



**CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENARY OF THE BIRTH OF CHEIKH ANTA DIOP
AND THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CAIRO COLLOQUIUM**

Elements for a Briefing Note

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The purpose of this Brief is to share information gathered from various sources², with a view to update institutions and people interested in the Celebration of the Centenary of the Birth of

¹ Prof. S B Mboup was appointed by the direction of the Center for Strategic and Policy Studies (CSPS) of Juba (South Sudan) with whom he has been collaborating for more than a year as Senior Research Fellow, to represent this institution in the Initiative Committee for the organization of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Cairo Colloquium and the Centenary of Cheikh Anta Diop.

The CSPS would like to join this important initiative, including by joining the Organizing Committee; without forgetting the possibility of organizing the Colloquium or events that are part of it (conferences, seminars, workshops) in Juba.

² Sources consulted include a Draft Terms of Reference (by a Pan-Africanist Task Force based in Abidjan-Cote d'Ivoire); and a "Dossier for the updating and acceleration of the project for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Cairo Conference (1974) on the peopling of Pharaonic Egypt and

Cheikh Anta Diop and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the January/February 1974 Cairo Colloquium about their genesis and progress made so far, in addition to prospects for future developments to bring the project of these two interconnected events into fruition. All ideas, objectives, strategies, activities as expressed here are to be shared and discussed as widely as possible amongst between all stakeholders in Africa and the Diaspora including academic and research institutions, PanAfrican think tanks, artists, writers, film makers amongst others, so as to be refined, enriched for their implementation.

I- CONTEXT & JUSTIFICATION

1. Cheikh Anta Diop: his work, his thought as an anchor point and main lever

Cheikh Anta Diop, born December 29, 1923 and died February 7, 1986 in Senegal, is a scholar of multidisciplinary training (physicist, historian, anthropologist, linguist...) and a Pan-Africanist politician. He is considered one of the greatest African scientists whose theses and revolutionary works are supported, adored by many scientists and activists for the rewriting of the History of Humanity in general, that of Africa in particular; or else fought, attacked, banished by the proponents of a rearguard battle which one could consider as antiquated, outdated, if it were not of burning topicality. In this case, this fight is assumed, carried through revisionist currents in the field of historiography by many supporters of the racist colonial order, with the support and financing of institutions and States in the service of Western Imperialism.

the deciphering of the Meroitic: Exchanges on the past of humanity, on the struggles of the present and the challenges of the future for Africa and the rest of the world”: Dossier produced by Babacar Diop Buuba, in charge of the Chair on African Renaissance (ICESCO – UCAD), President of the Pan African Association for Literacy and Adult Education (PAALAE), second deputy of the General History of Senegal (HGS) project. Diop is Vice President of AIIKS (African Institute on Indigenous Knowledge Systems), advisory member of ANRS (Agence Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique du Senegal), and member of the Amadou Mahtar Mbow Foundation.

The revolutionary character of the thought and work of Cheikh Anta Diop consists of a rigorous demonstration of two or three theses, namely: 1. the African origin of Humanity and Human Civilization; 2. the nature, the Negro-African (non-Indo European) essence of the first Nile Valley civilizations (Egypt, Nubia, Ethiopia), concerning in particular the basic elements of science, philosophy, religion; 3. the cultural, anthropological, linguistic unity of all African peoples notwithstanding and beyond undeniable specificities and diversity. Nowadays, these theses, more than simple scientifically established facts, are becoming day by day a fact of historical and political consciousness for many Africans, including people of African descent, on the Continent and within the Diaspora(s).

This epistemological break through imposed a radical change of paradigm in the drafting of the General History of Africa (GHA) sponsored by UNESCO, in particular following the International Colloquium held in Cairo, Egypt, from January 28 to 03 February 1974, still under the aegis of UNESCO, on the theme “Population of ancient Egypt and deciphering of the Meroitic script”. The debates also focused on axes and research results relating to skin color, morphology, cosmogony, religion, totemism, matriarchy, social structure, art, royalty, etc.

Let us recall what is written in the general conclusion of the Report on the Cairo Colloquium, a report written on behalf of UNESCO by Professor Jean Devisse, Cheikh Anta's long-time opponent and contradictor in Dakar, then in Paris and during the Colloquium:

“Although the preparatory working paper (see Appendix 3, p. 135) sent out by UNESCO gave particulars of what was desired, not all participants had prepared communications comparable with the painstakingly researched contributions of Professors Cheikh Anta Diop and Theophile Obenga. There was consequently a real lack of balance in the discussions”.

It should be noted that in linguistic matters, a consensus was reached between the participants concerning the belonging of Ancient Egyptian to the African context: this despite borrowings from other cultures from the East (Semitic, Persian...); borrowings which however did not affect the deep structures of the Egyptian language (Pharaonic, Coptic) which remained essentially African, in its morphology, its syntax, its cultural or basic vocabulary.

The main recommendations made by the participants focused on the need for further research in priority areas:

- physical anthropology to fix, in a very precise and rigorous way, the definition of races and the racial identification of exhumed skeletons;
- migrations of populations having occupied the Nile valley, non-Pharaonic burials, Paleo-African remains in Egyptian iconography, etc.
- cooperation between specialists in comparative linguistics to establish all possible correlations between African languages and ancient Egyptian;
- the multi and inter-disciplinary methodology applied to studies in the Nile Valley and all its outskirts (peripheries).

The importance of the 1974 Cairo Colloquium lies in the fact that it constituted a defining moment in African historiography. On the scientific level, links of several kinds have been recognized between ancient Egypt and the rest of black Africa. Thus, ancient Egypt could be treated within the framework of the General History of Africa, in particular by Cheikh Anta Diop in Chapter I of Volume II entitled “The origin of the ancient Egyptians”.

Today, 100 years after the birth of Cheikh Anta Diop and 50 years after the holding of the Cairo Colloquium, the question of the relevance, the impact in contemporary Africa of the thought of Cheikh Anta Diop arises acutely, in a context marked by the reality of the paradox between the geostrategic importance, the immensity of the natural and human resources of our continent on the one hand and, on the other, the high levels of insecurity and deprivation of its populations. In clear terms, how can this thinking help Africa to face the many challenges it faces, to regain its place as a full-fledged actor, an independent, competitive, respected partner within the global world? It is in this light that the question also arises of how to articulate all the celebrations and events planned for both the Centenary of Cheikh Anta Diop and the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Cairo Colloquium. In this regard, the recommended approach and the implementation methods must be as open and inclusive as possible, in order to reach youth, women, university and research institutions, pan-African think tanks, artists, writers, filmmakers among others as well as representatives of the media, publishing houses, actors from civil society and the private sector.

2. Reminder of the genesis and gestation process of the idea

This process, which is mentioned in Pr. Babacar Diop Buuba's communication on the place of the Pan-African ideal in the thought and action of Cheikh Anta Diop, is a result of the Book Fair in Cairo in December 2019. The idea was shared and endorsed within the delegation of Senegal, guest of honour: the Director of Books and Reading, Prof. Ibrahima Lo and the Minister of Culture and Communication Mr. Abdoulaye Diop opened up to their Egyptian colleagues who welcomed the idea. Back from Cairo, the sharing was done in academia and in certain cultural circles. The Director of the Museum of Black Civilizations (Prof. H. Bocoum) and the Coordinator of the General History of Senegal Project (Prof. Iba Der Thiam) also welcomed this project. Prof. B. Diop Buuba then presented to the Director of the Museum of Black Civilizations (MCN) the ToRs during the year 2020 to find out if the Museum would be ready to host such an event. (see appendix I)

3. New facts

In the meantime, the effects of COVID 19 and new projects took place, leading to reactivate, resize and accelerate the project: celebration in 2021 of the Centenary of A. M. Mbow, former Director of UNESCO, institution at the origin of the 1974 Colloquium; support from CACSEN (African Cultural Community-Senegal section) inspired by the action of *Présence Africaine*; and celebration of the Centenary of Professor Cheikh Anta Diop planned for 2023 in particular by the Khepera Association and the team of the *Ankh Journal of Egyptology and African Civilizations* ; agreement between the Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD) and ICESCO, for

the Chair on African Renaissance, IFAN/UCAD and the Direction of Place du Souvenir expressing the wish to work with the Chair. In 2023, the same Chair has developed partnerships with South African and Spanish friends, not to mention many individuals from the African Diaspora.

Thus the initiator, who had in the meantime become responsible for setting up the Chair, proposed the inclusion of the project in the first phase (2 years) of the Chair (see Annex II); and obtained its inclusion in the budget (see Annex III)

Moreover, during the 37th ordinary session of the Executive Committee in October 2020, the African Union had chosen the 2021 theme "Arts, culture and heritage, a lever to build the Africa we want"; this cultural component is largely covered in module III of the Chair alongside the sections on epistemology (module I) and history (module II).

The African Community of Culture of Senegal (CACSEN) has expressed the wish to play its part through texts and images. CACSEN has readjusted the agenda for this new scheme.

Other pan-Africanist initiatives are announced on the Continent and in the diasporas.

II. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED RESULTS

2.1. Objectives

The general objective of the celebrations is to capitalize on the impacts and perspectives of the thought of Cheikh Anta Diop, of the Cairo Colloquium and of the General History of Africa with a view to the emergence of all of present-day Africa.

The specific objectives are as follows:

1. Pay tribute to Professor Cheikh Anta Diop on the occasion of the centenary of his birth;
2. Recall some scientific and philosophical contributions of great black scholars known in prehistory and in history;
3. Evaluate the current impact of the recommendations of the 1974 Cairo conference, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of its holding;
4. Explore ways of updating and disseminating the General History of Africa;
5. Sharing achievements and projects for the strategic repositioning of Africa on the world map and in the global geopolitical agenda;
6. Draw lessons for the development of contemporary Africa;

7. Adopt the “Dakar Declaration” establishing an African Knowledge Day: sharing of knowledge, know-how, know-how to be, know- how to live together, live with other human communities from other continents

2.2. Expected results

The expected results are:

1. Deserved tributes are paid to Professor Cheikh Anta Diop on the occasion of the centenary of his birth;
2. Some scientific and philosophical contributions of great Black scholars distinguished in prehistory and in history are recalled;
3. The impact of the recommendations of the Cairo Colloquium of 1974, fifty years after it was held, is assessed;
4. Ways of updating and disseminating the General History of Africa have been explored;
5. Lessons are learned for the strategic repositioning of Africa on the world map and in the global geopolitical agenda; ;
6. “The Dakar Declaration” is adopted establishing an African Knowledge Day.

III. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

1. Schedule of the Celebrations (Preparatory and coordination meeting)

The celebrations due to take place for a week in January 2024 should be designed as a launch of the activities in preparation for the 2024 Colloquium, according to the program below:

	Morning	Afternoon
Day 1	Opening ceremony	Tributes to Professor Cheikh Anta Diop (meeting of concertation)
Day 2	Reminder of some scientific and philosophical contributions of great Black scholars known in prehistory and in history	Reminder of some scientific and philosophical contributions of great Black scholars known in prehistory and in history
Day 3	Evaluation of the impact of the recommendations of the 1974 Cairo Colloquium, 50 years after its holding	Evaluation of the impact of the recommendations of the 1974 Cairo Colloquium, 50 years after its holding

Day 4	Exploration of ways for update and dissemination of the General History of Africa	Exploration of ways for update and dissemination of the General History of Africa
Day 5	Lessons learnt for the development of present-day Africa	Lessons learnt for the development of present-day Africa
Day 6	-Adoption of the Dakar Declaration establishing an African Knowledge Day; - Adoption of the Final Report of the Preparatory Meeting - Draft TORs of the Monitoring Committee and Implementation of Conclusions and Recommendations of the Meeting	Closing ceremony

2. Participants

The participants to the Colloquium (end 2004) and Preparatory Meeting (celebrations) are:

- The participants to the Cairo Colloquium in 1974 still alive;
- The participants to the 20th anniversary of the Cairo Colloquium still alive;
- The writers of the General History of Africa still alive;
- Egyptologists, historians, anthropologists, linguists from different universities around the world;
- Representatives of international institutions: UNESCO, AU, EU, OAS, ASEAN, Oceania, Cairo Museum, etc.

3. Chronogram for the implementation of the Colloquium project

No	Activities	Year
01	Sharing of the file by the interested parties at the Senegalese level, then at the African and international level	1 st trimester 2023
02	Validation of the project	3 rd trimester 2023
03	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commemoration of Godfather Day at UCAD and celebration of his life and work during the fortnight of December 1/15, 2023 	4 th trimester 2023

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eestablishment of the committee and commissions (science and technology, organization, arts and culture, communication, external relations and partnership, finance, etc.) 	
04	Continuation of preparatory work for the Colloquium	1st semester 2024
05	Implementation, organisation of the Colloquium	2 nd semester 2024

4. Coordination and consistency

Given the close connections between all the events and activities planned for the celebration of the centenary of Sheikh Anta Diop and the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Cairo Conference, there will need to be effective coordination between them, and synergy, in order to ensure relevance and success, and sustainably optimize its impact in Africa and beyond. In this regard, close collaboration and open cooperation will be required between the organizers and the governance structures of the two events.

Thus, the commemoration of Godfather's Day at UCAD and the celebration of his life and work during the fortnight of December 1/15, 2023 will be around the exploration, among other things, of the research issues raised and axes of intervention as defined at the Cairo Colloquium (see above: priority areas), while taking into account the themes and areas of work identified among the objectives and expected results for the Conference (see below:). Likewise, the results, conclusions and recommendations of the events planned at UCAD in the period 01/15 December 2023, should be used to better prepare the Egyptology conference which will be (co)organized in Dakar by the Khepera Association and the Ankh Review team, from December 26 to 29, 2023; while the results, conclusions and recommendations of this last event could be used to illuminate the path leading to the holding of the Conference

planned for end 2024, particularly with regard to the (re)framing of its goals and objectives and the refinement of its agenda. and program as well as its implementation modalities.

IV- COLLOQUIUM BODIES

The Colloquium is co-sponsored by UNESCO and the AU. The Scientific Committee is made up of representatives of institutions identified by UCAD (Dakar Cheikh Anta Diop University), in agreement with other partners and stakeholders. The Organizing Committee is also made up of personalities identified by UCAD (Dakar Cheikh Anta Diop University), in agreement with other partners and stakeholders.

Pending the establishment of these two bodies, the coordination of preparatory activities could be ensured by an Initiative Committee to be set up, if this proves necessary.

V. BUDGET COMPONENTS AND SOURCES OF FUNDING

1. Budget (estimated): two hundred million (200,000,000) Francs

This budget covers all costs for the celebration of Godfather Day and Centenary, in addition to the preparation, organization and monitoring of the Colloquium, including celebrations and the meeting planned for January 2024 and the publication of the proceedings of the Colloquium.

2. Contributors, sources of funding

- Chair of the African Renaissance
- African and Caribbean states
- Universities, research institutions and pan-African think tanks
- Patrons and other interested partners