

In the Pursuit of Knowledge and Power: French Scientific Research in West Africa, 1938-65

AGBENYEGA ADEDZE

As agents of scientific colonization, the governors of French West Africa (Afrique Occidentale Française-A.O.F.) drew on the traditions of governance in France. Replicas of metropolitan institutions such as the administrative system with its cultural and technological accessories were re-invented in West Africa. Although colonialism was highly dependent on military occupation, political power, and economic exploitation, it was sustained by scientific knowledge acquired from research into both the humanities and the sciences. Prior to colonization, scientific knowledge was uncoordinated or was produced by individuals (explorers, missionaries, scientists, traders, soldiers, and administrators) associated with commercial houses or independent institutions. It was the consolidation of scientific knowledge into archives, research institutes and museums that gave the colonizing powers the authority and confidence to rule the peoples they have conquered. In this article, I explore research conducted by the French in West Africa from 1938-1965. I also examine the research institutes, the primary players, and their relationship with the colonial government.

The extension into the colonial world of domestic institutions to survey, map, take census, produce statistics, collect and collate information, collect and classify artifacts were all forms of the pursuit of knowledge and power. The locally operated institutions gathered “incomprehensible” native knowledge and rendered it comprehensible to the state. The information gathered in the colonial archives was constituted by the best minds, recruited and supported by the colonial government to elicit information from indigenous populations without recourse to military force. This information was needed to assess the indigenous peoples for taxation, classification, and political and social control. Bernard Cohn described this aspect of the colonial project as the investigative modality - the definition of a body of information that is needed, the procedures by which appropriate knowledge is gathered, its ordering and classification, and then how it is transformed into usable forms such as published reports, statistical returns, histories, gazetteers, legal codes, and encyclopedias.¹ He divided the investigative modality into five categories: the historiographic modality, the observational or travel

modality, the survey modality, the enumerative modality, the museum modality, and the surveillance modality. These modalities were either general, attached to specific administration, institutions, or transformed into scientific studies.

In the historiographic modality, a study of the pre-colonial political organization of the indigenous peoples was thought to be valuable to the building of the colonial state. It also involved defining the ideological construction of the indigenous peoples and the history of the colonialists themselves. The travel or observational modality was the amalgamation of images and the designation of locations for the enjoyment of the colonialists and European tourists. Whereas mapping and boundary definitions were typical of the survey modality, it was the classification of the colony's natural and human resources that was significant. Through the enumerative modality, the colonialist took censuses and compiled lists of products, prices, customs and duties, weights and measures, etc. According to the museological modality, the colony was a vast museum filled with ancient sites, wildlife and material culture for European museums and collectors. In order to maintain social order and the dominance of colonialists, systems such as the surveillance modality were put in place to identify and classify each indigenous group into an array of grids. These were used to determine their temperament and ability to comply or resist colonial domination, as well as their suitability for certain occupations.²

Nicholas Thomas challenged the apparent monolithic discourse on colonialism and recommended that colonial experience be historicized. He argued against the “governmentalization” of culture for he thought that colonial discourse was neither a unitary nor stable entity because it had its own internal contradictions and debates besides the corruption and inefficiencies of officials.³ Or, as Johanne Fabian suggested, not only “the crooks and brutal exploiters, but the honest and intelligent agents of colonialism need to be accounted for.”⁴ I will argue that it would be a futile exercise to separate the colonial project from scientific research because as demonstrated in French West Africa, many colonial administrators did impressive scientific research and some colonial scientists turned out to be great servants of the

colonial enterprise. This was the case because under colonial rule, it was impossible for anyone to perform independent research without the protection of the colonial government. On the other hand several colonial government functionaries were interested in doing research which they published in both the local and metropolitan journals. The colonial administrator, the missionary, and the scientist worked under the political economy of colonialism.

Comite D'etudes Historiques Et Scientifique de L'A.O.F.

On December 11, 1915, F. Clozel, explorer and later interim governor-general of French West Africa created the Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française. The objective of this scientific committee was to coordinate and centralize research under the supervision of the Governor-General. The committee had three sections (a) Resident Members in Dakar (b) Corresponding Members in French West Africa, and (c) Corresponding Members outside the colony. The officers of the committee were the Governor-General (president), two vice presidents, and a secretary-archivist. Dr. Bouet and Maurice Delafosse⁵ were the first vice presidents and H. Hardy was the interim secretary-archivist. In a circular to his lieutenants,⁶ Governor-General Clozel recalled the tradition of scientific expedition commenced by Napoleon Bonaparte in Egypt to be followed later in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Madagascar. For him French military and material victory abroad was at the same time the conquest of a new field of investigation for French scientists. He advised them on the importance research in ethnography, history, geography and natural history to the efficient organization and administration of the colony.⁷

The first appointees to become Resident Members were all government officials; Dr. Bouet, M. Delafosse and Hubert were colonial administrators, Claude Faure; the government archivist, Prof. Hardy; the Inspector General of Education in French West Africa, and Dr. Heckenroth; director of the bacteriology laboratory in Dakar. The others were Lemmet; director of the Hann Laboratory, Marty; government interpreter responsible for Islamic affairs, and the assistant prosecutor Monteilhet. Among the Corresponding Members in French West Africa were five colonial administrators, two army officers, and two assistants responsible for indigenous people's affairs. There was also an agronomist and a priest, Rev. Herbault the Consular General of Senegal. The Corresponding Members outside the colony were made up of researchers, explorers, and officers at the Ministry of Colonies in France.⁸ The first honorary president of Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques was no other than Gen. Joseph-Simon Gallieni,

Minister of War, who earned the stars and stripes of a general in his wars of conquest in French West Africa.⁹

In a span of twenty-one years of existence, Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques published twenty one volumes of its bulletin and monographs. Its first two publications in 1916 and 1917 were two volumes of *Annuaire et Memoires du Comité d'Etudes* which continued as the *Bulletin du Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française*. The articles in the bulletin covered both the humanities and sciences. It carried also a regular section on obituary, bibliography, book reviews, list of members, and minutes of the permanent commission of the Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques. In a span of ten years (1916-25), articles on topics relevant to effective exploitation of the colony were numerous. These were Commerce (99), Railways, Roads, Automobiles and Tourism (102), Navigation and ports (104), Mines (104), Political Geography (105), Colonization (107), Political Economy (107), Legislation and Administration (107), Military Art (108), Pedagogy and Teaching (109), Religions (109), Archives (111), Iconography (111), and History (111).¹⁰ Maurice Delafosse was one of the prolific contributors on African cultures and linguistics to the bulletin. His erudition and scholarship became a standard of reference for all scholars on Africa. A few of his articles were converted into pocket size books¹¹ for travelers, missionaries and colonial officials to Africa. In fact, in the preface to *Civilisations Nègro-Africaines*, he wrote that:

I believe that I am rendering service not only to those who are interested in ethnography and sociology from a purely speculative point of view, but also and above all to those who have to deal with Negro-African populations and to live with them in ignorance without knowing the profound lives of these masses and the motives for their thoughts and actions.¹²

In reality, M. Delafosse's desire to present the "real" Africa to his compatriots was the result of his admiration and respect for African culture. As the director of Indigenous Affairs, he was strongly opposed to the policy of assimilation as well as the recruitment of Africans into the French Army during the First World War. Such positions were unpopular among his colleagues and would cost him the coveted post of governor of Côte d'Ivoire. Consequently, he retired from the colonial service on health grounds to become a professor at the Ecole Coloniale et Ecole des Langues Orientales in Paris until his death in 1926.¹³

Origins of Institut Français D'Afrique Noire (IFAN)

Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) was founded on August 24, 1936. Albert Charton, Inspector General of Education carried Clozel's Comité d'Etudes

Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française further into the creation of Institut Français d'Afrique Noire in Dakar.¹⁴ In a proposal to the Governor General of the A.O.F., Jules Brévié (1930-1936), Charton lamented the absence of detailed scientific research on Black Africa except for general studies done by pioneers like Barth, Binger, Faidherbe, and Delafosse. Although they were the trailblazers of French research in Africa, scientific research of the Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française was poorly organized. Their research was inaccessible, and was mostly short-term work. Charton wanted a permanent institute in West Africa similar to others established under French colonial tutelage such as Université d'Algerie, Ecole d'Extrême Orient, Institut des Hautes Etudes Marocaines and the Académie Malagache. Even these were small in proportion, he argued, compared to the state supported ethnographic studies done by the Belgians, the Dutch and the British who are also involved in the colonial venture. Albert Charton saw the creation of a research institute in French West Africa as “an intellectual responsibility and necessity for colonial glory to study the people we have the responsibility to rule, to educate and to protect. In this lay one of the most important justifications for colonialism which should not be limited to economic and material interests.”¹⁵ To win approval for his proposal, Charton reminded the Governor General that ethnology and human geography studies were very political in nature. These disciplines were useful to the colonial enterprise, a good example being the work of Rattray in the Gold Coast. The 1930s were conducive for African studies in France. The likely cause of this being instant success of the Exposition Coloniale in 1931, which led to the creation of Société des Africanistes at Sorbonne, and the Ecole des Sciences Politiques, and Hautes Etudes Commerciales teaching courses on colonial science. Colonial exhibitions enjoyed so much success that the “organizers did not hide their interests, no one was ashamed of the imperial idea, millions celebrated it with gusto and panache, using the exhibition site to bathe in the glory of conquest.”¹⁶ The organizers of the Exposition Coloniale hoped to use the exhibition to restore French image at home and abroad. Internationally, they wished to recapture France's pride as European power since its defeats in 1870 and 1914. The exposition was also meant to show French economic success in the colonies. At home, the French government wished to portray the image of “la plus grande France” in addition to the economic and social benefits of the colonial enterprise. Objects used in the exhibition were later kept at the colonial museum – presently Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie.¹⁷

Albert Charton had multiple objectives for the Institute for African Studies. It was meant to:

- stimulate scientific research in all fields.
- act as a liaison or coordinating body for all researchers within the empire.
- distribute and publish research results.
- serve as a documentation center, archive, library, ethnographic and natural history museum.¹⁸

The main disciplines to be studied at the institute were ethnology and sociology of indigenous peoples.¹⁹ He also recommended the study of indigenous languages, geography, colonial history (to the glory of France and to strengthen their resolve and faith in the colonial enterprise), prehistory, African art, and physical and natural sciences. The organizational structure of the institute was to comprise a Council of Research, Heads of various fields, Members resident in Africa, Fellows, Consultants and an administrative office.

Although the proposal received favorable consideration, it took five years for the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire to become a reality. In 1931, Governor-General Jules Brévié (1930-1936)²⁰ in the same direction as Clozel fifteen years earlier, took the initiative to announce the importance of the study of the territory under his control in a circular to the Lieutenants-Gouverneurs de Colonies du groupe, and l'administrateur de la Circonscription de Dakar et Dépendances. He urged all his officers to start collecting historical documents relative to the French conquest and administration in West Africa as well as data related to the indigenous peoples, and oral traditions. He outlined the sources for information on the colony and the research method to be adopted. Although, he was pleased with the rapid changes that the indigenous peoples were undergoing he was afraid that they were losing their traditions, hence they must be collected and stored in archives and museums.²¹

Institut français D'Afrique Noire

On 22 August 1936, Governor-General Brévié issued the decree creating Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (IFAN). The decree stipulated IFAN to be a scientific research institute for the study of Black Africa. True to the investigative model, IFAN was charged to:

1. Encourage and promote scientific work in all its forms in West Africa.
2. Organize and coordinate scientific research in West Africa, determine the research programs, and ensure collaboration with the metropole and neighboring countries.
3. Create museums, archives, libraries, and scientific collections.
4. Publish research results in the Bulletin of IFAN.
5. Contribute towards the understanding of Black Africa by teaching in the metropole or French West Africa with the permission of the governor-

general.²²

Conspicuously absent from the stated objectives of IFAN was the training of Africans. Also, contrary to the Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques that had its executive body in Dakar, the Higher Scientific Committee (Comité Supérieur Scientifique) of IFAN was based in Paris. It was responsible for the research orientation of IFAN. It reviewed the annual report of IFAN to make recommendations to the governor general. It also recommended fellows to the Ecole Française d'Afrique. The president of the University of Paris was to head the Comité Supérieur Scientifique assisted by the Inspecteur conseil de l'Instruction publique at the Ministry of Colonies. The other thirty members of the committee were to be nominated by the governor general. The committee was to meet at least once a year.

Next on the organizational structure of IFAN was the Council for scientific Research (Conseil des recherches scientifique) in Dakar made up of the permanent members of IFAN resident in French West Africa. Organized into several sections and departments, they would direct research and oversee the publications of IFAN. The number and nature of research to be undertaken was to be determined by the governor-general. He appointed his head of departments of education, public works, health and medical services, political affairs, animal husbandry, and agriculture to the Council. The rest of the appointed members were the directors of the Pasteur Institute, geology and mines, meteorology, and museum and archives of French West Africa. Associates to the Council of Scientific Research were the representatives from each territory and institutions in the metropole interested in Africa, all of whom must be approved by the governor-general.

The third structure of I.F.A.N. was the French African School (L'Ecole Française d'Afrique) for the temporary fellows of the institute. The members of this school were nominated for two to three years by the governor general upon consultation with Council for Scientific Research, and the Higher Scientific Committee. They were chosen from the doctorates in letters, sciences, medicine, law, and university professors as well as museum curators or researchers, archivists, and graduates of School of Oriental Languages, Ecole pratique des Hautes études, and Ecole Nationale de la France d'Outre-Mer. Other candidates to be considered for the school were young people who had demonstrated interest in scientific work in Africa, and intellectuals whose research necessitated fieldwork in Africa.

The value of IFAN to the colonial enterprise was reiterated on the eve of the departure of Governor Brévié from Dakar. In a meeting to discuss the future of I.F.A.N. attended by members of the scientific committee and those of the erstwhile Comité scientifique de l'A.O.F. as well as the new Gov. Vadier, Chief Adminis-

trator; Ponzio, General Villain, Inspector General Lounay, Goux; mayor of Dakar, Turbé; president of the Chamber of commerce, and Albert Charton; inspector general of education. The latter made the farewell speech in which he praised Gov. Brévié for his vision and contribution to scientific research and effective administration of the colony. He related the intricate relationship between the scientific study in Africa and colonialism:

development of the economic life, for the defense of cultures, for the protection of aerial navigation, for mineral prospecting, for the multiplication of our resources and wealth, for our security and peace in Africa ... It is indispensable for the government, for education, for the responsibility to instill and stimulate in the colonized peoples precise and rigorous knowledge, the precise psychology of humanity of the indigenous peoples, this experience is the definition of the art of colonization.²³

IFAN, therefore, was a state sponsored research institute with the governor-general of French West Africa having absolute control. Thus, the colonial intentions for IFAN fall into the "investigative model" of Bernard Cohn. The colonial government supported and selected scholars, approved research topics, and underwrote the publications of IFAN. These characteristics distinguished IFAN from other research institutes like the International African Institute based in London. Founded in 1926, the International African Institute had an international mandate to coordinate the research of students of Africa from French, British, Belgian, Spanish and Italian colonies. With funds from the Rockefeller Foundation, it was able to have some autonomy although some of the institute's fellows went on to advise colonial governments. Michael Crowther noted that some of the institute's fellows such as "Scapera [were] advising the Bechuanaland Protectorate government on land tenure and customary law, Fortes the Gold Coast government on Tallensi marriage law, and Read the Nyasaland government on the effects of migratory labor on village life."²⁴ Also, during the early years of the International African Institute, former colonial administrators occupied the executive council. Lord Lugard for example was reported to have tried to run the institute like an extension of the British Empire.²⁵

The first twenty-five years of IFAN saw its crystallization into a fully-fledged research institute in spite of the impact of World War II on its beginnings. On August 20, 1936, IFAN was officially allocated offices in the Department of Education, Library, Archives, Museums, and Collections. Dr. Théodore Monod who was an assistant at Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle (Paris) was appointed as the first director of IFAN. Alexandre Senou Adande was appointed to be in charge of the museum, and André Villard became the archivist.

S. A. Adande was the first African to work at IFAN in a position of authority. He was born on March 12, 1913 in Porto-Novo. He had his elementary education in Porto-Novo and Lome in Togo and later went to the famous French West African teacher training school William Ponty at Gorée. He also studied at Institut d'Ethnologie de l'Université de Paris and Ecole de Louvre. While at IFAN his activities were not limited to research alone, he was actively involved in politics as he became an executive board member of Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (R.D.A.) from 1946-1951. Likewise he was the secretary general of the Convention Africaine (1956-1957), member of the Union Progressiste Sénégalaise (U.P.S.), and treasurer to Parti Dahoméen d'Unité (P.D.U.). When Dahomey obtained its autonomy, he held several ministerial posts; Agriculture and Peasants (1958-59), Finance and Budget (1960-62), Rural Development (1962-63) and Justice and Legislation (1964-65).²⁶

Dr. Monod, who arrived in Dakar in July 1938, conceptualized I.F.A.N. in the terms of a general inventory of French West Africa as well as a study of specific and general problems. For him, IFAN in West Africa would play the same role that the Museum of Natural History played in France as a center for research, documentation, and high culture.²⁷ The indefatigable researcher and prolific writer steered I.F.A.N. to its reputation as a major scientific research center in Africa. He was born on April 9, 1902 in Rouen, France. His father was a pastor, and at age 16, young Theodore was dreaming of missionary work in Tibet to “fight against the stupid paganism,” however, he had great passion for natural history and prehistory. He got his first opportunity as a researcher on two ocean liners, *Mistral* in 1920 and *Petral* in 1921. The results of his research on marine fauna were published in *Bulletin de la Société d'océanographie de France*. In 1922, he was appointed an assistant at the Museum d'histoire naturelle in the Department of Fisheries and Colonial Animal Produce. His position at the museum helped him to undertake several research trips to Africa especially to Mauritania, Cameroon, Chad, Guinea, Sahara Desert, and Algeria. His views on colonialism at the time were best expressed in his dairies of Cameroon, he would write “I am a negrophile, fundamentally, less for the indigenous peoples but rather against their exploiter.”²⁸ Before taking the job at I.F.A.N., he had just published his travels in the Sahara, *Méharées: Explorations au vrai Sahara*.²⁹ In this book, he set out to demystify all popular knowledge about the Sahara desert. He promised the truth and nothing but the scientific truth. This claim to scientific truth was not uncommon to travel literature in this period. Contrary to other travel writers, who trade the truth for drama and wonder, Monod's discoveries would be informed by “science” because he claimed that we lived in a world

without mysteries or secrets if we knew how to look for answers.

Under the effective leadership of Monod, IFAN attained its autonomy on October 16, 1948. It established local centers in all the territories; Saint Louis, Conakry, Bamako, Abidjan, Porto-Novo, Lome, Niamey, Ouagadougou, and Douala. In addition to these centers, I.F.A.N. was responsible for forest reserves of Mount Nimba, the Royal Palace of Abomey, the hydrobiological laboratory of Diarafabé with its laboratory ship, the protected regions of the Sahara, and the History and Marine museums of Gorée. Some of the notable researchers of IFAN were the sociologist G. Balandier (1946-49), the ethnologist B. Holas, and the archaeologist R. Mauny, and some of the renowned fellows were Mr. and Mrs. Schaeffner and P. Verger.

Between 1939-1945 during World War II, IFAN adjusted its role to suit the times. Monod redefined IFAN's role to “manifest and exalt French science in the Federation.”³⁰ This was necessary because France was under German occupation from 1940-1942 and had to maintain its prestige in the colonies. He organized public lectures on several subjects and invited the general public to participate in scientific research. For a whole year (1940-41), he had a regular program on Radio Dakar entitled “L'hippopotame et le philosophe” through which he could reach the masses outside Dakar on French research in West Africa.³¹

Monod's radio program was not limited to research notes, it was peppered with witty anti-war and anti-nazi metaphors that brought him under the scrutiny of the Vichy regime. He was to submit any text to be broadcast a day in advance for approval by the government. He categorically refused to broadcast his texts if any sections were removed. On occasions the censors missed his intentions, thus, he wrote that race was purely an issue of physical traits and has nothing to do with nations, languages, peoples, cultures or morals, that a skull did not predict either language or religion, and that the distribution of races, languages, and civilizations did not coincide with geographical regions or national territories. Regarding the Aryan question, he argued that Aryan language was a historical phenomenon and there was not a single anthropologist who felt that there were contemporary peoples of Aryan blood.³²

To make up for lack of staff and inability to cover the whole territory, Monod in the tradition of *Notes and Queries* and *Instructions sommaires pour les collecteurs d'objets ethnographiques*, published his own pocket size research manual, *Conseils aux chercheurs*.³³ This booklet was distributed freely among the expatriate community within the Federation on how to conduct research. Monod's preface had an eight-point message that appealed to the emotions, passions, and goodwill of his readers:

1. Primarily written for readers as an introduction to

Africa that we thought would be useful to our correspondents.

2. Conserve this precious document which will be useful to you one day. However, if you do not need it pass it on to someone who might. You know them.
3. Send us the addresses of your friends who are interested in African things for you will be rendering all of us a service.
4. Learn to observe not only with curiosity and but with sympathy.
5. Make an effort to see objectively, describe, and record with total objectivity, simplicity as well as humility, without "explanation" and especially without judgement.
6. If the people appear strange to you, admit these differences but do not forget however, that they are human and could also have art, history, literature, traditions, morality, etc. ... culture. And they are to be studied and not ridiculed or denigrated.
7. IFAN wishes you a successful research. It will always be happy to know your research results.
8. Do not forget our address: Institut Français d'Afrique Noire, Dakar.³⁴

This document was the source book for IFAN staff, colonial administrators, soldiers, missionaries, explorers, amateur and pseudo-scientists. It contained the necessary references and methodology for colonial research as well as international bibliographical sources. The topics he recommended for research included the soil, climate, vegetation, useful plants, fauna, prehistory, history, slave trade, Black Americans, races,³⁵ civilizations and societies, Islam, native food, African art, music and musical instruments, and languages. The list was so exhaustive that there was not a single person who would not find something to do. To crown it all, he contributed model research questions, diagrams, tables and phonetic notations.

For the collections of artifacts to be sent to the IFAN museums, he provided a sample card catalogue. The collections were not going to be haphazard, they had to be systemized and ordered to fit the scientific model of natural history. Objects from any area became "evidence" from which facts could be abstracted to represent the whole society. These objects could also be exhibited as a representative symbol of the society, hence, models were drawn from IFAN collections as to who or what was the typical Bamana, Baule, Senufo or Wolof. Although some ethnic groups share similar material culture, due to political and administrative manipulations, the collections were classified solely on the basis of ethnicity. In recent years, African art historians have debunked the theory of one ethnicity one art, however, its political influence on colonial administration has yet to be examined.

Contrary to the central role IFAN played in research in French West Africa, due to the autonomous nature of the British territories, research was somewhat localized. For instance, Ghana had its own Survey and Geography Departments as well as its own publications such as *Ghana Notes and Queries*. Similarly Nigeria had *Nigerian Field*. Rather than an association with the central research center, university colleges in places like Fourah Bay (Sierra Leone), Ibadan (Nigeria) and Achimota (Ghana) became focal points for academic research.

Conference Internationale des Africanistes de l'Ouest

Perhaps the single most important event that put IFAN on the international map was the organization of an international conference in January 1945.³⁶ Conférence Internationale des Africanistes de l'Ouest (C.I.A.O.) was supposed to be the first of the annual meetings of ethnologists, geographers and natural historians of West Africa. The association was created a year earlier and boasted individual and institutional membership from the whole world regardless of institutional or language barriers. The membership list was a veritable who is who in African studies. Distinguished institutional members were Universidad de Barcelona; Seville and Madrid, Colonial Social Science Research; London, Committee for African Studies; University of Pennsylvania, Department of Bantu Studies and African Studies Review; University of Witwatersrand, International African Institute, Royal Anthropological Institute of London, Sociedad Espanola de Antropologia, Etnografia y Prehistoria; Madrid, and West African Institute of Industries, Arts, and Social Science, Gold Coast. Some of the eminent anglophone Africanists of the period who participated in the conference were T. C. Shaw, Prof. Melville Herskovits, B. E. Fagg, and Prof. Daryll Forde.

In his opening address to the conference, Governor-General Divo exhorted participants, in the times of World War II, to break the political barriers to intellectual research for the benefit of humanity. They were to consider scientific research as a peaceful crusade against ignorance, disease, fear, and misery.³⁷ The conference was accompanied by an exhibition on old maps and engravings, illustrated books, and Gilbert Vieillard collections.³⁸ IFAN organized tours for each panel to important ethnographic and archaeological sites in Senegal. To ensure the continuity of the organization, an international committee was appointed, it was made up of T. Monod (French Africa), A. E. Southern (British West Africa), A. A. Mendes-Corrêa (Portugal), and J. Martinez Santa-Olalla (Spain). C. Daryll Forde and Paul Rivet were appointed metropolitan corespondents for Britain and France respectively. At the end of the conference, the participants came up with a seven-point resolution:

1. The urgency of doing systematic ethnographic re-

search in West Africa.

2. Tourist art should be distinguished from indigenous art, the latter must be protected in order to evolve in its own style, and should be encouraged to develop without outside market influence.
3. Take the necessary measures to protect the environment in West Africa by delimiting forest reserves, national parks and enforcing legislation on hunting.
4. To forestall the commercial exportation of indigenous art objects, enforcing customs regulations, and if possible establish in collaboration with the local population, site museums where objects were found.
5. In publishing their research results, archaeologists should carefully define their methodology for easy interpretation of the data.
6. To conduct a survey of archaeological monuments for their protection.
7. Recognized developments in African studies in Spain and Portugal and urged other specialized organizations to allow these countries to participate actively in the progress of African studies.³⁹

The above resolution spoke clearly on the state of scientific research in West Africa if not the whole of Africa before the 1960s. The classic ideology of the salvage paradigm or what J. Fabian termed “denial of coevalness” was its driving force.⁴⁰ Peoples and their artifacts were presumed to be in danger of extinction and had to be saved. Although most of the objects to be collected were made in the era of French occupation, the resolution suggested that Europeans were the last people to have seen these artifacts and therefore had to collect and preserve them. One can also analyze these in terms of cultural reification, a process whereby a culture is declared dead or dying but its material remains are collected, preserved in a museum and later displayed.⁴¹ Despite the preponderance of ethnographic studies (see analysis below); the participants still saw this as their priority. This myopic attachment to an aspect of the African past led the participants to relegate the study of contemporary art or what was then called tourist/airport art to second class status. They established a hierarchy for African Art which was not to be broken until the 1980s when tourist, popular and urban art began to receive serious attention from Africanist Art historians.⁴² On a visionary note, one could say the conference decried the perennial problem of looting and the illegal exportation of African material culture, called for the creation of site museums, and the protection of the environment. Of paramount importance, was the fact that the conference was able to bring together Africanists from different countries to discuss their research. The unfortunate side of colonial research was the balkanization of research conventions and terminology by

the colonial powers. African research is still haunted by the political and social division of French, British, and Portuguese methods and terminology dating to colonial times. A monumental task because in modern times, due to language barriers, Africanists hardly know what research is done in other countries.

IFAN Publications

Another achievement of IFAN was its publications. By January 1, 1939 the first editions of IFAN were inaugurated. The former *Bulletin du Comité Historique et Scientifique de l'Afrique Occidentale Française* became the *Bulletin de l'IFAN*, to which was added *Notes Africaines*; a sort of newsletter for the local correspondents, and monographs. *Bulletin de l'IFAN* had two series; A and B. The B series was devoted to geography, history, ethnology, linguistics, archaeology and sociology, and A series was devoted to the pure sciences. IFAN continued to publish thesis (mémoires) as its predecessor as well as catalogues and documents. It also published a series known as the initiation to African studies with titles such as *Les Grandes Missions Françaises en Afrique Occidentale* (C. Chailley), *Les Serpents de l'Ouest Africain* (A. Villiers), and *L'Homme Noir en Afrique* (B. Holas). In its first decade of publication, 1939-1948, 41% of all articles in *Notes Africaines* were on Ethnology, followed by Botany (12%), Linguistics (9%), Archaeology (9%), Zoology (6%), Anthropology (5%), Geography (3%), Medicine (3%), and others 7%. Within the same period the prolific director of I.F.A.N., Monod published in all the fields. In fact he contributed about 90% of all the articles on Zoology, 50% on Archaeology, and 30% on Botany. The articles in the second decades of *Notes Africaines* (1949-1963) were equally dominated by publications in Ethnology (31%), followed by Zoology (17%). The rest were History (12%), Linguistics (11%), Botany (9%), Archaeology (8%), Geography (7%), Environment (3%), and Anthropology (2%). This time it was Raymond Mauny, the director of the Department of Prehistory and Archaeology who dominated the publications with 84 articles. Proximity to Dakar played an important role in the determination on the country of study; Mali and Senegal topped the list of the number of articles published in *Notes Africaines* from 1949 - 1963.

The preponderance of Ethnology in this publication in the span of two decades was in accordance with colonial policy of understanding the lives of the people they governed – surveillance modality. In the first issue of *Bulletin de l'IFAN* for example, contributions by two colonial officials were of the category of surveillance modality. Capt. H. Martin wrote on the Oulad Bou Sba, a people of the Sahelian region of Mauritania. He traced their turbulent history from Morocco to their present location and noted their propensity for cattle rustling. He cautioned the government against these people for

they could create trouble for the French and at the same time inspire other groups to revolt. In the same volume, François Nicolas, an administrator noted in his study of the Tuareg of Dinnik that the absence of natural indigenous cadres was making it difficult for the French to administer the region.⁴³ Another probable reason for increased interest in African peoples after World War II had a lot to do with the anti-colonial movements in the colony.

IFAN was also involved in the population survey of French West Africa. It had established a population archive alphabetically based on ethnicity and geographical region. Street names were equally important for IFAN as indicated by Raymond Mauny the director of department of Prehistory and Archaeology. He recommended that with the expansion of Dakar, its streets should follow a French system whereby you found certain streets in a particular area named exclusively after great men, musicians, painters, etc. In the same manner on the streets of Dakar should be the names of great Frenchmen such as Gaden, Delafosse or Viellard. Others could be named after great Africans like Soundiata or El Hadj Omar.⁴⁴ Finally, just as Delafosse et al., the influence of IFAN on the knowledge industry in West Africa was so substantial that when *Les Guides Bleus* (the influential French travel guide) for French West Africa was published in 1958, five of the seven articles came from IFAN scientists. These were T. Monod (*À la Rencontre de l'Afrique de l'Ouest*), G. Brasseur (*Aperçu Géographique*), R. Mauny (*Préhistoire et Histoire Ouest Africaine: des Origines au XVIIe Siècle*), M. Houis (*Problème Linguistique de l'Ouest Africain*), and B. Holas (*Populations de l'A.O.F.: Types des Civilisations and Arts et Artisanat en A. O. F.*)⁴⁵

Conclusion

Certain political developments in the latter part of the 1950s in French colonies all over West Africa were going to have an indelible impact on research in West Africa. The establishment of Institut des Hautes Etudes in Dakar (1950) and Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique d'Outre-Mer (ORSTOM) for example meant that IFAN no longer held the monopoly for research in French West Africa. IFAN received a series of shocks to its status with the Loi Cadre of 1956 (which recommended a breakup of the federation), and the wave of independence in the territories by 1960. An indication that IFAN would no longer have any control over research in the local centers in Abidjan, Niamey, Bamako, Lome, Porto-Novo, and Conakry. Faced with this reality Monod wondered if he could attach his institute to the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris or to the new Université de Dakar. The former did not possess the financial capacity and the latter at least had a promising future. Thus, in 1959, IFAN was attached to

Université de Dakar, the national university of the new Republic of Senegal.

One of the first critics of IFAN research and publications was J. Suret-Canale in Conakry. In the editorial of the premier issue of *Recherches Africaines*, he sought to distance the new publication from its predecessor *Etudes Guinéennes*.⁴⁶ He asserted that although IFAN accumulated useful research on West Africa, for a long time scientific research was the privileged domain of powerful colonial administrators who were not well trained in the various fields but were driven by the unique ideology of colonialism. He also felt that IFAN neglected the training of Africans and rather facilitated research in Africa for French scientists. And in line with colonial policy, IFAN thought it unwise to delve into areas of contemporary African history.⁴⁷ In contrast, history dominated the number of articles published in post independence *Notes Africaines* from 1964-1976 as opposed to ethnography in colonial times.

T. Monod did not dispute J. Suret-Canale's assertions, however, he explained that IFAN could not escape the colonial conceptions of the time because it was considered to be just another department for the colonial government. Besides, the government always used IFAN as a propaganda tool. He wrote that "the desire of the administration to transform it into an instrument of propaganda was real."⁴⁸ In his review of IFAN in the 1960s, he outlined the complex relationship he had with the colonial government and the possibilities for IFAN's future. He recommended that IFAN come out of its state of primitive accumulation of materials to engage in new ways of progress and scientific research for Africa.⁴⁹ Was this Monod's apology? In a sense it was but on a closer examination, one noticed that he had little room to maneuver. Besides, he was known as an activist. In his last years in Dakar, he was against the French imposed war in Algeria, which created enemies for him in Senegal and in France. In a letter to Lucien Paye, the French Minister of National Education, he complained about the treatment he was receiving. His position as director was not confirmed when IFAN was brought under the University of Dakar so he brought this to the attention of the President of the university who sent him to the Ministry of Education. The latter sent him to the Ministry of Finance, which in turn sent him back to the university. Even the university refused to pay his usual return ticket to do research at the Museum of Natural History in Paris. He therefore requested from the minister that they openly relieve him of his post instead of pushing him around.⁵⁰

The Africanization of cadres in former colonial institutions eventually transformed IFAN. The 1960s annual reports of IFAN indicated the travails of its director for twenty-six and a half years. Contrary to his pre-1960 annual reports where he would outline the achieve-

ments and future goals for IFAN, he became very critical of his staff and colleagues. He was cognizant of the problems his institute would be facing. He deplored the annual long vacation now taken by researchers that obliged him to distinguish between the professional and vocational researchers. The 1963/64 annual report was the last before he left for France. It was also the most critical; he deplored the absence of professionalism at the institute and the mercenary approach to research. He wondered if half a century of his life's work would come to nothing, however, he reassured whomever was going to take his place that he was leaving behind a wealth of material for research on Africa with worldwide reputation. One could understand Monod's position; he was about to lose control of his life's work to which he was emotionally attached. Nonetheless, some of his remarks were relevant, considering the state of IFAN today.

Without doubt, replications of scientific research institutes such as Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques and later Institut Français d'Afrique Noire were part of the investigative modality established by France in its West African colony. Although individuals like Governor-General Clozel, Governor-General Brévié, and Inspector General of Education Clozel were the main advocates of scientific research in French West Africa, perhaps the only individual who carried these ideals to fruition was Dr. Théodore Monod. However, he did not always have things easy with the colonial administration, an example being the fact that his constant plea for a museum of French West Africa in Dakar never received government support.

NOTES

¹Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British India* (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1996), 5.

²Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, 1996.

³Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994).

⁴Johannes Fabian, "Religious and secular colonization: common ground," *History and Anthropology*, 4, (1990): 339.

⁵Louise Delafosse, *Maurice Delafosse: Le Berichon Conquis par l'Afrique*. (Paris: Société Française d'Histoire d'Outre-Mer, 1976). This biography, written by Delafosse's daughter, was published on the fiftieth anniversary of his death with a preface by President F. Houphouët-Boigny and a postface by President L. S. Senghor.

⁶The Lieutenant-Governors of Upper Senegal and Niger, French Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Dahomey, and the commissaries of the Governor-General in the Civilian Territory of Mauritania and the Military Territory of Niger.

⁷*Journal Officiel de l'Afrique Occidentale Française* (Dakar: IFAN, December, 1915).

⁸*Journal Officiel de l'Afrique Occidentale Française*. (Dakar: IFAN, December, 1915).

⁹*Annuaire et Mémoires du Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'A.O.F.* (Gorée: Imp. du Gouvernement, 1916).

In his acceptance letter to the committee as its honorary president, he thanked them for associating his name to those of valiant and erudite men such as Caillié and Faidherbe.

¹⁰*Bulletin du Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'Afrique Occidentale Française: Tables Décennales (1916-1925)*, (Rochefort, 1927).

¹¹See for instance *Civilisations négro-africaines* (1925) and *L'Ame nègre* (1922).

¹²Maurice Delafosse, *Civilisations négro-africaines*, (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1925), 7.

¹³*Civilisations négro-africaines*.

¹⁴Albert Charton, *Rapport à Monsieur le Gouverneur Général de l'A.O.F. sur un avant-projet de création d'un Institut d'Etudes Africaines*, August, (Dakar: IFAN, 1931).

¹⁵Albert Charton, p. 6. "C'est pour nous, une sorte de devoir intellectuel et une exigence de l'honneur colonial que d'étudier les pays que nous avons charge d'administrer et les peuples que nous avons la tâche de protéger et éduquer. Il y a là, pour une part, une des justifications les plus hautes de la colonisation qui ne saurait se définir en termes uniquement matériels et économiques."

¹⁶Paul Greenhalgh, "Education, Entertainment and Politics: Lessons from the Great International Exhibitions," in *The New Museology*, Peter Vergo, ed. (London: Reaktion Books, 1989), 94.

¹⁷Albert Lebrun, L'exposition coloniale, *La Revue Indigène*, (Jan-Fév-Mars 1931): 11. According to Etienne Féau, head of the African section of the Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie, later in 1966 this museum loaned some African objects for the First World Festival of African Arts in Senegal. After the festival, the Senegalese government even sent some of their collections to be kept at the museum in Paris. There was never any attempt to retrieve those objects. (E. Féau, personal communication, Summer 1996).

¹⁸*Rapport à Monsieur le Gouverneur Général de l'A.O.F.*

¹⁹Charton insisted on this aspect as it was very rich and would serve immediate practical needs.

²⁰Governor-General Jules Brévié's had a particular interest in scientific study in French West Africa. He was one of the corresponding members of the former Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifiques de l'A.O.F.

²¹*Journal Officiel de l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, (18 mai 1935): 416.

²²*Journal Officiel de l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, (22 août 1936): 777.

²³Création de l'Institut français d'Afrique Noire, *Bulletin du Comité d'Etudes Historiques et Scientifique de l'Afrique Occidentale Française* (Dakar, 1936): 385.

²⁴Michael Crowder, "'Us' and 'Them': The International African Institute and the Current Crises in African Studies," *Africa*, 57:1 (1987): 113.

²⁵*Africa*, 57 :1 (1987)

²⁶*Dictionnaire: Bio-Biographique du Dahomey*, Tome I (Porto Novo: IRAD 1969).

²⁷Théodore Monod, *Recherche Scientifique: Institut Français d'Afrique Noire* (Dakar: IFAN).

²⁸"Je reste négrophile, foncièrement, moins peut-être pour l'indigène que contre son exploitateur." (5 Janvier 1926), in

Nicole Vray, *Monsieur Monod: Scientifique, Voyageur et Protestant* (Paris: Actes Sud, 1994).

²⁹Théodore Monod, *Méharées: Exploration au vrai Sabara* (Paris: Editions "Je Sers." 1937).

³⁰*Notes Africaines*, 90 (April 1961): 39.

³¹*Notes Africaines*. 90 (April 1961).

³²Nicole Vray, *Monsieur Monod: Scientifique, Voyageur et Protestant* (Paris: Actes Sud, 1994).

³³*Conseils aux chercheurs*, I.F.A.N., (Dakar, 1948) (Numerous editions).

³⁴*Conseils aux chercheurs*: 3-4.

³⁵This is an ambiguous word in French; it could either mean races or peoples.

³⁶Successive conferences were held in Guinea Bissau (1947), Ibadan (1949), Fernando Po (1951), Abidjan (1954), and Accra (1959).

³⁷*Première Conférence Internationale des Africanistes de l'Ouest: Comptes Rendus* (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, Paris, 1950).

³⁸Gilbert Viellard, a linguist and ethnographer, who died in France during the war in 1940, was the assistant administrative secretary of IFAN from 1937-1939. His collections comprised manuscript and objects he collected from the Peul of Macina (Mali).

³⁹*Première Conférence Internationale des Africanistes de l'Ouest: Comptes Rendus*, 1950.

⁴⁰Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Objects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). Fabian defined denial of coevalness as "a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse."

⁴¹Tony Fry and Anne-Marie Willis, "Aboriginal Art: Symptom or Success?" *Art in America* (July 1989): 85.

⁴²Nelson H. H. Graburn, ed., *Ethnic and Tourist Art: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

⁴³Henri Froidevaux, "L'Institut Français D'Afrique Noire: Ses Premiers Travaux," in *Bulletin des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques*, LXII (1947): 39.

⁴⁴Raymond Mauny, *Comment Appeler les Quartiers et les Rues de Grand Dakar?* (Dakar: IFAN, n.d.).

⁴⁵*Les Guides Bleus, Afrique Occidentale Française* (Paris: Hachette, 1958).

⁴⁶*Etudes Guinéennes* was the local IFAN center journal, the last issue of which appeared in 1956. Guinea under Sekou Touré was the first country in French West Africa to gain independence in 1958.

⁴⁷Jean Suret-Canale, Présentation, *Recherches Africaines*, 1 (1959): 5.

⁴⁸*Notes Africaines*, 90 (April 1961): 48.

⁴⁹*Notes Africaines*, 90 (April 1961).

⁵⁰*Monsieur Monod: Scientifique, Voyageur et Protestant*, 1994.