

## **African Universities and the Ends of Empire: Teaching “British Civilisation” in Senegal**

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African universities are contested sites of (neo)colonial beginnings, middles, and ends. With particular focus on the Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, this work-in-progress paper asks what the study of ‘British civilisation’ at this flagship university tells us about spurious endings and mutant futures. It seeks to contribute to extant scholarship on the global history of literary/languages disciplines. There are currently 9000 students enrolled in the department of English at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, Senegal. This makes it the largest department in the oldest Western-style university in francophone West Africa. It is home to the *Laboratoire d’Etudes Africaines et Postcoloniales* and its associated journal (founded relatively recently). However, the teaching of ‘British civilisation’ has been a major part of its curriculum since the 1950s. Based on archival research and interviews with current and former staff and students, the first part of the paper will consider the role of French *coopérants* and the former Senegalese president, Léopold Sédar Senghor, in creating and sustaining the English curriculum. The second part will reflect on regional dynamics of British soft power (including the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Senegal in 1968). The final section will draw on metaphors of mutation in the ‘*Ecole des mutants*’ artistic collective and recent co-produced work with UCAD students (part of the larger, collaborative AFRUNI project) to consider futures of languages and literature teaching in higher education.

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Ruth Bush is Professor of Comparative Literatures and Cultures at the University of Bristol, UK. Her research concerns literary and cultural production, with particular interests in material print cultures, translation, gender, and institutions. She currently convenes “AFRUNI: Creative Lives of African Universities”, a collaborative ERC project about representations and lived experiences of universities in four multilingual, historically francophone, African cities (Dakar, Abidjan, Abomey-Calavi and Yaounde). Recent publications include: *Translation Imperatives: African Literature and the Labour of Translators* (CUP Elements, 2022) and a bilingual special issue of the *Journal of African Cultural Studies*: “*Les universités africaines francophones: le campus sous toutes ses formes / African Universities: Translating Francophone Campus Forms*”.

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### **History of Universities Seminar**

Convened by Miles Taylor (Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany), Ku-ming (Kevin) Chang (Academia Sinica, Taiwan), and Heike Jöns (Loughborough University, United Kingdom). Hosted by the Humboldt University of Berlin on Zoom: <https://www.histgeog-uni.net/history-of-universities-seminar/>.