

AFSC • INTELLECTUAL GENEALOGY

From knowledge to institution.

East African, continental and Black diaspora genealogies of intellectual self-determination — and the possibility of an African Food Studies Centre.

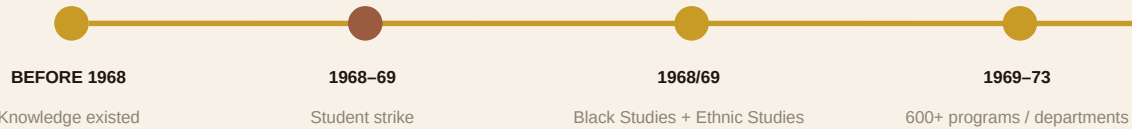
*“The knowledge already exists.
What becomes possible when it has an institution?”*



BLACK STUDIES · SAN FRANCISCO · 1968–69

The institution changed what Black intellectualism could do.

Black intellectual traditions already existed. The 1968–69 student struggle at San Francisco State demanded institutional power: the right to define the field, teach it, hire for it and carry it forward.



*An institution does not predetermine its graduates.
It creates conditions for possibilities to emerge.*



PEOPLE SHAPED BY THE BLACK / ETHNIC STUDIES ECOSYSTEM

Movement

ALICIA GARZA

M.A. Ethnic Studies (2017); co-created Black Lives Matter while a graduate student at SF State.

Culture

BOOTS RILEY

Black Studies & Cinema alumnus; musician and filmmaker whose work interrogates race, labour and capitalism.

Literature

DEVORAH MAJOR

Found an intellectual home in Black Studies; poet and novelist who later served as San Francisco Poet Laureate.

Public life

DANNY GLOVER

Participant in the 1968–69 strike; actor and activist who carried movement commitments into public culture.

Sources [1–6]: San Francisco State Africana Studies; College of Ethnic Studies; SFSU alumni and development pages.

A WIDER GENEALOGY

Many struggles. One underlying question.

How do people gain the institutional power to study, name and develop knowledge on their own terms?

1960s–70s

SOMALIA

LANGUAGE AS INFRASTRUCTURE

In what language will a new nation teach, administer and think?

1962

UGANDA

CONVENING A FIELD

Who defines African literature — and where do its writers meet?

1963

ETHIOPIA

STUDYING OURSELVES

What changes when a society builds an institution dedicated to studying itself?

1960s–70s

TANZANIA

POLITICAL ECONOMY

Who defines development, dependency and the postcolonial economy?

1968

KENYA

CURRICULUM AS POWER

Why should English literature be central and African literature peripheral?

1961 onward

GHANA

AFRICA-CENTRED SCHOLARSHIP

What should African scholarship become after political independence?

1968–69

SAN FRANCISCO

BLACK STUDIES

Who has the authority to define Black knowledge inside the university?

RELATED STRUGGLE

Intellectual
self-determination

Different histories. Different politics. A recurring demand: the right to decide what knowledge matters, who produces it and what institutions it should serve.

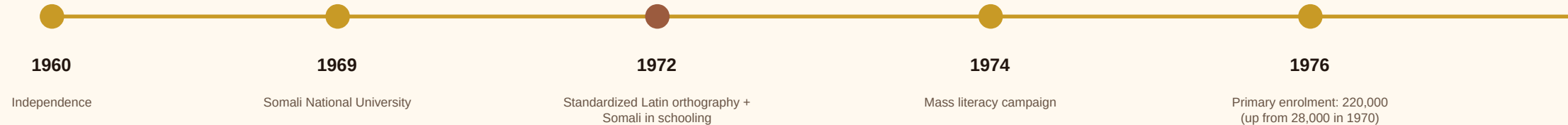
SOMALIA · A HORN OF AFRICA LESSON

When language became infrastructure.

For Somalia, post-independence institution-building was also a struggle over language, education and who could enter the knowledge system.

AF SOOMAALI

language · education · memory · public life



WHAT BECAME POSSIBLE

- schooling that could be indigenized through Somali
- wider participation in formal education
- national professional training and public capacity
- language becoming part of state and educational infrastructure

WHAT AFSC SHOULD ASK

- who defines the standard and the archive?
- how do oral, pastoral, religious and mobile knowledge systems enter fixed institutions?
- what should remain relational rather than extracted into text or data?

“What would an institution have to become to respect the architecture of pastoral knowledge?”

EAST AFRICA · INSTITUTIONAL EXPERIMENTS

Not one decolonial path — several.

Different institutions answered different parts of the postcolonial knowledge question. Together, they offer AFSC a richer genealogy than any single region or model.

KAMPALA · 1962

MAKERERE WRITERS CONFERENCE

Institution as meeting place

A continental gathering of African writers and critics — including Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and a young Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o — helped chart the terrain of African literature.

NAIROBI · 1968

DEPARTMENT OF LITERATURE

Curriculum as power

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Taban Lo Liyong and Oluwole Osofisan challenged the inherited English syllabus and argued for African literature to move from the margin to the centre.

ADDIS ABABA · 1963

INSTITUTE OF ETHIOPIAN STUDIES

Institution as research home

A multidisciplinary institute devoted to Ethiopia; its Journal of Ethiopian Studies has published since 1963 in Amharic and English.

DAR ES SALAAM · 1960s–70s

THE “DAR” INTELLECTUAL MILIEU

University as political-economy laboratory

UDSM became a major centre for debates on dependency, world systems and decolonisation, associated with thinkers such as Walter Rodney and Issa Shivji.

CONTINENTAL COUNTERPOINT · ACCRA, 1961

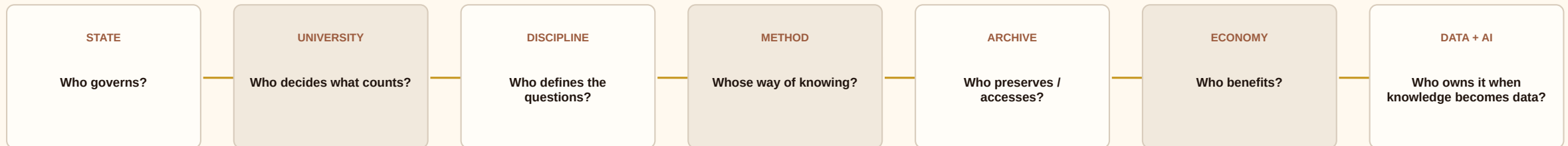
The University of Ghana's Institute of African Studies was founded to teach and research Africa and later articulated a tradition that privileges Africa-centred epistemologies.

Sources [9–13]: Makerere University; University of Nairobi; Addis Ababa University; Cambridge on UDSM; University of Ghana IAS.

POSTCOLONIALISM · THE UNFINISHED QUESTION

Political independence did not automatically decolonize knowledge.

The flag can change while the university, discipline, method, archive and economy still reproduce inherited hierarchies of knowledge.



THE STRUGGLE IS STILL EVOLVING

AFRIAK · 2024

CODESRIA fellowship program centres Indigenous and alternative knowledges and supports researchers working alongside knowledge keepers.

RHODES MUST FALL · 2015

Student movements reopened questions of curriculum, institutional power and decolonising knowledge production in African universities.

THE POSTCOLONIAL UNIVERSITY

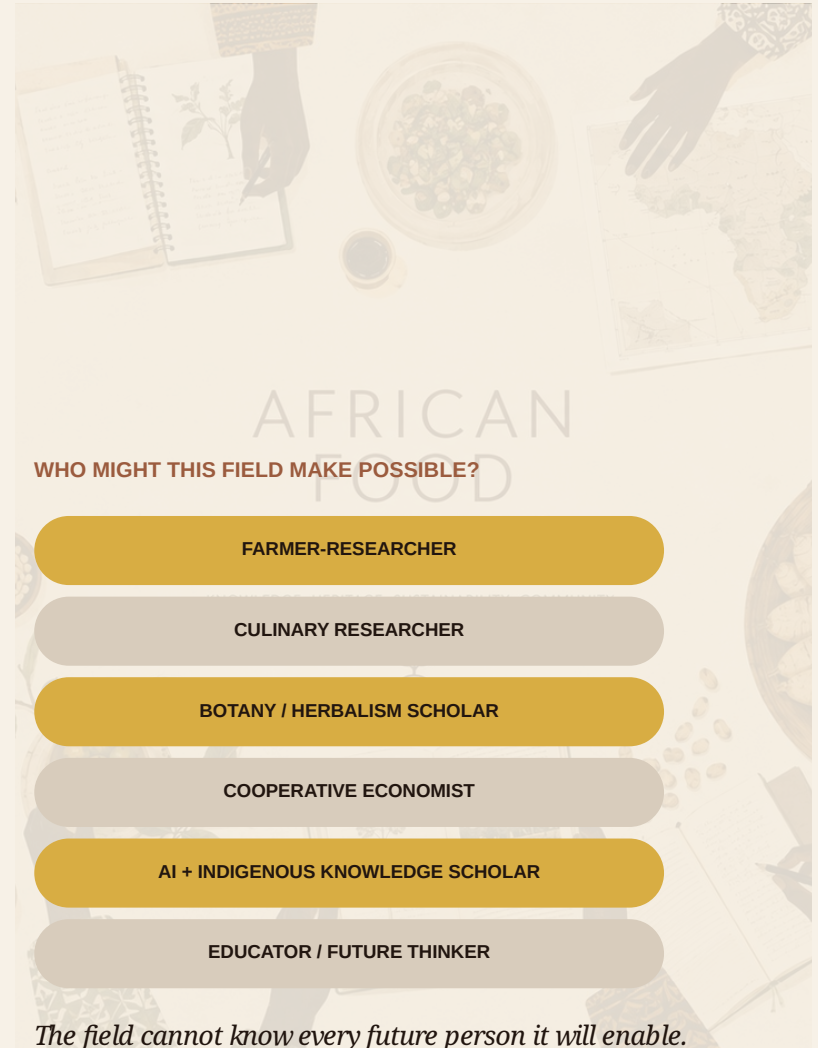
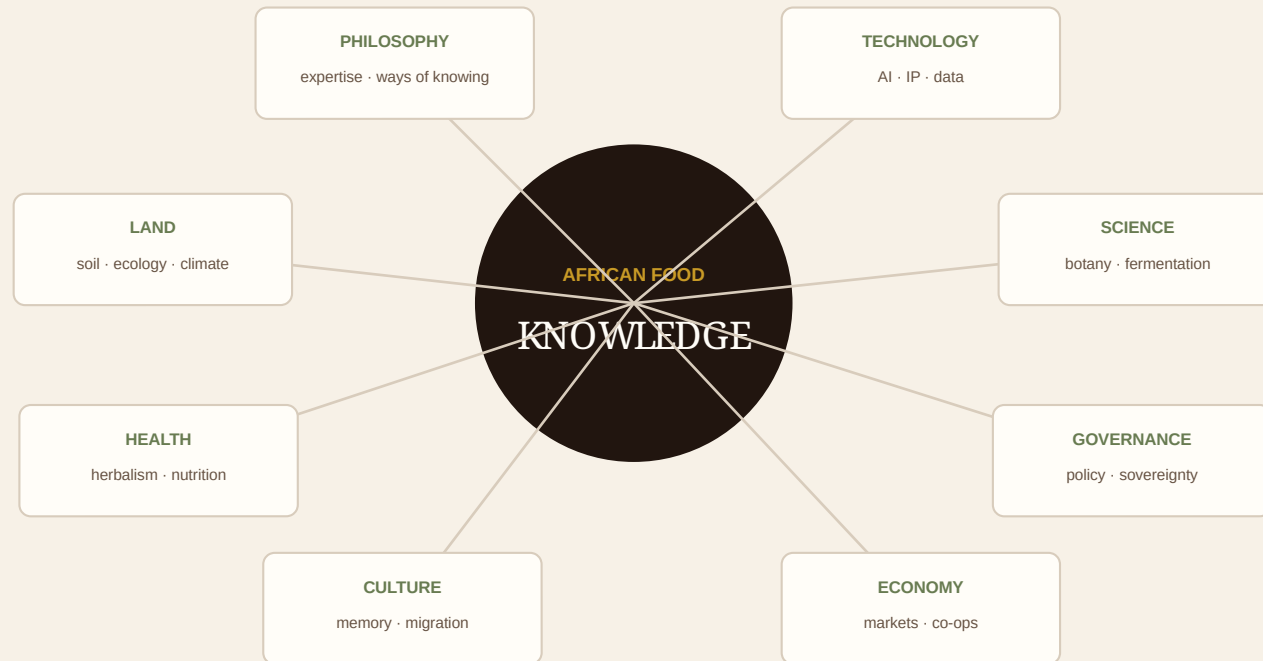
Adebayo Olukoshi's formulation remains useful: the question is what kind of African Studies African universities should build, and whose purposes it should serve.

AFSC enters an unfinished decolonial landscape — not a blank one.

WHY AFRICAN FOOD STUDIES?

Food is not only a subject.
It is a meeting place between knowledge systems.

African food should not only be an object studied by anthropology, agriculture, nutrition or economics. It can become a place from which new questions, methods and theories are generated.



WHO MIGHT THIS FIELD MAKE POSSIBLE?

FARMER-RESEARCHER

CULINARY RESEARCHER

BOTANY / HERBALISM SCHOLAR

COOPERATIVE ECONOMIST

AI + INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SCHOLAR

EDUCATOR / FUTURE THINKER

*The field cannot know every future person it will enable.
But it can build the conditions from which they can emerge.*

THE INQUIRY NOW

What should AFSC carry forward — and what should it refuse to reproduce?

This is why the KASI case study matters. The goal is not to copy an institution. It is to study how intellectual self-determination becomes governance, program design, sustainability and legacy.

1 · HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS

Black Studies
Somalia
Makerere / Nairobi / Dar
IES / IAS

What did institutions make possible? What did they narrow, compromise or leave unfinished?

2 · LIVING CASE

KASI

How does an African-centred epistemological position become governance, programs, relationships, funding and something that can outlive its founder?

3 · AFSC DESIGN

Foundational Blueprint

Epistemological charter · governance framework · knowledge stewardship / IP principles · 3-year research agenda · pilot roadmap

WHAT I AM ASKING FOR

KASI

institutional memory · guidance · boundaries · reciprocal output

RESEARCH PARTNERS

comparative study · academic grounding · methodological challenge

FUNDERS

protected research time · travel · documentation · contributor honoraria

CONVENERS

roundtables · learning spaces · pilot institutional experiments

Shape the inquiry before I build the institution.

SELECTED SOURCES & FURTHER READING

The brief is a beginning, not a closed canon.

The aim is to build a comparative research base that is continental, diasporic and attentive to different political histories — including the Horn and East Africa, not only West African and U.S. precedents.

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|---|--|
| <p>1 SFSU Africana Studies — History
africana.sfsu.edu/history</p> <p>2 SFSU College of Ethnic Studies — Our History
ethnicstudies.sfsu.edu/history</p> <p>3 SFSU — Alicia Garza alumna profile
develop.sfsu.edu/alicia-garza-speech</p> <p>4 SFSU Africana Studies — Boots Riley
africana.sfsu.edu/news-announce/sorry-bother-you-advance-screening-alum-boots-riley</p> <p>5 SFSU Alumni — Devorah Major
alumni.sfsu.edu/gator-greats/literature</p> <p>6 SF State Magazine — 1968–69 strike / Danny Glover
magazine.sfsu.edu/archive/archive/fall_08/strike2.html</p> <p>7 UNESCO — Education for All / Somalia
unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000221976</p> <p>8 Somali National University — History
snu.edu.so/about/history</p> | <p>9 Makerere University — First African Writers Conference, 1962
timeline.mak.ac.ug/events/event-32</p> <p>10 University of Nairobi — Department of Literature history
business.uonbi.ac.ke/uon-50/...department-literature...</p> <p>11 Addis Ababa University — Institute / Journal of Ethiopian Studies
aau.edu.et/institute/IES · ejol.aau.edu.et/index.php/JES/about</p> <p>12 Cambridge — The Dar School and decolonising knowledge
cambridge.org/core/...university-of-dar-es-salaam</p> <p>13 University of Ghana IAS — Director's message
ias.ug.edu.gh/content/directors-message</p> <p>14 CODESRIA — AFRIAK
codesria.org/afriak/</p> <p>15 UCT — Decolonising the curriculum
news.uct.ac.za/article/-/2016-06-13-decolonising-the-curriculum-its-time-for-a-strategy</p> <p>16 UCT — African Studies in the Post-Colonial University
humanities.uct.ac.za/.../Celebrating%20Africa%202012.pdf</p> |
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Research principle: use these as starting points, then deepen the case study with archival material, oral histories, African scholarship, institutional records and knowledge-holder perspectives.