

Book review by Anang Tawiah: Contesting Northern Knowledge: Akinsola Akiwowo and the Worldwide Struggle to Change the Social Sciences, edited by Raewyn Connell (2021),

Contesting Northern Knowledge: Akinsola Akiwowo and the Worldwide Struggle to Change the Social Sciences, edited by Raewyn Connell (2021), explores the pioneering contributions of Nigerian sociologist Akinsola Akiwowo.

Trend Report:
SOCIOLOGY IN AFRICA TODAY
Akinsola A. Akiwowo

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INTRODUCTION

Paul F. Lazarsfeld, in his introductory remarks to *Main Trends in Sociology*, observed that as unstable as the history of sociology has been since its inception, and diversified as its activities have been, yet a sociological mode of thought and a way of raising problems and giving explanations has coalesced into a discipline with a new research technique and a promising quest for intellectual coherence.¹ Today, nowhere are the instability and diversification of the intellectual activities of sociologists better illustrated than in Peter Christian Ludz's description of the present state of sociology and political science in the Federal Republic of Germany, where there is a 'realignment' of the two disciplines and a new approach to the definition, object and commitments of both subject areas.² When, however, we shift our attention from contemporary Germany to Africa today and attempt to observe the state of the art one does not know how, in all honesty, to depict or describe the complex warps and woofs of sociological work in African universities, where the discipline is professionally lodged. What I therefore plan to do in this Report is to present as much as possible of what I have discovered to be key elements of the sociological paradigms used in the writings of sociologists in Africa. To do this I shall proceed from those countries in Africa from which I have received written responses to my enquiries about the present state of

Highlights

Overview, strengths/limitations, and contribution
Thematic chapter-style breakdown with key highlights
Four SEO-ready article outlines with keywords and multimedia guidance

Content

Part 1 — Three-Part Book Review Format

1. Overview & Significance

Contesting Northern Knowledge: Akinsola Akiwowo and the Worldwide Struggle to Change the Social Sciences, edited by Raewyn Connell (2021), explores the pioneering contributions of Nigerian sociologist Akinsola Akiwowo. The volume reflects on his efforts to challenge Eurocentric traditions in the social sciences, particularly his innovative use of Yoruba ritual poetry to develop indigenous sociological concepts. It situates Akiwowo's work within broader postcolonial debates on knowledge production and decolonizing academia ([ResearchGate](#), [Cambridge University Press & Assessment](#)).

2. Strengths & Limitations

Strengths: The book compellingly highlights how oral traditions—specifically Yoruba ritual poetry—can enrich social science theory and challenge global academic norms ([ResearchGate](#)). It also maps the challenges and aspirations of intellectuals in the Global South seeking epistemic agency.

Limitations: As this is a scholarly reflection rather than Akiwowo's own text, it lacks direct chapter-by-chapter internal structure or samples from his core writings. Readers interested in methodological detail may need to consult the original papers ([ResearchGate](#)).

3. Legacy & Contribution

The book revives Akiwowo's early challenge to the dominance of Euro-American frameworks, illustrating how local cultural forms—like Yoruba oral traditions—offer valid foundations for social scientific knowledge. It underscores ongoing efforts to decolonize academia and diversify epistemic sources in global social sciences ([ResearchGate](#)).

Part 2 — Chapter-Style Review with Highlights & Examples

The work takes the form of a journal article, but we can reinterpret Connell's reflections as thematic "chapters":

1.

Introduction: Global Knowledge Economy & Postcolonial Turn

Highlights how knowledge from the Global South is often marginalized and dependent—Akiwowo's approach counters this by introducing cultural-intellectual autonomy ([ResearchGate](#)).

2.

Akiwowo's Conceptual Innovation: Yoruba Ritual Poetry as Sociological Foundation

A core highlight is the "Akiwowo Project": using Yoruba oral-poetic concepts to formulate social-scientific explanatory principles ([ResearchGate](#)).

3.

Debating Innovations: Toward an Interactive Epistemology

The discussion evaluates how Akiwowo's ideas have prompted broader conversations about inclusive and dialogic knowledge-making across regions ([ResearchGate](#)).

4.

The Postcolonial Intellectual's Tasks

Connell outlines the evolving role of scholars in the postcolonial world—moving from parroting Northern theory toward engaging in an interactive, pluralistic knowledge exchange ([ResearchGate](#)).

Part 3 — SEO-Optimized Article Bundle

Below are four article ideas designed for SEO effectiveness, incorporating strong keywords and structured outlines:

Article Title	SEO Keywords	Outline
1. Reviving Indigenous Knowledges: A Review of Connell's Book on Akiwowo	Contesting Northern Knowledge review, Akiwowo sociology, decolonizing social sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Connell's work and context • Akiwowo's innovations using Yoruba poetry • Why it matters today • Define Akiwowo's method • Examples of derived concepts (e.g., asuwada) • Implications for global theory-making
2. How Yoruba Ritual Poetry Can Shape Social Science Theory	Yoruba oral poetry sociology, indigenous sociological paradigms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dependency problem in knowledge • Akiwowo's project as remedy • Broader postcolonial turn • Suggested course modules • Discussion prompts (e.g., "What is scholarship from the South?") • Multimedia resources suggestions
3. The Global South Speaks Back: Decolonizing Social Science Through Akiwowo	decolonizing social sciences, Global South knowledge production	
4. Teaching Inclusivity in Sociology: Akiwowo in the Classroom Using the	teach decolonial sociology, Akiwowo syllabus, indigenous social theory	

SEO Best Practices

Use clear headings with keywords in H1/H2 format.

Include meta descriptions such as: *"Explore how Akiwowo's Yoruba-based theories challenge Northern social science dominance via Connell's book."*

Interlink articles to build content relevance.

Suggest images like cover art, Yoruba poets or scholars, with alt-text: *"Yoruba ritual poetry influencing social science theory."*