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*Edited by Francesco Boldizzoni
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AFRICAN ENCOUNTERS WITH GLOBAL NARRATIVES

Patrick Manning

In 1994, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza published *A Modern Economic History of Africa. Vol. 1: The Nineteenth Century*. Published by the Council for Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the volume won the 1994 Noma Award for Publishing in Africa.¹ The work itself was the most substantial economic history yet published of nineteenth-century Africa, and appeared to open an era in which scholars born on the African continent would take leadership in the study of its economic history. The detailed synthesis of the literature made the case for the great diversity of African economic life, generated by African-led processes of growth emerging out of domestic economies and also by the undermining of African growth through the progressive impact of enslavement for overseas markets. CODESRIA had formed twenty years earlier as a collaborative body organized to link social scientists across the African continent; it appeared at this moment to be stepping forward in the field of economic history in addition to its established strength in policy studies.

In practice, the 1994 appearance of this book ended up as a significant but modest advance along an existing trajectory rather than as a real turning point. Zeleza, after the warm reception of his book, was drawn into other scholarly activities: he did not publish the projected second volume of his economic history.² His career paralleled that of several earlier writers on economic issues in Africa who began with key interventions in African economic history and then moved on to work in other fields.³ Similarly CODESRIA, while it gradually gained in strength as a publisher, was not able to follow up Zeleza's volume with other studies in economic history.

Zeleza's work echoed and expanded that of earlier African-born scholars who published single volumes addressing economic history: Dike 1956; Ly 1958; Afana 1966; Daaku 1970; Ekundare 1973. One outstanding example of continuous intervention and evolution in economic analysis is Samir Amin, who published his first book in 1965 and continues to produce. Amin, born in Egypt, educated in economics in France, and based in Dakar for the majority of his long career, has been remarkable in writing on both historical and contemporary economic affairs in Africa and the world (Amin 1965; Amin 2009). With these and some other exceptions, the predominant writers in African economic history have lived and worked outside of Africa. The literature in African economic history has yielded some works of real excellence, written by both continental and overseas authors, but it has not thrived in any

sense. Instead, African economic history has been marginal to the field of economic history generally and has been principally descriptive rather than analytical. While African history in general can be said to have developed with great success and achievement, economic history has remained marginal.

This chapter surveys the evolution of studies of African economic history and scrutinizes the debates within topical and especially temporal sub-fields of African economic history. The debates include whether the study of national-era (post-1960) African economies should incorporate data on the period before 1960 and, for earlier times, whether studies of Africa's overseas trade should be linked to socio-economic changes within Africa. To a remarkable extent, African economies have been analyzed through a variety of dualistic, two-sector models: domestic and international, traditional and modern, labor and capital, market and non-market, men's work and women's work.⁴ African populations have been seen as dense or sparse, innovative or resistant to change, and able to generate surplus and investment or not. The tendency to analyze in dichotomous terms, compounded by the rudimentary skills in economic analysis of many contributors, has limited the clarity and value of the literature.

Despite these limits, much has been learned about African economic history during the past half-century. While neither datasets nor economic analysis have developed in much detail, African economic history benefits from historians' descriptions of economic life and from the multidisciplinary character of African studies, which has led to participation of adjoining disciplines in the analysis of African economic life – notably anthropology, demography, and agricultural economics. As a result, empirical evidence has accumulated and the inherited dualisms have been steadily nuanced. At least ten literature reviews have been composed for African economic history, though the unevenness of the reviews reflects the unevenness of research in the field.⁵

The task in this chapter is to analyze economic history at the continental rather than the national level; the chapter also treats Africa as part of a global economic system. Africa is the largest geographic unit analyzed in this book. Indeed, the African continent's surface area is well over half that of Eurasia, and Africa is nearly as large as North and South America combined. The Africa we analyze here has not one but over fifty national units, with a total population of over one billion – nearly matching that of India and China and exceeding the total population of Europe. African population density is best seen as *moderate* on a world scale rather than *sparse*. While only one-tenth that of India the density is more than one-third that of Eurasia as a whole and exceeds that of the Americas and Russia. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, African population was stagnant while that of other regions grew substantially. Thus, the African proportion of Old World population declined from some 20 percent to 10 percent over two centuries, then regained most of its relative loss in the twentieth century (Manning 2014). In both population and economic activities, the African continent is best analyzed through its links with other regions and not only through its regional distinctiveness. Africa has often been presented as a distinct civilizational unit, but the idea of continental uniqueness tends to endorse belief in its backwardness and then to treating it as isolated from the world beyond its shores.

The topics addressed by economic historians of Africa stretch across the past five centuries. From 1500 to 1700 African continental trade fluctuated significantly, as did its maritime commerce and the extent of its large-scale polities. In coastal and in maritime zones, rising powers (Ottoman, Portuguese, Dutch, English, and French) gained hegemony, especially through a growing process of enslavement for overseas markets. The eighteenth century brought great expansion in the export slave trade resulting in population decline for West and Central Africa. In the nineteenth century slave-exports peaked and then declined, after which

enslavement on the mainland expanded to a peak, briefly setting up a new political economy that is not yet well understood.⁶ African exports of agricultural commodities and minerals grew steadily as free-trade imperialism came to dominate maritime relations. From the late nineteenth century, European powers seized virtually the whole of African territory. They soon raised taxes and reoriented flows of labor, commodities, and money. Peasantries survived and even expanded during the colonial era – incorporating those who escaped slavery. After a half-century of integration into metropolitan economies, most African territories won national independence between 1960 and 1975. Independent governments focused initially on Keynesian policies of social welfare, thus extending the postwar era of economic growth. From about 1975 African economies stagnated, governments found themselves in debt and under the tutelage of the World Bank, urbanization accelerated, and the peasantry weakened. Meanwhile, the indices of health and education in African nations, having improved markedly from the 1950s in response to postcolonial state policies of social welfare, improved at a slower rate through the 1980s. The southern half of the continent has been hurt seriously in economic and demographic terms by the HIV/AIDS epidemic from the 1990s to the present. Nevertheless, continental GDP per capita and foreign direct investment have returned to growth in the twenty-first century.

Imperial and colonial studies of African economies, to 1960

The literature on African economic history, for the purposes of this chapter, is taken to begin with studies conducted during the colonial era. Colonial administrations developed and published records of revenue, expenditure, and overseas trade; official ethnologists studied African social life. European-style universities first arose in South Africa and Northern Africa among European settler groups; their policies and documents laid the groundwork for later academic study of economic history.

The colonial perspective focused on levels of tax revenue, the value of exports, and growth rates of these two variables. Programs of infrastructure in ports and railroads led to concern for public finance; loans were usually paid off rapidly through forced savings from African tax revenue. Monetary policies varied among the colonial powers, but generally consisted of imposing the metropolitan currency on the colonies, demonetizing prior currencies. Labor policies focused on selecting the degree of forced labor to be imposed. State-supported programs of agricultural development or experiment were given high visibility but entailed modest investment, mostly funds from local tax revenue. From the 1890s through the 1920s, the various colonial governments pursued this largely extractive economic policy: as a result, African trade came to be rerouted entirely through the colonial powers. Works of early-colonial enthusiasts show that the early twentieth century was an era of economic growth for much of Africa (Sarraut 1923; McPhee 1926). Further reflection suggests that the gradual movement of millions of slaves into peasant status may have been as significant in contributing to that era of growth as were the policies of colonial government.

From the 1930s, colonial regimes adopted greater concern for welfare within their territories, at once through advances of economic thinking in the colonial administrations and in response to the organization of social movements and political pressures from the governed (Hancock, Lord Hailey). Studies of African population became more detailed and anthropological analysis gave closer attention to the perspectives of those under study. In this era two publications by South African scholars arguably launched the formal study of economic history on the continent: S. H. Frankel's 1938 study of capital investment traced capital imports especially for southern Africa; C. W. de Kiewiet's 1941 overview of South

African socio-economic history emphasized a narrative of British colonial expansion. Soon thereafter, at the other extreme of the continent, Charles Issawi published a 1947 economic history of Egypt focusing especially on the nineteenth century (Frankel 1938; DeKiewiet 1941; Issawi 1947).

As the Second World War ended, Asian colonies gained immediate independence, so that African territories remained as the principal European colonies. Within those colonies, economic and social policies ranged widely. At one extreme, the 1948 elections in South Africa brought *apartheid* policies; in parallel, Portuguese and Belgian colonial rule remained highly restrictive. At another limit, France allowed establishment of some trade union rights and built new infrastructure with a combination of Marshall Plan funds and local taxation, while British colonies too emphasized conciliation across class and racial lines and began to apply Keynesian policies of economic growth and regulation. The St-Lucian-born economist W. A. Lewis consulted with the government of Gold Coast and completed a 1953 report on industrialization; out of it he developed his vision of "economic development with unlimited supplies of labour" a two-sector model (based on capitalist and subsistence sectors) that linked economic growth and international trade. This model has remained influential in the global literature to the present (Lewis 1954, 1963).

The issue of macroeconomic analysis and accompanying historical statistics arose in Africa as elsewhere from the 1940s. In an important innovation, Phyllis Deane began study of British colonial social accounting in 1941 and published a 1953 book on social accounting for Northern Rhodesia but her work was dropped in practice when Northern Rhodesia was incorporated into the Central African Federation.⁷ Little effort was devoted to calculating retrospective national accounts and GDP for African territories, but two works demonstrated that the task was feasible if difficult. P. N. C. Okigbo created national accounts for the period 1950–57 in Nigeria (Okigbo 1962). Okigbo recognized the complexity and limitations of African national accounts, but strongly supported the creation of time series.⁸ In parallel, Maldant and Haubert calculated national income estimates for the French territories of West and Central Africa from 1947 through to 1965 (Maldant and Haubert 1973). Their study was anachronistic in that the French colonial federations that they analyzed had been Balkanized into independent republics in 1956, yet they managed to show the feasibility of estimating national income back to 1947.⁹ One might seek to argue that pre-independence African economies relied too heavily on non-market production and rural institutions for historical statistics and national income analysis to be of any value. However, historical analysis shows continuity rather than dramatic change in productive systems and institutions with the shift to the postcolonial era during which such statistics have been universally produced (Helleiner 1966; Manning 1982, 1990–91). Lack of estimation of time series for African national accounts was more a matter of lack of funding than of a sudden and sharp change from informal economies to modernity (Berry 1992).

Meanwhile, marketing boards for agricultural exports, first created in the 1930s, expanded as a device for appropriating revenue from peasants in order to invest it in infrastructure (Bauer 1954). Other areas of research and debate in African economic life included labor policy and labor migration, agricultural policy and peasant societies, and debates within economic anthropology on the nature of African rationality. Studies in economic anthropology, often with a historical dimension, developed substantially during the 1950s and 1960s (Herskovits 1952; Hill 1963; Meillassoux 1964). In the same era, historians began to publish studies of Africa's precolonial maritime and commercial history, including the works of Abdoulaye Ly on the *Compagnie du Sénégal*, K. G. Davies on the *Royal Africa Company*, and K. O. Dike on nineteenth-century trade and politics in the Niger Delta (Ly 1955; Dike 1956; Davies 1957).

Independence: the era of nationalism, growth, and Keynesianism, 1960–75

By the end of 1960 more than half of Africa's people and nations had gained political independence. Rapidly, a new national perspective replaced the colonial perspective in economic analysis and in social science generally. Multidisciplinary research in African Studies had begun in the last years of the colonial era, but accelerated greatly with the independence of African states: African Studies programs formed especially in the UK, France, and the USA, but also in Belgium, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Sweden, the Soviet Union, and Canada. Similarly, as African universities were established and gained strength, African Studies programs formed in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Senegal and, with a somewhat different dynamic, in South Africa. The innovation was that scholars in distinct disciplines worked relatively closely with one another. Thus economic studies of Africa have included, since this time, links among the disciplines of economics, history, anthropology, agricultural economics, and population studies.

International trade remained the principal focus in studies of African economies, both historical and contemporary. But the unit of analysis now became the nation state rather than the empire, and such macroeconomic variables as GDP began to be discussed; with time the discussion extended to levels of public debt. In international trade the focus changed as well: from the colonial concern with the value of exports to a national concern with trade balances. Microeconomic analysis also shifted in postcolonial times, adding firm-level studies of technology, finance, and output to the earlier institutional and policy-oriented studies of projects.

The shifts in perspective with independence were smaller in related fields where scholars had earlier established clear contact with African agriculturists and their perspectives. The works of agronomists thus provide substantial continuity in interpretive frameworks (Jones 1959; Miracle 1966, 1967; Boserup 1966, 1970). The outstanding exception was that of René Dumont, who provided a stinging critique of postcolonial agricultural policy for failing to break more fully with colonial policies (Dumont 1962). The study of economic anthropology flowered from the 1950s to the 1970s (Hill 1963; Meillassoux 1971). In addition, the literature exploring precolonial African trade and politics, written from a socio-political perspective, that emphasized the agency of African participants, continued up to the mid-1970s (Pankhurst 1961; Gray and Birmingham 1970; Daaku 1970; and Martin 1972).

Study of African economic history expanded first among scholars trained in economics, and somewhat later among scholars trained in history. Among economists, major publications appeared from the mid-1960s (Houghton 1964; Amin 1965, 1971; Afana 1966; Baldwin 1966; Helleiner 1966; Kay and Hymer 1972; Brett 1973; Berry 1975; Birnberg and Resnick 1975). For the French African colonies, a major effort at data collection and macroeconomic statistical analysis for the era 1947–60 had ended up as an anachronism. The federations of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa, combined for analysis by Maldant and Haubert into the "African West" (*l'Ouest africain*), were dissolved by a 1956 act of the French government into nineteen separate units that became independent nations by 1960 (Maldant and Haubert 1973). During the transition to African independence, economic analysis included some further efforts to lay the groundwork for retrospective national accounts but these were not sustained (Okigbo 1965; Szereszewski 1965; Helleiner 1966). As a result, African countries initially had no time series on GDP. Only for South Africa has this distinction between colonial and national perspectives on the economy been resolved sufficiently to provide a continuous set of economic statistics going back as far as the early twentieth century (Houghton 1964).

Scholars trained in history soon joined the field and eventually became the principal contributors to the literature in African economic history. The initial wave of such works, appearing in the 1970s, came from historians with knowledge of economic principles (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1972; Latham 1973; Ekundare 1973; Hopkins 1973; Curtin 1975; Alpers 1975). In general, the outlook of these works focused on African social change. Subsequent postcolonial historiography was influenced by a number of external shocks. These included drought (in West, East, and Southern Africa), civil war (in the Congo and Nigeria), continuing struggles for national liberation (in Angola and South Africa), and growing Cold War confrontation in several African regions. In the 1970s, early programs in structural adjustment designed by the World Bank – to ensure that foreign debt would be repaid – led to cutbacks in Keynesian policies of social conciliation and reinforced the overall slowing in economic growth that had begun to take hold. These post-independence events of the 1960s and early 1970s brought substantial shifts in the emerging literature on African economic history.

One result was that radical nationalist and Black Power movements arose in the late 1960s, fueled by the insufficiencies of independence-era reform and a growing African critique of neocolonialism. These movements linked up with the concurrent global explosion in New Left, neo-Marxian, dependency-oriented studies.¹⁰ Andre Gunder Frank's phrase, "the development of underdevelopment," while coined for the experience of colonial Latin America, had soon brought an impact to Africa with Walter Rodney's study of underdevelopment in Africa in somewhat later times (Rodney 1972).¹¹ Immanuel Wallerstein, a sociologist whose early work centered on the politics of newly independent states, turned in 1968 to focus on an analysis of the rise of Atlantic capitalism (Wallerstein 1974). Samir Amin and Giovanni Arrighi, each of whose early work focused on colonial African territories, found that Marxian and neo-Marxian economic paradigms offered a new potential for linking the national and colonial eras in economic studies that gradually expanded to a global scale (Amin 1973; Arrighi and Saul 1973). A literature on the creation of underdevelopment through colonialism arose particularly on Kenya, contesting earlier views of traditional societies being brought willingly or unwillingly to modernization. The analysis was reformulated to pose the question of the timing, the nature, and the causes of the African transition to capitalism (Brett 1973; Leys 1974; Wolff 1974; Kitching 1980; Langdon 1981).

Other scholars were working within the emerging framework of political economy specializing in various period studies of class formation focused on the national period (e.g. Bernstein and Campbell 1985); studies of underdevelopment focused on the colonial period (e.g. Brett 1973; but see Leys 1974); and studies of the articulation of modes of production centered on the precolonial era (e.g. Dupré and Rey 1973; but see Rey 1971). The same era of intellectual and political turmoil brought greater attention to studies of slavery – in the Americas, in Africa, and linking the two Atlantic shores. Expanding a literature that had emphasized studies of slavery in the Americas, Philip Curtin's 1969 book on the volume of the Atlantic slave trade opened up a huge area of study on linkages across the Atlantic: controversy began immediately and further research continued for decades. Eventually it became clear that these were studies of maritime African economic history.¹²

A wide-ranging field of African economic history appeared to be forming: it showed the potential of linkage to economics, social history, agronomy, and anthropology, with work on both continental and maritime history spanning neoclassical and Marxian outlooks and paradigms, and spanning several centuries of change (Herskovits and Harwitz 1964). On the African continent, CODESRIA took form in 1973 as an organization linking social science scholars of anglophone and francophone Africa; the Association of African Historians formed in

the same year.¹³ At the same time and overseas a Ford Foundation program provided research fellowships in Africa for roughly ten scholars in 1973, and brought the same scholars together for a workshop in Madison in the summer of 1974. The participants included several scholars of African birth who went on to publish their work.¹⁴ Curtin's economic history of Senegambia appeared in print in the wake of this program (Curtin 1975). While the book was widely praised for its deep exploration of written and oral sources, differences arose between those who gave it full praise and those who argued that it underemphasized the negative influence of the slave trade and misstated the role of imported goods in the domestic economy. The skeptics included French academics who drew on work of Senegalese scholars and an American economist.¹⁵

Economic historians of both colonial and precolonial Africa showed increasing interest in firms, both African and European (Hopkins 1973; Berry 1975; Coquery-Vidrovitch 1975). Some writers breached the divide between precolonial and colonial economic history; their analyses focused on trade, government policies, and on studies of commercial firms (Hill 1963; Hopkins 1973). Connections to American-influenced cliometric history appeared in a few studies (Birnberg and Resnick 1975; Manning 1982). Overall, this era included initiatives in studies of African economies from a number of perspectives, with the possibility that they might have interacted productively. Such studies did much to open up discussion of long-term economic continuity and change and about the periodization of African economic history.

This first wave of studies in African economic history posed substantial challenges to the various sorts of dualism that had dominated colonial-era thinking. The scrutiny of African rationality no longer occupied great spaces in the literature. One of the major topics within that debate, the backward-sloping labor supply curve, died down after effective explication and refutation of the target-worker thesis (Miracle and Fetter). An anthropological dualism distinguishing market from non-market behavior declined after debate on the economic-historical terrain (Dalton, Hopkins). Other debates arose on African modes of production and on the relative contributions of the state and the private sector to African economic growth (Coquery-Vidrovitch 1969). More broadly, discussion continued on the question of whether economic change in Africa has resulted more from external (usually European) influences, from autonomous African developments, or from some interaction of the two. These discussions in African economic history, addressing various eras and topics, appeared to be expanding in scope and included a growing number of African-born scholars. Anthony Hopkins, whose *Economic History of West Africa* (1973) represented a bold step in synthesizing precolonial and colonial economic history, discerned among economists a rising interest in economic history, as a response to the failure of many short-range plans for rapid growth and development. Hopkins's judgment, however, turned out to have been premature.

Structural adjustment, neoliberalism, and new nations 1976–95

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the modest momentum built up in African economic history continued to bring new studies. J. Forbes Munro published a skillful overview of Africa and the international economy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, based on British Parliamentary Papers (Munro 1976). Bogumil Jewsiewicki led in publication of a collection of articles on the Great Depression in the Belgian Congo (Jewsiewicki 1977); Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch led a parallel collection on the Great Depression in French colonies. Several monographs on African economic history appeared in this era: a study of the rise and persistence of groundnut exports from Northern Nigeria; a regional economic history of Central Niger focusing on the nineteenth century; a long-term study of Dahomey

(Benin Republic) combining cliometric and other quantitative economic history with long-term growth analysis and social history; a survey of Egyptian economic history focusing on the nineteenth century; and two studies of the South African economy from the late nineteenth century (Hogendorn 1977; Baier 1980; Natrass 1981; Manning 1982; Issawi 1982; Yudelman 1983; see also Cooper 1980 and Sheriff 1987). The US Social Science Research Council commissioned a review of Africa and the world economy and then a review of African agriculture (Cooper 1981; Berry 1984).

This expansion of studies in African economic history, however, clearly came to an end as the 1980s proceeded. A forceful campaign of the World Bank in the early 1980s, reducing African public expenditures, had the effect of undermining studies of African economic history. The campaign brought imposition of Structural Adjustment plans on African economies, privileging World Bank economists over national ministers of finance, and pressing for massive cuts in public services in order to ensure rapid repayment of huge debts that had grown up during the 1970s. In the 1981 Berg Report, named after its principal author, Harvard economist Elliott Berg, the World Bank generally condemned African governments for following mistaken, state-centered economic policy. In the same breath, Berg equally rejected the previous policies of colonial governments.¹⁶ In practice, the World Bank showed no interest in the African past; policy was to start anew.

A new dualism became increasingly explicit: it divided Africa's past at the year 1960 and separated contemporary Africa (the national era) from historical Africa (the colonial and precolonial eras).¹⁷ In this dualistic vision, the contemporary era was the preserve of economic development and economic policy experts, while the historical period was relegated to historians and anthropologists for antiquarian study. The successful imposition of this intellectual dichotomy cut African economic history off from the economic analysis of contemporary Africa, cut it off from the economic history of other world regions, and left studies of African economic history to atrophy.¹⁸ Looking back to this era with today's terminology, one may say that an expanding neoliberal outlook conveyed the impression that African economic history was irrelevant.

The academic ostracism of African economic history was reinforced by shifts in global and African conditions that restricted resources for historical investigation. The field became further restricted in response to African economic difficulties, global conflicts, and widespread ideological change. The October 1973 war between Israel and its Arab neighbors led to a boycott in petroleum sales from nations of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to Western powers. Petroleum prices remained at peak levels until 1984; in addition, interest rates (especially for African countries) rose in the 1970s and peaked in the early 1980s, so that most African nations ended up in severe international debt. Serious droughts affected West, Central, and East Africa. The Portuguese colonial empire ended with the revolution of 1975, but the aftermath brought expansion of Cold War struggles in various parts of Africa. The World Bank imposed increasingly stringent structural adjustment policies that cut back public expenditure throughout the continent. From the mid-1970s, one sort of austerity after another limited growth in African countries. The virtual halt to foreign investment, with the exception of investment in petroleum drilling, further limited growth. One result was that African universities, already restricted by governments as sites of potential political protest, were cut back for fiscal reasons.¹⁹

The Berg Report and Structural Adjustment Programs brought fragmentation as well as limits to the discourse on African economic history: scholars pursuing the various approaches to African economic life fell out of contact with one another. The potential collaborations among economists, historians, agronomists, and other scholars in the study of African

economies gave way to isolated work by scholars in segregated fields. Studies of post-1960 economic change, directed by economists, advanced without reference to the preceding era. From this time, while many African students took up the study of economics, virtually none of these students took up economic history – nor even long-term approaches to economic policy. Economic historians of Africa met for a time in Britain through the Third World Economic History group and in Paris through the Laboratoire Connaissance du Tiers-Monde, but no regular meetings persisted. Attempts to link precolonial and colonial history, Marxian and neoclassical analysis, anthropological and historical data, or African maritime history and that of the continent, received even less attention than before.

Nor did African economic historians manage to establish and sustain a strong forum for publication and debate. A journal established in 1976, *African Economic History*,²⁰ gave primacy to social history, agricultural economics, and studies of colonial administrative policy; it privileged descriptive studies and economic anthropology rather than sharpened debates in economic history.²¹ The articles, roughly equally divided between those covering colonial and precolonial Africa, tended to focus on trade, production, firm studies, and government policy. Slavery and slave trade, comprising a major issue in precolonial economic history, accounted for a small proportion of the articles in *African Economic History*. In sum, from this time most of the central contributions in African economic history were by scholars with little knowledge of economics. *Economic History Review* maintained some recognition of Africa especially during the 1980s when A. G. Hopkins served as the journal's co-editor. African articles published in the *Journal of Economic History* were mostly on the slave trade, an issue readily linked to the journal's extensive coverage of slavery in the American South.²² The *Review of African Political Economy (ROAPE)*, founded in 1973, had by the early 1980s turned its radical analysis away from historical issues to focus on contemporary issues.²³

Scholars who had begun their work in African economic history moved to adjoining fields. A. G. Hopkins joined with P. J. Cain to propose an interpretation of the British Empire in general for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Cain and Hopkins 1980, 1993). Patrick Manning moved primarily to studies of African migration and demographic history, which enjoyed a period of productive activity under the leadership of Joel Gregory (Fetter 1983, 1990; Cordell and Gregory 1987; Manning 1990; Cordell et al. 1996). Nevertheless, a few historical studies of remarkable originality appeared in this era: a global study of the cowrie trade, encompassing the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic; a twentieth-century study of the subordination of peasant farmers to the urban, professional lives of their children; and a continental synthesis of African poverty in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Hogendorn and Johnson 1985; Berry 1985; Iliffe 1987). In some cases the turmoil of the time led to rapid responses in the scholarly literature: Gerald Helleiner focused his considerable energies on analysis of the contemporary African debt crisis (Helleiner 1981; see also Helleiner 1966). In another instance, several scholars responded to drought in the Saharan fringe and Central Africa with historical analyses tracing both the periodic episodes of drought and the social responses in earlier times (Lovejoy and Baier 1975; Dias 1981; Miller 1982; Becker 1985).

Additional studies appeared in fields allied to economic history. Thus, while the sustained discourse on economic history dissipated, works of relevance to economic history continued to appear. Jacques Marseille's critique of the ineffectiveness of French empire pursued this trend from a critical perspective (Marseille 1984). D. K. Fieldhouse defended the effectiveness of empire with the argument that economic decolonization brought arrested development. (Fieldhouse 1986). Labor history, both precolonial and colonial, developed a linkage to economic history; although it remains entirely separate from economic history for some regions (Gutkind et al. 1978; Van Onselen 1982; Freund 1984, 1988; Coquery-Vidrovitch and Lovejoy

1985; Phimister 1988). Studies in business history appeared in a brief flurry, focusing both on expatriate firms (Hopkins 1973; Coquery-Vidrovitch 1975; Fieldhouse 1978) and on African firms and enterprises (Berry 1975; Forest 1983). Social history analyses held clear relevance for economic history (Isaacman 1972; Gran 1979). And social scientists in adjoining disciplines published work that clearly reinforced contemporary study in economic history (Schatz 1977; Bates 1983). Among them, Keith Hart continued to develop a notion of informal economy that later gained wide currency (Hart 1982). In the compiling of data resources, Marion Johnson's work of coding all British trade with Africa from 1689 into the nineteenth century was the principal advance in this arena (Johnson 1990). Generally, these were continuing works by scholars who had entered the field earlier, rather than publications by junior scholars.²⁴

The most impressive body of Africa-related data assembled from 1975 to 1995 that was relevant to African economic history in this period was that on the volume of Atlantic slave trade. From Curtin's initial synthetic census through Jean Mettas's complete listing of eighteenth-century French slave voyages to David Eltis's work on the nineteenth-century slave trade, this work demonstrates that a sustained and intensive effort can succeed in creating a historical database upon which a revealing historical analysis can be constructed (Curtin 1969; Mettas 1978, 1984; Eltis 1987). This work linked the issues of slavery, commerce, and migration for Africa, the Americas, Europe, and the Atlantic (Lovejoy 1983; Miller 1988, 1985; Manning 1990). However, this research remained an isolated field of study in that it did not become part of the literature on migration and only slowly became integrated into study of Africa's continental history.²⁵

To return to the point at which this chapter began, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza's extensive 1994 economic history of nineteenth-century Africa brought a flurry of excitement and hopes for revival in the field, through its attention to shifting economic structures and the agency of merchants and producers within the continent. The book had the inherent capacity to reinvigorate the field, but interest and energy had simply expired. Previously and at a somewhat similar level, Ralph Austen's 1987 continental survey of African economic history, while it gave careful attention to the various schools and approaches within the field, and while it gave a long-term survey of the continent's economic change, did not succeed in launching debate or renewed research (Austen 1987).

Post-Cold War Africa, since 1995

For the last twenty years of the twentieth century, per capita GDP stagnated and commonly declined in Africa. In the 1990s the HIV/AIDS pandemic brought a collapse in life expectation in southern and eastern Africa, though lifespans rose again in the early twenty-first century. Remarkably, and despite the continent's recurring crisis and disaster, African societies had achieved striking overall advances in certain indices of social welfare by the early years of the twenty-first century. By 2010, the continent's land was able to support over four times as many people as it had in 1950, notwithstanding repeated food crises and famines, and the average lifespan had risen by one-third, from 35 to 50 years. Aggregate GDP had increased at rates roughly equal to those of population growth. In the same time period, adult literacy had risen from under 5 percent to near 50 percent (and most of the literacy was in second languages). Higher education too had advanced remarkably: by 2010, Nigeria was able to claim 100 universities within its borders. An extraordinary process of urbanization unfolded, bringing the African level of urbanization to some 40 percent, above that of Asia. In the virtual absence of public investment, communal facilities for health, education, and transportation were treated and maintained.

How did this contradictory set of socio-economic changes emerge? The contrast of stagnation in GDP per capita, on the one hand, and African advance in social conditions and community development, on the other, is worthy of deeper study. A related question is whether GDP, in its standard calculations, is an adequate measure of African economic growth or social welfare.²⁶ Further, the apparent contrast between the nature of African economic change in the late twentieth century and that of other large regions of the world should call for study of African economies, both in their own contemporary terms and in terms of their trajectory over the past century or two. But the weakness of research institutions within Africa and the weakness of African-oriented economic history outside of the continent held back detailed documentation or analysis.

The era since 1995 has seen a gradual return of interest in the economic history of Africa. One may argue that, by 2010, the level of interest and activity had become roughly equal to that thirty years earlier when the field gained its first head of steam. The steps in academic advance, nevertheless, have been gradual. For instance, works published in the late 1990s addressing a range of historical and contemporary issues were valuable but small in number.²⁷ Meanwhile, the larger number of studies in African social history contributed to a revival of interest in economic history. David Eltis led in assembling a comprehensive dataset on Atlantic slave trade, published in 1999, which greatly facilitated research on the slave trade and its implications from the sixteenth century forward; a revised and expanded edition of this work appeared online in 2010 (Eltis et al. 1999, 2010). For West Africa, studies in the social history of enslavement and emancipation expanded (Diouf 2003; Scully and Paton 2005). For the Indian Ocean, Gwyn Campbell edited several conference volumes on slave trade, while other scholars published historical volumes focusing on East African labor history, identity, and consumption behavior (Allen 1999; Larson 2000; Campbell 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Alpers et al. 2005; Prestholdt 2008). More broadly, global studies in migration history, led by Jan and Leo Lucassen, accepted the arguments of Africanists that the African slave trade and other African migration should be explicitly incorporated into global migration history (Manning 2005; Lucassen et al. 2010).

An expanded number of economic history studies appeared in the new century. Joseph Inikori's study of the role of African trade in the British industrial revolution advanced the Atlantic dimension of economic history (Inikori 2002; see also Manning 2006). Gareth Austin's numerous studies of labor in Ghana culminated in a substantial work on the transition from slavery to free labor (Austin 2005). Gwyn Campbell's economic history of nineteenth-century Madagascar identified patterns of trade, production, and social structure that appeared to be relevant for other large African states (Campbell 2005b). Much new knowledge on African economic history was accumulating.²⁸ Promising trends appeared from several directions, suggesting that the scattered elements of research in African economic history might eventually be gathered into a program of sophisticated analysis. First, Master's theses and doctoral dissertations prepared in African universities over the years began to become more widely available, for instance through the process of digitization at the Université Cheikh-Anta Diop in Dakar.²⁹ Second, A. I. Asiwaju, working in association with the leadership of the Association of African Historians, developed a call for comparative studies within the African continent as a way of promoting scholarship on Africa to connect to studies in global history (Asiwaju 2003–4).³⁰

A third trend arose from debates within neoclassical economic theory. Daron Acemoglu and colleagues took up the issue of the long-term causes of contemporary poverty, arguing that early deprivation could show up centuries later as slow economic growth (Acemoglu et al. 2001). Nathan Nunn offered an explicitly African application, arguing that early impoverishment through slave trade led across the centuries to slow growth in certain regions

of modern Africa, and A. G. Hopkins responded that such research might indeed bring a revival of studies in African economic history (Nunn 2008; Hopkins 2009). In two further major advances, African-born scholars now became prominent in the revival of economic historical studies, and scholarship began to emphasize overlaps and interconnections of economic history (before 1960) and economic development (after 1960). Tetteh Kofi and Asayehgn Desta published a volume on agronomy linking history and policy (Kofi and Desta 2008). Ellen Hillborn and Erik Green published a Swedish-language continental survey of economic and social history (Hillborn and Green 2010). A 2010 conference in Accra, sponsored by Harvard University and including several African-born authors, addressed issues of African poverty, and resulted in an interdisciplinary volume (Akyeampong et al. 2014). A 2013 conference in Vancouver, organized by economist Morten Jerven, focused on African economic development but included several presentations by economic historians. A key innovation was the participation by several heads of statistical offices in African nations, who joined in the discussion of how to improve data on economic change in the postcolonial era.³¹

In another area of change, institutions providing support for study of African economic history began to emerge. Annual meetings of an African Economic History Workshop have taken place in Europe beginning 2005. Further, the African Economic History Network, founded in 2011, has maintained an initially high level of activity, including support for the annual workshops, working papers, newsletters, and a textbook.³² In other institutional advances, the International Economic History Association chose to hold its sixteenth triennial congress at the University of Stellenbosch, in South Africa, in 2012, and a global historical organization of African-based scholars formed in Ilorin, Nigeria, in 2009.³³

The numerous recent shifts in the study of African economic history can be summarized in three points. First is the growing recognition of the linkage of issues in contemporary economic development with pre-1960 economic patterns. Second is the recognition of the significance of African issues in understanding economic-historical dynamics more broadly. Third is the formation of institutions for study of the field linking the work of scholars on the continent and elsewhere. One may be optimistic about the future of African studies in economic history and their integration into economic studies generally. At the same time, it is prudent to give attention to intellectual and analytical costs that result from the three decades in which studies of African economic history were, in effect, actively discouraged by the economics profession. One must also recognize the work that remains to be done in data collection, data creation, and in drawing on the records of African communities, past and present, to understand their perspectives and their concerns on economic issues.

Notes

- 1 Zeleza, born in Harare of Malawian parents, studied in Rhodesia and London before completing his PhD at Dalhousie University. The Noma Award for Publishing in Africa has been supported by a major Japanese publishing firm since 1980.
- 2 Zeleza ultimately served a term as president of the African Studies Association of the USA.
- 3 Phyllis Deane, Giovanni Arrighi, and Immanuel Wallerstein, among others, fall into this category.
- 4 Further dualistic typologies include the dual economy, plural society, parallel or underground economy, monetary vs. non-monetary economy, and "traditional" vs. "modern" economy – as well as the notion that African and non-African ideas about economic life must be fundamentally different.
- 5 Cohen 1971; Alpers 1973; Hopkins 1975; Cooper 1981; Austen 1981; 1985; Freund 1984; Berry 1984; Manning 1987; Iliffe 1999; and Hopkins 2009.
- 6 These large-scale systems of slavery appeared to be disconnected from global commodity markets. For the best analyses of the political economy of large-scale, nineteenth-century slavery, see Meillassoux 1991; Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993; Campbell 2005a; and Médard and Doyle 2007.

- 7 For a study including the early work of Phyllis Deane in the context of the development of British social accounting under Colin Clark, see Speich (2011). Speich is insightful in exploring the politics of social accounting in the UK and the United States, but took at face value and without further investigation certain colonial assertions of the backwardness of African economies. See also Deane 1948 and Deane 1953.
- 8 "In Nigeria, in the years immediately following World War II, the United Kingdom Colonial Office made limited efforts to determine the level of capital formation and to assess the balance of trade. After the first set of national accounts was prepared (for 1950–51), a few attempts were made to provide time series. When we came to work on a time series for 1950–57 it was clear from our discussion with Government officials that the potentialities of a fully articulated series of national accounts as a background to policy making were not fully appreciated. Our aim was therefore to provide a consistent time series for Nigeria to enable the user of the data to see the direction (if not the magnitude) of the changes over time in the economy as a whole as well as in the major sectors" (Okigbo 1962: 3). See also Prest and Stewart 1953 and Prest 1957.
- 9 As these authors argued (p. 15), "Les méthodes de la comptabilité économique sont utilisées depuis longtemps. . . . Mais on en voit souvent l'application refusée aux économies du Tiers-Monde. Ces économies, dit-on, du fait de leur dépendance vis-à-vis de l'Extérieur, et d'une certaine désarticulation du secteur moderne et du secteur traditionnel, n'auraient pas de personnalité nationale. Il serait donc vain d'en tenter la description organique et de leur supposer une quelconque stabilité de comportement. . . . Nous voudrions que notre étude contribue, dans son domaine, à écarter cette interprétation pessimiste et à montrer la possibilité d'une analyse quantifiée de l'économie des pays en voie de développement."
- 10 As another sign of the times, conflicts at the 1969 African Studies Association meeting in Montreal resulted in its split and the formation of the African Heritage Studies Association and the Canadian Association of African Studies.
- 11 Frank's interpretation of underdevelopment in Latin America focused in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; Rodney's vision of underdevelopment in Africa centered on the nineteenth century (Frank 1967; Rodney 1972).
- 12 For a list of major collective works on slave trade see Manning (1996). For a worldwide bibliography of studies on slavery see Miller (1985).
- 13 The Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA) was formed with headquarters in Dakar and an office in Kampala. This organization, sustained by philanthropic support from Africa and the North Atlantic, served initially to encourage communication among English- and French-speaking African scholars.
- 14 Participants in the 1974 summer workshop, and their institutions at the time, included the director, Philip Curtin (University of Wisconsin), as well as Babatunde Agiri (University of Lagos), E. J. Alagoa (University of Port Harcourt), Ralph A. Austen (University of Chicago), Sara S. Berry (Boston University), Margaret Jean Hay (Wellesley College), A. G. Hopkins (University of Birmingham), Paul E. Lovejoy (York University), Patrick Manning (Cañada College), Abdul Sheriff (University of Dar es Salaam),
- 15 Reviews ranged from the full appreciation by B. Marie Perinbam in *American Historical Review* 81 (1976): 922–3, to the more critical views of Claude Meillassoux, in *Journal of African History* 18 (1977): 449–52; Jean Suret-Canale, in *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 11 (1977): 125–34; and Sara S. Berry, in *African Economic History*, No. 1 (1976), 114–18.
- 16 "Modern economic growth has a relatively brief history in Sub-Saharan Africa. Colonial administration established itself in most cases in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Economic expansion came quickly in a few countries – Ghana, Senegal, Uganda, and Zaire, for example – and spread elsewhere later, with interruptions during World Wars I and II and the depression of the 1930s. However, general and sustained development came only after World War II in most of the countries of the region" (World Bank 1981: 11).
- 17 In fact the periodization of Africa's economic past was seen in more complex terms, in that the colonial era was treated as distinctive and the precolonial era was sometimes divided into sub-periods. But the divide at 1960 became primary in that it isolated post-1960 years as a period for short-term but serious economic analysis, "cut off from longer-term" patterns of apparently lesser relevance.
- 18 The Berg Report received sharp criticism from those who have argued that it erred by blaming the African victim of transnational structural constraints (Browne and Cummings 1984). Years later, an empirical response suggested that growth of African state sectors was not a post-independence

- phenomenon but a twentieth-century phenomenon, initiated and sustained by colonial governments (Manning 1990–91).
- 19 Green and Nyambara (2015), in a useful and optimistic review of recent study in African economic history, acknowledge that African fiscal crises and neoliberal policies of global organizations during the 1980s restricted studies by African (and other) scholars in the field. I agree with their argument that African-based scholarship has grown significantly in recent years, though I think that this rebound came somewhat later than they argue.
 - 20 *African Economic History Review*, edited by Margaret Jean Hay and Patrick Manning. Four issues of this publication appeared in 1974 and 1975.
 - 21 *African Economic History*, edited by Margaret Jean Hay, appeared at the University of Wisconsin under the overall direction of Jan Vansina and Marvin Miracle. It was almost ten years before it began to be indexed in the *Journal of Economic Literature*.
 - 22 The *Journal of Economic History* neglected, meanwhile, to review Philip Curtin's *Atlantic Slave Trade* (1969), though it remedied the omission by adding him to its editorial board in 1975; he stepped down after 1981 and was replaced by Ralph Austen in 1983.
 - 23 Roughly 10 percent of the articles in *ROAPE* focused on the period before 1960; on the other hand, the extensive bibliographic coverage presented by Chris Allen gave close attention to articles and books in economic history.
 - 24 Green and Nyambara (2015) emphasize the entry of African scholars in the late 1990s, but their account might also have taken into account the real shortage of new scholars – either Africans or others – in study of African economic history in the 1980s and early 1990s.
 - 25 Otherwise, numerous articles relevant to economic history have appeared in *Journal of African History*, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, and *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*.
 - 26 The critique of GDP for Africa, however, has become conflated with the common skepticism among development economists about historical statistics for African economies. See Jerven 2013 and Manning 2014.
 - 27 These included a study of nineteenth-century palm oil trade, microeconomic studies of rural saving, development policy, and globalization in Africa (Udry 1995; Yansane 1996; Lynn 1997; Edoho 1997).
 - 28 Ironically, a chapter was included in the *Cambridge Economic History of Latin America* that compared and linked the economic histories of Latin America and Africa (Manning 2006).
 - 29 The total number of institutions of higher education on the continent had risen to well over two hundred.
 - 30 Asiwaju's argument was initially presented at the 2005 congress of the International Committee on Historical Sciences (CISH) in Sydney: this was the first CISH session devoted to the history of Africa.
 - 31 "African Economic Development: Measuring Success and Failure," Vancouver, 17–21 April 2013. Jerven's critique of available African development statistics launched a lively discussion at the meeting (Jerven 2013).
 - 32 The African Economic History Network (www.aehnetwork.org), co-founded by Morten Jerven and Erik Green, is funded by the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, Sweden. Its textbook, edited by Ewout Frankema and Ellen Hillborn, is an online survey of major issues in African economic history aimed at secondary and university students in Africa.
 - 33 The African Network in Global History/Réseau africain d'histoire mondiale (ANGH/RAHM) formed in July 2009, and affiliated with the Network of Global and World History Organizations and with the Association of African Historians. The World History Center at the University of Pittsburgh provided support for this founding meeting.

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