about the

politics of the archive, and its current uses – which includes fluidly making and remaking the stories of Black resistance.

This collection concludes with chapter 11, a contribution by Allen Stack about the politics of maintaining personal archives – circulating within private caches of documents, memories, music, and private conversations – within the capital city of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou, during the brutal presidency of Blaise Compaoré. Stack examines how these formerly hushed conversations about Sankara and executed journalist Norbert Zongo re-emerged in the streets during protests against the regime. Stack's argument moves away from the troubled conception of archives with which we started the book and, instead, insists upon acknowledging how people collect, navigate, imagine, and wield these archival stories in ways that are overtly political. His story is one about ideas and political figures once thought stamped out, who return to the street within the voices of those continuing to demand a better future.

We understand our engagement with african anticolonial archive, whatever it looks to be in the following pages or in the minds of our readers, to be an explicitly political engagement in our respective fields about what counts – and is collected – as knowledge, and how ordinary people, ourselves included, acquire, navigate, imagine, and wield conversations across time and into our future. We cannot assume that we will ever return to a time in which a Sankara-like person will speak of Maurice Bishop and the end of imperialism, before a crowd in Harlem. That was the past. But this past still circulates within the present. Just as the colonial archive structures the present, so too does anticolonial archive. The anticolonial past continues to speak. Now, it is time to consider what kind of tools, and possibly weapons, already exist in our collective hands. This book can be read as an invitation to think with and through Africa, anticolonialism, and archive in ways that perhaps upset problematic reifying processes. Each of these chapters represents the author's individual, and our collective, struggle with articulating a 'story' about Africa, about anticolonialism, and about archives. This is what we mean when we write of opening horizons, thinking possibilities, and imagining futures. We invite the reader to experiment with us!

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