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**In July 2010 Absalom Mutere proposed to edit an issue of
African Communication Research on
Communication and Pan Africanism**

His lifetime of teaching, administration, struggling for media freedom, research and publication to establish the academic field of communication in Africa was to be summed up in this. He had invited many of his colleagues to contribute to this issue of *African Communication Research*. He himself was planning to write the review article.

Due to his untimely death, he was not able to carry out the task, but his many life-long friends in Africa and in the diaspora have rallied in solidarity. In many ways this issue of *African Communication Research* is a symbol of the solidarity, mutual respect and mutual support in the community of African scholars working in the field of communication - something that Prof. Alfred Opubor has summed up well in his memorial to Absalom Mutere.

Absalom Mutere, 1955-2010: In memoriam

When Absalom Mutere passed on in Lusaka , Zambia , on 10 November, 2010, at the age of 54, the African communication education and research community lost a valuable and respected colleague.

Absalom Mutere was first and foremost a journalist. The sensibilities and reflexes of the profession he chose and practiced with devotion marked his other pre -occupations and achievements. He had the journalist's intense need to know and a robust antipathy to injustice and impunity in high places, which was reflected in his popular writing, public speeches and especially his teaching.

When I first met him at the University of Nairobi 's School of Journalism , twenty five years ago, he was an ebullient, even irreverent, young academic. He was committed to teaching and his enthusiasm rubbed off on his students. His manner was easy, friendly, and approachable; but his discourse was serious and rigorous, especially about professional standards and ethical behavior.

Outside of Kenya, in Zimbabwe where we were both living in the late 1990s, his assignment, was also to bring professionalism in skills, attitudes and values to the rather literary graduate journalism programme based at the English Department of the University. He went out to cultivate the Zimbabwean media gate keepers and soon had his students being accepted for internships in local newspapers and broadcasting stations, resulting in enhanced credibility for the University and offers of media collaboration.

I observed this same talent for creating rapprochement between journalists inside and outside academia, in the period we spent together at the African University College of Communication, AUCC, in Accra , Ghana, where he was Dean of Journalism for two years, 2008-2010, and I was visiting faculty. His obvious understanding of professional issues, his passionate and knowledgeable defense of freedom of expression, and his concern that African journalists be well-informed and meticulously trained, won for him and AUCC, ready acceptance and respect from Ghanaian media leaders. He was often invited to local media gatherings discussing these issues, being quoted as an authority, and seized the opportunities provided to introduce new ways of engaging capacity building and offer new tools for reporting on various issues, including corruption and conflict, on which he had published research papers, curricula and instructional materials.. With the approaching Ghana Presidential elections of 2008, he was actively involved in training

programmes for preparing journalists for the challenges of ensuring free and credible elections through well-planned monitoring and coverage. He later organized forums at AUCC to analyze the performance of media after the elections. His views were actively solicited, especially to compare the Kenya and Ghanaian experiences. He came to these tasks with rich knowledge and data, having been Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Media Council of Kenya, MCK from 2004 to 2007, coinciding with the unfortunate post electoral massacres in his home country, for which the media have been roundly condemned as partisan instigators. He had a keen observer and pungent commentator on the Kenyan media, and so had many important insights for his Ghanaian hosts.

Earlier, in the mid 1980s, Absalom had done a published study on Kenya's communication policy, and had come to see its underbelly, especially in terms of lop sided ownership and control of public and private media, and intimate linkages with the power centers of politics and the economy. He saw in this also a growing potential for strangling freedom of expression. He pursued the implications of media-government relations over the next decade; both as a practitioner and a critical observer.

He soon came to be seen by his peers in journalism and his academic colleagues and students in Kenya as a strong and unrelenting voice for freedom of expression; but also as a crusader for responsible behavior and professionalism in media practice. His appointment to MCK legitimized his leadership on these issues; and he threw himself into the role with energy and the doggedness of the talented rugby player that he was.

His disappointment with the performance of the media, especially what he perceived as their ethical feebleness regarding temptation from leaders in politics and business led him to question whether the Fourth Estate was a reliable institution for ensuring Kenya's unsteady march to democracy. According to him, the other three Estates were actively buying out the Fourth in a bid to wield massive influence and control. If the government owned press was institutionally partisan, and the private press was in the pocket of owners and business interests, who would look after the interests of the people? He began to consider an alternative; a Fifth Estate!

In his couple of years in Accra, he was busy designing new Master's degree programmes to reflect the current and emerging challenges for journalism in Africa, collaborating with colleagues in

Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa, and Kenya, so that the curricula could be adopted by a network of institutions across the continent.

In October, 2010, he relocated to Tanzania, to join the graduate programme in communication at St Augustine's University of Tanzania, SAUT, an institution that he was very fond of, from previous happy assignments, and where students and colleagues remember him warmly. On a brief visit to Lusaka on family business, Absalom fell ill, and passed on.

As I write this, I try to picture Absalom as I last saw him. It was in the garden of the Avenida Hotel in Accra. We had met to discuss yet another draft of the master's programme that he and a group of colleagues were planning to implement. He was sitting across from me in his customary open neck shirt., his booming voice waxing strong, as he leaned forward to me to explain some details I had questioned.

I struggle now to remind myself when last I saw Absalom wearing a suit. Then it came back in a flash: it was that lovely Saturday afternoon at the Meikels Hotel in Harare. Absalom was wedding his Zambian sweetheart, the lovely and elegant Chalwa. They had done me the honor of asking me to witness their vows. We will all miss him!

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ALFRED E. OPUBOR



The rhetorical foundations of Pan-Africanism

By Cecil Blake

Abstract

The article introduces rhetorical theory into the debates on Pan-Africanism. The author traces the growth and development of the idea of a movement which started with a Pan-Blackist agenda, and changed later into the Pan-African movement, with a focus on the campaigns between 1900 and 1958. Lloyd Bitzer's "Rhetorical Situation," is used as a theoretical construct to discuss and analyze how spokespeople of both phases, handled their rhetorical tasks. The author concludes that the leading proponents of Pan-Africanism failed to target the African masses after decolonization, and failed also to use African culture as a part of the frame of reference to support their arguments for a united Africa. Among the leading figures discussed are Edward W. Blyden, Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. DuBois and Kwame Nkrumah.

Key words: Pan-Africanism; rhetorical theory; Kwame Nkrumah; Marcus Garvey; W.E.B DuBois; Edward Wilmot Blyden; Pan-African congresses; African unity.

Introduction:

The rhetorical imperative

One of the weakest fields of scholarship on Pan-Africanism is communication as a many-sided, "composite" discipline. I deliberately decided to use the term "composite" because, in the research on communication in Africa, rhetorical scholarship and intercultural communication has attracted relatively few research scholars. The dominant focus on communication research/studies has been in the area of mass communication. This imbalance in the composite field of communication has been addressed in many conferences of the African

Author Biographical note

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Council on Communication Education over recent years, but somehow, the disproportionate dominance of mass communication in pedagogy and research remains intact. The research tradition in communication continues to emphasize how mass communication could be put to the service of national development efforts in Africa. Pan Africanism, so deeply influenced by contexts of public addresses, can only be explained well by rhetorical analysis and rhetorical theory and provides an opportunity to redress one of the imbalances of communication research in Africa.

Much of the conceptual framework of Pan Africanism has evolved in the Pan-African conferences and congresses between 1900 and 1958, building on the thought of precursors in the nineteenth century. The speakers in these contexts have fashioned their arguments to persuade audiences to adopt their lines of thinking and plans of action. The rationale for the use of rhetorical theory as the means to understand the evolution of Pan-Africanism is mainly grounded on the premise that it is an audience-centered approach. Using rhetorical theory as a construct in this discussion on Pan-Africanism allows us to see the promulgators of Pan-Africanism as “rhetors” who are “involved in the production of ... text[s]” that are communicated to audiences. Texts, “are *potentially active* when the rhetor [read: promulgators of Pan-Africanism] intends it to *do* something, to affect or change the auditors’ minds or actions or environments” (Covino and Joliffe, 1995, p.6). Rhetorical analysis enables us to determine how promulgators of Pan-Africanism constructed their messages directed at their audiences and the extent to which the audience would be in a position to act positively to the messages of the promulgators. In essence, the use of rhetorical theory sheds light on how the promulgators understood and handled their overall rhetorical task in the situation in which they found themselves. One of major questions is why the proponents of Pan Africanism essentially failed to introduce their thought into the mass culture of Africa.

Lloyd Bitzer (1968) advances a theory of “situation,” aptly called the “rhetorical situation,” in which he identifies three major elements at play in a rhetorical situation. The elements are: exigencies, audiences and constraints. He argues that exigencies in a given situation that require resolution leads rhetors to make utterances [read: texts/ messages] directed at audiences with the aim of resolving the

exigencies. The caveat, however, is that the audience to whom the message is directed *should be in a position to resolve the exigencies*.

Against the background of Bitzer's theory of rhetorical situation, we can discern why promulgators targeted certain audiences and not others, notably the mass of Africans. From the above, it is easy to understand the third element in Bitzer's rhetorical situation, "constraints". These are obstacles that may be insurmountable and in the long run could result in a failure on the part of people or institutions that embark upon the task of resolving exigencies. Constraints could be found in both the rhetor, in this instance, the promulgators of Pan-Africanism as well as the targeted audience. Self-interest, perceived or real, on the part of a given rhetor may be a major constraint in his or her efforts to get an audience to participate in the process of resolving exigencies. Likewise, prejudices and stereotypes held by audiences may serve as impediments to attend carefully to rhetorical appeals by those seeking to resolve certain exigencies.

In order to determine why Pan-Africanism, such an important movement in the annals of African history, continues to face manifest problems in the institutionalization of its ideal, a united Africa, it is important to examine critically the messages and rhetorical strategies of the major promulgators of the movement as they sought to achieve the goals of decolonization prior to 1957, the year of Ghana's independence, and, since 1957, the goal of continental unity. Furthermore, rhetorical theory seeks to explain how communicators fashion what could be referred to as actionable content in the messages that seek to persuade audiences to accept and act positively on the appeal(s) made by the communicator.

Given the fact that the unity of Africans, including the diaspora as well as the people of various geographic regions, has been so elusive since the middle of the nineteenth century, a central task of communication research is a critical analysis of how the promulgators of Pan-Africanism understood their rhetorical tasks and the strategies. A comprehensive examination of the genesis of Pan-Africanism from a rhetorical perspective reveals the following: (1) One cannot understand the roots of Pan-Africanism without an understanding of its precursor I have named in this work: Pan-Blackism, and the rhetorical strategies employed by its major proponents; (2) One has to understand the distinction between Pan-Blackism and Pan-Africanism and why the rhetorical strategies utilized by the major promulgators of these perspectives differed; (3) One has to make a clear differentiation in

terms of phases in the lifespan of Pan-Africanism — from a rhetoric of decolonization and nationalism to a rhetoric of amalgamation in post-colonial Africa.

Pan-Blackism as a precursor to Pan-Africanism: “Africa for Africans.”

I use the term Pan-Blackism when discussing the precursor to Pan-Africanism because the goal of Pan-Blackism was to have an amalgamation of the Black race in Africa. The Pan-Blackists believed in the precept: Africa is for Africans. This fundamental belief was echoed by Pan-Africanists as well, but as shall be shown, the manner in which the Pan-Blackists used the expression was more race-based. The movement originated in the United States of America during the days of the enslaved Africans in the Americas. Promulgators of Pan-Blackism argued that Blacks in the United States whether free or enslaved in the nineteenth century would never achieve racial equality in the United States of America and that the solution to the problem of the degradation was an exodus to Africa (Lynch, 1970; Blake, 1990 and 1997). Racism and the history of slavery were portrayed as exigencies that would *never* be resolved. The two were protracted exigencies with insurmountable constraints such as deep-seated prejudice and hatred towards Blacks that was evident and displayed by Whites with very few exceptions. It would be erroneous, however, to claim that the Pan-Blackist movement was created by Blacks only. In fact The American Colonization Society, comprising Whites, was the earliest organization to advocate for the return of freed blacks to Africa. Their rationale was to get rid of freed Blacks in America by sending them to their ancestral home, Africa, where they would presumably spread civilization and Christianity (Staudenraus, 1961). Furthermore, their deportation to Africa would keep the enslaved Africans at a distance, and by so doing avert slave uprisings.

The primary proponents of Pan-Blackism were the following: Edward Wilmot Blyden, by far the most ardent and most prolific promulgator whom Hollis Lynch (1970) called a “Pan-Negro Patriot”; Other leaders in this movement were Martin R. Delaney, Alexander Crummel and Archbishop McNeal Turner. Blyden was a West Indian from the Virgin Islands and Delaney, Crummel and Turner were African Americans. The most prominent of all of them, however, was Edward Wilmot Blyden. The Pan-Blackists lived during and after the era of slavery. They had a discernible audience in the Black Freedmen

men and women. Their mission was to create a Pan-Black “country”, Africa, where the amalgamation of the race would be achieved. Their vision was to see a “civilized” and “Christianized” Africa, led by people who had “benefitted” from the experience of slavery in the United States and who had the moral obligation to return to their motherland to ameliorate what they referred to as its barbarous condition, notwithstanding the fact that they acknowledged the existence of a once admirable and noble history (Blake, 2005). Their motivation was basically to live in freedom in a Black country, and to establish, as Blyden argued, a national government – in a Black “nation” – Africa. As he put it to his Black audiences in the United States:

An African nationality is our great need, and God tells us by his providence that he has set the land before us, and bids us go up and possess it; we shall never receive the respect of other races until we establish a powerful nationality (Blyden, 1861).

Pan-Blackists also had a clear and distinct rhetorical strategy directed at persuading their audiences about the benefits of Black emigration to Africa. They highlighted political, social and economic benefits for freed Blacks who would return to Africa. They used venues – churches – in which they could reach the average freedman; it was not just a situation of talk among leaders of the race. There was an active engagement of a rhetorical audience, quite capable of resolving a fundamental exigency put forth by Pan-Black promulgators: permanent inequality and disrespect if the audience does not get persuaded to resolve it by going back to Africa. The venues used were effectively chosen because the venue alone reified ethos. Blyden, the leading promulgator was himself a reverend gentleman and he courted several of his African-American colleagues to join his rhetoric of Black exodus with a goal of achieving Pan-Blackness.

In short, the promulgators of pan-Blackness understood the rhetorical situation, as well as their rhetorical tasks. Even though one may argue about the degree of success of Pan-Blackism particularly in the nineteenth century, a “country,” Liberia, came into existence through strategic alliances with organizations that had dubious intentions: The American Colonization Society, and even alliances with White supremacists in their efforts to get freed Blacks to emigrate to Africa (Lynch, 1970). The American Colonization Society paid for Blacks who were persuaded to relocate to Liberia where they would

live in Freedom and respect. Transportation, which could have been a protracted constraint, was taken care of and Blyden maintained a beneficial relationship with The American Colonization Society, a pivotal ally. In the twentieth century, the same strategies continued but with a higher level of organization. The most famous Pan-Blackist of the twentieth century was Marcus Garvey, another West Indian from Jamaica, who went to the United States of America to establish the most highly structured organization, the United Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A), in the history of the Pan-Blackist movement (Cronin, 1955). U.N.I.A. was the first all-Black organization created to work towards the achievement of the vision and goals of Pan-Blackism, in which Africa would be for Africans.

Garvey went beyond the apotheosis of African virtue in his efforts to instill race pride in a Black population that had suffered from denigration and increasingly, racial discrimination, accompanied by violence meted out against them by White supremacist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan. Also punishing were the Jim Crow laws that created hardships for African Americans.

Garvey's rhetorical strategies highlighted race pride and confidence. He projected an image of grandeur, by creating and flaunting an organization laden with positive Black symbolism – brigades, a shipping line and businesses. Garvey's rhetoric of Blackness, accompanied by his clever use of form and pomp – his organization, U.N.I.A was a unique phenomenon in the history of Black exodus rhetoric. His ability to call conferences in which he invited Blacks from the West Indies and Africa to join their African-American brothers and sisters as they worked together to achieve an eventual return to Africa, was a major rhetorical quality that augmented his position and role as *the* leader of Pan-Blackism in the early twentieth century. His vision of Africa with a national government under the total control of Blacks with infrastructure that would meet then existing standards was in line with precursors of the nineteenth century. He demonstrated his conviction about the eventual creation of a Black African nation, by declaring himself the Provisional President of Africa.

His philosophy was decidedly "Blackness." His stance was clear and unequivocal: "I believe that White men should be white, Yellow men should be yellow, and Black men should be black in the great panorama of races, until each and every race by his own initiative lifts himself up to the common standard of humanity, as to compel the respect and appreciation of all" (Jacques-Garvey, 1968, p. 26). In order

to remain faithful to that stance, he abhorred miscegenation. Miscegenation degraded "Blackness." Miscegenation is an act of "race suicide" and makes Blacks abhor their race "for the companionship of another" (Jacques-Garvey, 1968, p.17).

Garvey, however, did not successfully handle the rhetorical situation or his rhetorical tasks. Granted, he set up the most highly structured organization designed to achieve race amalgamation in Africa. His unsuccessful handling of the various businesses he established, coupled with his choice of managers who did not have the requisite training and background in handling complex business enterprises led to a collapse of his enterprises. He had a shipping line – The Black Star – but did not, like the American Colonization Society in the 1800s, succeed in founding a nation in Africa and shipping emigrants there. He himself, as Provisional President of Africa, never set foot on African soil. At the end he was betrayed and fell afoul of the law, leading to deportation from the United States (Cronin, 1955).

Garvey's Pan-Blackist movement was contemporaneous with the Pan-African movement that started in 1900 in London, England with another West Indian, Henry Sylvester-Williams, a Trinidadian barrister in London, as the founder. After his passing, the most dominant figure in Pan-Africanism, W.E.B. DuBois, and an African-American, took up the cause. A contemporary of Garvey, they were very firm rivals who did not like each other. Garvey appealed to the large mass of Blacks, while DuBois' Pan-African movement was primarily led by elites, as we shall see in the following discussion on Pan-Africanism. Kwame Nkrumah, who would become the most ardent Pan-Africanist after African decolonization claimed in his autobiography (1957) that he was influenced by the writings of Garvey, and shared the Pan-Blackist mantra of "Africa for Africans," but did not believe in Garvey's rhetoric of racial separation.

Pan-Africanism

Before delving into a discussion on Pan-Africanism, a revealing and telling characterization of the movement, found in the first paragraph of P. Olanwuche Esedebe's introduction to his "Origins of Pan-African Ideas," in his *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1991*, is instructive. He states:

Despite the flood of books and articles on Pan-Africanism in recent years, the study of the phenomenon is still in its infancy. Writers tend to bury its aspirations and dynamics in a welter of

fascinating but largely irrelevant details. Not surprisingly, there is still no agreement on what it is all about. Explanations that some African scholars and politicians give often differ from those suggested by African descendants abroad. Sometimes the continental Africans themselves advance conflicting interpretations (Esedebe, 1994, p. 3).

DuBois had earlier quipped on this aspect of “conflicting interpretations” when he made reference to a comment by Jan Smut’s (a former Prime Minister of South Africa). DuBois states:

Singularly enough, there is another Pan-African movement. I thought of it as I sat recently in San Francisco and heard Jan Smuts plead for an article on “human rights” in the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations. The Pan-African movement which he represents is a union of the white rulers of Kenya, Rhodesia, and Union of South Africa, to rule the African continent in the interest of its white investors and exploiters (DuBois in Kedourie, 1970, p. 387).

The observations above provide an entry point for the discussion on Pan-Africanism. The movement requires a lot of discussion from multiple perspectives in order to appreciate and attempt to get a hold of the complexities involved in fashioning visions for a united African continent, and the mechanisms through which such visions could be realized. What follows from here on is *not* a history of Pan-Africanism, but rather an analysis of the *rhetoric* of Pan-Africanism using the “rhetorical situation” addressed earlier as the theoretical framework.

Foundational exigencies

From its earliest formulation, Pan-Africanism had to deal with what I refer to as a “foundational exigency” during its two major epochs: before decolonization and after decolonization. The foundational exigency of the first epoch was the resolution of the problems of abuses ranging from human rights abuses meted out against Africans under colonial rule as well as those in diaspora, to the abuse of African land and resources by the colonial powers. The resolution of the exigency mentioned above would be nothing short of decolonization, with the exception of Liberia and Ethiopia, which would place the control of the African continent in the hands of Africans. With regard to the diaspora, the resolution would be nothing short of successful litigation, particularly in the United States, against human rights abuses of its citizens of African descent. I call the above foundational exigencies

because without their resolution the movement would largely fail. I consider the foundational exigencies as the *raison-d'être* of the movement, necessitating my use of the rhetorical situation construct as a theoretical framework for my analysis given the core locus of exigencies within the construct.

During the second epoch, after decolonization, the foundational exigency was the solution of the state of a fragmented Africa in terms of having a group of sovereign African nations, all sharing common problems of national development and the overall improvement of the quality of life of Africans yet fragmented. The dire need for continental unity under one government was the answer. This foundational exigency became complicated, albeit protracted, the longer it took for African governments to come to an agreement on continental unity under one sovereign entity – the United States of Africa, a vision and dream particularly of Kwame Nkrumah, the most significant Pan-Africanist of the epoch.

Julius Nyerere captured the intricacy of the exigency and its organic linkage with a major constraint, national sovereignty, during a speech he delivered on July 13, 1966, delivered at the University of Zambia on the occasion of the inauguration of President Kenneth Kaunda as the first Chancellor of the University of Zambia. Nyerere stated:

.... It was as Africans that we dreamed of Freedom; and we thought of it for Africa. Our real ambition was African Freedom and African government. The fact that we fought area by area was merely a tactical necessity. We organized ourselves into the Convention People's Party, the Tanganyika African National Union, the United National Independence Party, and so on, simply because each local colonial government had to be dealt with separately (Nyerere, 1968, p. 207).

He then posed the ultimate Pan-African problematic: "The question we now have to answer is whether Africa shall maintain this internal separation as we defeat colonialism, or whether our earlier proud boast – "I am an African" – shall become a reality (Nyerere, 1968, p.207). Africa has indeed maintained the "internal separation," to which Nyerere referred. He also pointed out succinctly that "each state is a sovereign entity." Moreover, "each state has a government which is responsible to the people of its own area – and to them only. It must work for their particular well-being or invite chaos within its territory" (Nyerere, 1968, p. 208).

Nyerere's speech was definitive: the immediate rhetorical task that African leaders had to deal with was to entrench and solidify their national base. Thus, "each state of Africa devises for itself a constitution and a political structure which is most appropriate to its own history and its own problems." In essence, "each state is forced to promote its own nationhood." In the process, the leaders of their respective nations should be "teaching loyalty to a particular unit, a particular flag" (Nyerere, 1968, p. 208). From the foregoing, the rhetorical situation becomes challenging because the audience, particularly heads of state of the various nations that would have to agree to create a unified African continent be it federal system or another alternative, were in a situation that might not make it possible for them to be capable of resolving the foundational exigency that Pan-Africanism presented.

So, rather than adopting an approach to the solution of the foundational exigency at the continental level, African leaders should have to redefine the exigency: from a need for a continental union, to some other forms of "union"; one that may present less protracted constraints. Thus, Nyerere suggested in the same speech that there should be a deliberate organization of regional groupings, not a continental union even though the latter is desirable but at that given point in time, improbable. Even at the regional level, the idea was not a unified regional group as a political unit. It is evident that his vision came to fruition. African states jealously guarded their respective sovereignty, and they continue to do so, but have created "communities" such as the Economic Commission for West Africa (ECOWAS). The extent to which such amalgams would achieve the eventual consolidation of all African states is still an open debate. I now move on to discuss the idea of Pan-Africanism as it matured from a small conference in London in 1900 to 1958, when Nkrumah took center stage in the continent in his unwavering fight for a continental union – a United States of Africa.

The Pan-African Conference convened by Sylvester-Williams

During the waning years of the nineteenth century, the overall situation of Africans in the continent and in diaspora remained oppressive. The Berlin Conference held in 1884-1885 had ended up with the partition of Africa, with Europeans demarcating lines at will and creating boundaries of African territories apportioned among them. African descendants in diaspora were not doing any better in terms of their living conditions and issues related to their rights in the

various countries in which they lived. In short, the vast majority of Africans and their descendants worldwide were in a miserable state of oppression and carried the heavy burden on their backs made up of colonialism, racial discrimination, economic and social deprivation – presenting a rhetorical situation with exigencies that called for a resolution. Someone indeed emerged as the rhetor with an aim of working towards the resolution of the exigencies mentioned above. The audiences required for the resolution of the exigencies were first, Black leaders of various interest groups concerned with the plight and conditions of Africans in diaspora and the colonial powers as well as relevant international bodies. These audiences had the capacity to resolve the exigencies.

Henry Sylvester-Williams, a West Indian Barrister from Trinidad residing in London, convened what he called a “Pan-African Conference” in 1900. It was a seminal event because that was the first time the term was introduced in the debates on the African condition worldwide, and Sylvester-Williams fashioned a concept that sought to address the conditions of Africans worldwide and proffer solutions for the state of wretchedness pervasive in African communities under colonial rule, and others living in miserable conditions in diaspora.

The main objective was to initiate a “forum of protest against the aggression of white colonizers and, at the same time, to make an appeal to the missionary and abolitionist traditions of the British people to protect the Africans from the degradations of Empire builders” (Padmore, 1971, p. 96). In addition, there were also the following objectives: “to bring people of African descent throughout the world into closer touch with each other and to establish more friendly relations between the Caucasian and African races; to start a movement looking forward to the securing to all African races living in civilized countries, their full rights and to promote their business interests” (Thompson, 1969, p. 23).

The conference was held between July 23 and July 25, with thirty delegates comprising West Indians and African Americans. There were no delegates from Africa. From a rhetorical situation perspective, Sylvester-Williams was indeed able to reach the required audiences. Furthermore, the conference set the stage for bonding among people of Africa and those in diaspora on major issues of rights, freedom and equality among races. They deliberated on the plight of Africans worldwide and came out with an appeal to the colonial powers. Black leaders participated in the conference. Rhetorically, therefore, the

conference brought a convergence on the nature of the exigencies that had to be resolved; there was also a convergence on the nature of the audience(s) that would be in a position to resolve the exigencies – the idea of having “friendly relations between Caucasian and African races was a strategic move in seeking to solidify the audience base required for the resolution of the exigencies. In that regard, one could argue also that there was an attempt to bring about a common recognition of the constraints that had to be overcome. The British Government did pay attention to the conference and its deliberations and issued a statement promising “not to overlook the interests and welfare of the [native races]” (DuBois, 1970, p. 373). After the death of Henry Sylvester-Williams there was an eighteen year hiatus.

The First Pan-African Congress

In 1918, the man who became the father of Pan-Africanism sought to convene a Pan-African Congress in conjunction with the Africa Peace Conference in Paris. Even though DuBois had to deal with major obstacles mainly centered on the objections of the governments of the United States of America and France, he succeeded in holding the congress in Paris, in conjunction with the Africa Peace Conference through the intervention and assistance of Blaise Diagne, an influential Senegalese Deputy and Commissar-General, charged with the responsibility of recruiting African soldiers. The congress started on February 19, 1919 and ended on February 21, 1919.

W.E.B. DuBois succeeded in attracting the participation of fifty-seven delegates who came from the West Indies, the United States and, for the first time, from Africa. According to DuBois, “Of the fifty-seven delegates from fifteen countries, nine were from African countries and eleven Africans in the diaspora. The other delegates came from the United States, which sent sixteen, and the West Indies, with twenty-one” (DuBois, 1970, p. 375). The numbers and spread of representation were impressive, but it should be noted that they were drawn from those participating in the Peace Conference as well as others residing in France. The participants came up with substantive resolutions that called for, *inter alia*: The establishment of a code of laws for the “international protection of the natives of Africa; African rights to education; and African ownership of land and resources. A strong component of the resolutions for the period under review was a call on the colonial powers not to exploit Africa’s natural wealth to the detriment of Africans.

The first Pan-African Congress set some very important precedents: a call for the major international bodies to commit to African self-governance as well as ownership and control of its resources, and the absence of any explicit commitment on the part of the participants to declare a preference for any European ideology; African cultural institutions were recognized as significant even though there was a call for modernization and “civilization.” Rhetorically, the first Pan-African Congress demonstrated that the Black leadership structure – Diaspora driven – could attract a diverse audience comprising of African and diaspora participants with international recognition, having successfully met in conjunction with a major international conference. This success was significant for the purpose of recognition by the colonial powers and the international system, of an African-centered group – articulate Pan-Africanists – with an agenda of their own making, aimed at solving a major exigency – the removal of the yoke of colonialism on Africans and their descendants worldwide under colonial rule in Africa. Not only was the issue of colonialism addressed, the delegates also discussed the plight of African-Americans who had faced increasingly harsh treatment in the forms of segregation and lynching.

The rhetorical appeal to international bodies reached a wider audience than the previous conference held eighteen years earlier. Furthermore, the exigencies and constraints were identified, and the rhetorical tasks posed by them were handled very well by DuBois and his cohorts. The targeted audience, the international bodies were in a position to act. It could be concluded that the rhetorical situation was well-understood by the organizers and they made utterances regarding the resolution of the exigencies. Finally, in terms of audience segmentation, the congress succeeded in attracting two categories of audiences: Africans and African descendants in diaspora, and international bodies to whom rhetorical appeals could be made to resolve exigencies. Such a start set the bar very high. There could be no let down. Continuity and sustainability were elements that would determine whether the emerging Pan-African movement could be taken seriously by the actors involved. Without the two elements, the chances of resolving the exigencies would be slim. It should be noted that even though the colonial powers allowed meetings of such a nature to take place in their respective capitals, it did not mean that it was a signal to the Black world that they were going to give up their

grip easily on their colonial possessions. DuBois, therefore, wasted no time in trying to keep the tempo going.

The Second Pan-African Congress

Unlike the first congress that succeeded in getting a good number of participants, the prevailing rhetorical environment had changed significantly. A major player in the debates on the future of Africa and Africans, Marcus Garvey whom I referred to earlier as the most prominent Pan-Blackist of the twentieth century had firmly established himself as a credible force to deal with in the debates on the conditions of Africans and the ultimate resolution of their problems. His was a populist movement contrasted with Dubois, who described his movement as comprising "intellectuals" (1970, p.377). Garvey had the attention of the majority of African Americans and West Indians with a predisposition towards emigration to Africa. Furthermore he had the information design and infrastructure required for an effective dissemination of his rhetoric. Both men, DuBois and Garvey disliked each other. DuBois was of a mixed race parentage. Garvey abhorred miscegenation. DuBois regarded Garvey as a demagogue and intemperate because of his strongly pro-Black and anti-white stance. DuBois, on the contrary had struck strategic alliances with whites (DuBois, 1970; Padmore, 1971.).

The paradox, however, is that Garvey himself sought to establish strategic alliances with Whites, but with those associated with the Ku Klux Klan, since both he and they shared the belief that Blacks should go back to Africa, with, of course different motives: Garvey as a means of amalgamating the race in the process of establishing a Black and respected "nation" and the KKK seeking the expulsion Blacks purely on a white supremacist rationale. Furthermore, Garvey stated that "The Ku Klux Klan is going to make this a White man's country....They are perfectly honest and frank about it. Fighting them is not going to get you anywhere" (Cronin, 1955, p, 189). To crown it all, "Garvey asserted in stating his belief that the K.K.K. was the invisible government of America" (Cronin, 1955, p. 189).

With the rhetorical scene established above, the Second Pan-African Congress was scheduled to take place in London, Brussels and Paris in 1921. The congress was held in London between August 27 and 29, 1921. During the meetings, a total of one hundred and thirteen delegates participated: "forty-one from Africa, thirty-five from the United States, twenty-four represented Negroes living in Europe, and

seven from the West Indies" (DuBois, 1970, p. 376). One distinctive aspect of the Congress within the context of the "rhetorical situation construct" was the preponderance of constraints compared with the previous Congress. DuBois articulated them as follows: "First of all, there was the natural reaction of war and the determination of certain elements in England, Belgium and elsewhere, to recoup their war losses by intensified exploitation of the colonies. They were suspicious of native movements of any sort" (DuBois, 1970, p. 377). He also attributed Garvey's growing influence among West Indians as affecting the number of West Indian participants in the Second Pan-African Congress, as well as his influence on an increasing number of African Americans.

Resolutions adopted at the congress, *inter alia*, criticized the Belgian colonial government, even while "giving [the government] credit for plans of reform for the future" (DuBois, 1970, p. 379). In Paris, the Congress adopted the resolutions passed in London but added features that emphasized the "absolute equality of races, physical, political and social... The doctrine of racial equality does not interfere with individual liberty: rather it fulfills it." Furthermore, we see the introduction of ideological preference in terms of the establishment of "political institutions among suppressed people," and the need for a "habit of democracy [which] must be made to enrich the earth." Interestingly, however, agency for democracy was not given as a sole property of Europe. DuBois argues that "Despite the attempts to prove that its practice is the secret and divine gift of a few, no habit is more natural or more widely spread among primitive people, or more easily capable of development among masses" (DuBois, 1970, p. 379). Through such rhetoric, DuBois' elitism comes through and a distinction is made between Garvey's Pan-Blackist Movement and DuBois' Pan-African Movement. DuBois' Pan Africanism continued to target international bodies and colonial governments in a manner that sought to bring about a mutual resolution of the African exigencies manifested in colonial policies. Meanwhile, Garvey's Pan-Blackism rhetoric continued, directed at the mass of African Americans, West Indians and Africans who were exposed to his movement's objectives and arguments for Black consolidation and solidarity.

Another session of the Second Pan-African Congress was held in Brussels, between August 31 and September 2, 1921. The session was clouded with dissention mainly from Blaise Diagne, the Senegalese Deputy in Chamber of Deputies in Paris. He opposed adopting the

resolutions passed in London seemingly because of the radical anti-colonialist stance they represented. DuBois, however, did not confront Daigne. Rather he exercised considerable restraint (Esedebe, 1994). Daigne performed the same disruptive function later during the Paris sessions of the Congress.

The Third Pan African Congress

The third Pan-African Congress was convened in London and Lisbon. The sessions were held on November 7 and 8, 1923 in London, with very limited participation. At Lisbon, eleven countries participated, less than the previous Congress, with more representation by Africans from the Portuguese colonies. It was clearly not as successful as the previous gatherings. Again, the demands made by participants in this Congress centered *inter alia* on: Equality for all races; African self-governance; right to land; fair court trials – by juries of their peers; free elementary education; development of Africa for Africans as well (DuBois, 1970, p. 383).

As could easily be discerned, the number of participants consistently fell. The Congresses were driven mainly by Americans – in fact one could arguably postulate that DuBois carried the movement on his shoulders. Interestingly, after the Third Congress, he visited Africa for the first time. He went as Special Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary to represent President Coolidge of the United States of America.

The Fourth Pan-African Congress

The pattern of a slowdown in participation and degree of complexity of the succeeding congresses continued to manifest itself with the Fourth Congress convened in New York in 1927. Interestingly, it was the largest gathering of delegates since the inception of the movement with two hundred and eighty participants but with a rather weak representational spread. Africa was represented with the presence of only four countries from Africa. Thirteen countries in all were represented. The resolution that emerged from the conference reiterated what had become the benchmark issues laid down by previous congresses, namely: African voices in African governance; Africa for Africans as well; right to modern education; right to land; equality of races. If anything could be said of significance from a rhetorical perspective up to this point in the history of the movement since its inception in 1900, is the consistency with which

were articulated what could now be referred to as Pan-African rhetorical tokens (Blake, 1997) of the movement from a diaspora-driven perspective. Furthermore, these tokens, in the form of the benchmark issues referred to above increasingly solidified around a major audience: the colonial powers. Indeed the delegates comprised an aspect of the audience. However, they were hardly in a position to significantly resolve the exigencies in the African continent because of the negligible number of participants from Africa to begin with, accompanied by the fact that the Africans who came as delegates had no authority or mandate from the marginalized mass of Africans. From the standpoint of the theoretical construct used – the rhetorical situation – solidification of the audience around European colonial powers made sense. The difficulty however was the inability of the movement to use successfully moral suasion as the means through which they proffered solutions for the removal of the exigencies in colonial Africa. Deep entrenchment of colonial interests that translated to economic prosperity for the colonial powers coupled with an equally entrenched and deep-seated racial hatred and discrimination against Africans presented constraints that for all practical purposes were very hard to remove.

The movement up to this period of the fourth congress also lacked a strong ideological base. The father of Pan-Africanism, W.E.B. DuBois was known to have socialist tendencies, but as Padmore (1971) has observed, the Russians did not have a deep enough commitment to provide the boost for the movement for the sake of its goals. Meanwhile, there was a growing number of Africans living in England who have been agitating for decolonization. Among them was Kwame Nkrumah who went there from his studies in the United States, to pursue a law degree. Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya was also present as was I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson from Sierra Leone, a well-known trade unionist. Another major figure was Nnamdi Azikwe from Nigeria. Others included T.R. Mackonnen, and Peter Abrahams. Also present around the same time were notable West Indians such as George Padmore. The amalgam of West African students also made it possible for the creation of a West African Students Union, of which Kwame Nkrumah later became president. This group formed a core that would eventually galvanize around the Pan-Africanist ideals with W.E.B. DuBois playing a major role in the convening of the Fifth Pan- African Congress.

The Fifth Pan African Congress

The Fifth Pan African Congress was held in Manchester, England on August 11 and 12, 1945. The dominant presence and leadership from the diaspora was evident. The Secretaries of the Organizing Committee for the Congress were George Padmore and Kwame Nkrumah. In the invitation letter sent out to various organizations, the West African Students Union in London lamented the fact that all the congresses leading to and including this one were held in Europe. They had suggested that the Congress be held in the Republic of Liberia, an independent African nation then. The Organizing Committee settled for Manchester, presumably because of the International Trade Union Conference going on in Paris and the prospects to have a strong participation by some delegates from that conference from Africa and the diaspora.

The joint chairpersons were Dr. W.E.B. DuBois from the United States and Dr. Peter Millard from the then British Guyana. It is reported by Nkrumah (1957) that over 200 delegates participated. The delegates were members of trade unions and labor organizations from the West Indies and Africa. Delegates at an International Trade Unions Conference in Paris were asked to participate in the Manchester Pan-African Congress to represent officials in the West Indies and Africa who could not attend due to time and other constraints. Organizations in the colonial territories that could not send delegates to the Trade Union Conference as well as the Pan-African Congress requested their compatriots living in England to represent them (DuBois, 1970, p. 385). The main agenda was on the colonial situation in Africa and the means through which African states could be liberated. In the letters of invitation sent out to delegates worldwide, Nkrumah stated that the "aims of the Congress" were explained as well as the "political tactics that should be adopted to achieve liberation in the colonies" (Nkrumah, 1957, p.53).

It was no wonder, therefore, that the delegates came prepared to describe the living and overall conditions in their respective countries. Based on the reports and the prevailing ideological environment coupled with the fact that the European countries that held territories in Africa and elsewhere were capitalists, the Congress rejected capitalism and other reformist ideas as means of solving the colonial problem. Instead, the delegates voted in favor of African socialism as the solution but with non-violence as the tactics that should be employed in seeking the liberation of the continent. Another major

outcome of the Congress was the endorsement of the Declaration of Human Rights, consistent with the aim of liberating the colonies. Nkrumah noted that "Africans and those of African descent, wherever they might be, [were advised] to organize themselves into political parties, trade unions, co-operative societies and farmers' organizations in support of their struggle to political freedom and economic advancement" (Nkrumah, 1957, p. 54). It is interesting to note that such anti-colonial agitation by Africans and West Indians was coming directly from the capital of Great Britain a major and leading colonial power.

Two declarations, one written by W.E.B. Dubois and the other, Kwame Nkrumah, were addressed to the "imperialist powers." The declarations "asserted the determination of the colonial peoples to be free and condemned the monopoly of capital and the use of private wealth and industry for personal profits alone." They asserted further that "economic democracy [was] the only real democracy and appealed to colonial people everywhere – the intellectuals, professional class and workers – to awaken to their responsibilities in freeing themselves and saving the world from the clutches of imperialism" (Nkrumah, 1957, p.54).

The ideological stance was clear: this was a Congress that endorsed, accepted and employed socialist principles as the guiding principles for liberation. There is no evidence of making reference to any aspect of what may be a representative African worldview derived from African core values. Instead, since the huge number of participants at the Congress were Africans, "its ideology became African nationalism – a revolt by African nationalism against colonialism, racialism and imperialism in Africa – and it adopted Marxist socialism as its philosophy" (Nkrumah, 1957, p.54). Pan-Africanism became decidedly associated with Marxism. Rhetorically, the ideological positioning placed African liberation leaders and their interests squarely into domain of the ideological competition between Eastern and Western Europe. The strategy would of course result in support for African liberation by the communist world, which would logically mean that after liberation, African states that benefitted from such a support would presumably have to be client states within the communist sphere. The strategy is emblematic of the pervasive inability of Africans to come up with prescriptions for the resolution of their problems without aligning themselves with powers external to the continent, with ideologies framed outside of Africa. The manifestation of this

weakness still obtains as the continent still lacks an African-centered ideology and praxis as it struggles to resolve its multifarious problems.

It is important to also note that Nkrumah and other leaders of the Fifth Pan-African Congress sought to segment their audiences with the hope of penetrating all classes except the non-working class (in terms of “formal” employment) that would have comprised the majority of Africans in particular. They communicated to their audiences through leaders of organizations. This segmentation of the audience is a far cry from previous Pan-African Congresses that had a mainly elite audience. The audience targeted for the Fifth Pan-African Congress indeed had the potential to resolve the exigency that was colonialism, by actively agitating for freedom across the spectrum – by elites and ordinary workers through their trade and labor unions. There was a major constraint: the means through which the audience would act to resolve the exigency – non-violence was the preferred mode.

George Padmore accurately described the activities of the Fifth Pan-African Congress as entering into a “new phase – that of positive action” (Padmore, 1971, p. 149). This phase had important implications and challenges for those Africans in leadership positions in the movement to maximize their audience reach. Padmore is correct in stating that “The effectiveness [of this phase] depended upon the degree to which the African peoples were organized. Organization is a key to freedom. Without the active support of the common people, the intellectuals remain isolated and ineffectual. This is why the Fifth Congress, in its Declaration to the Colonial People, stressed the importance of forming a united front between the intellectuals, workers and farmers in the struggle against colonialism” (Padmore, 1971, p. 149).

Padmore’s postulations above removes the long-standing bifurcation of DuBois in terms of branding the leadership of the movement as the intellectual elite, and Garvey’s mass agitation for instance, that involved the mass of Africans both in the continent and in diaspora. What the Fifth Congress introduced in the strongest possible sense was the need to augment the rhetorical strategies by calling for a more aggressive anti-colonialist stance and a fight for freedom from colonialism. No longer was there room for the perennial platitudes of rational appeals to the colonial powers and the international bodies through the Pan-African tokens to which I referred earlier.

The Fifth Pan-African Congress set the stage for agitation for African freedom and independence. The clear pronouncement of an

ideological preference – African socialism, provided the foundation for a rhetoric that promulgated the idea of freedom from “imperialist” control of Africa, consistent with socialistic discourse. Rational discourse was not entirely dismissed, but there was a distinct option to use all available means – discursive and non-discursive – to wrest Africa free from colonialism and the imperialist grip on the freedom and their resources that Europeans exploited just for the benefit of Europe. Nkrumah’s agitation for the independence of the Gold Coast resulted in incarceration by the British government. After his release he created a political party, the Convention Peoples Party in 1949, and successfully agitated for the independence of the Gold Coast, which was renamed Ghana, after independence in 1957. After Ghana’s independence a domino effect seemed to have emerged, with several African states gaining their independence during the decade of the 1960s. Kwame Nkrumah emerged as the leading figure and spokesperson for Pan-Africanism, replacing the aging DuBois.

The rhetoric of Post-Independence Pan-Africanism: The ascendancy of Kwame Nkrumah

The post-independence period launched the Pan-African movement into Africa as its permanent base. The rhetorical environment called for new rhetorical realities. First and foremost any rhetoric of Pan-Africanism during this period required *action* beyond the ideals enunciated and promulgated during the colonial era. Post-independence Pan-Africanist rhetoric had as its singular and most important goal: *African or continental unity as the means of consolidating the interests and aspirations of all Africans in the continent and to fight for the liberation of the remaining colonies under European control.*

Kwame Nkrumah, the most influential African leader at the dawn of post-independent Africa energetically took the lead role. He convened two Pan-African conferences in Ghana, merely a year after Ghana’s independence – the first in April, 1958, and the second in December, 1958. These conferences, according to Thompson: (1) moved Pan-Africanism from “idealism and romanticism to that of practical politics” (Thompson, 1969, pp. 126-127). (2) Pan-Africanism extended its reach to civil society organizations in the continent; (3) facilitated frequent meetings and interactions among leaders of the respective nations of the continent; (4) set the context background for countries that gained their independence after 1958 for their participation in

continental politics; (5) accelerated the liberation struggles in Portuguese colonies and Southern Africa; (6) emphasized the centrality of having a firm organizational structure and base for deliberations, activities etc., aimed at achieving African unity.

Nkrumah's leading role and determination might have invited petty jealousies and covetous dispositions towards the protection of the sovereignty of the newly independent African nations, even though they participated in continental meetings. For instance, the first conference held in Accra in 1958, resolved that:

[T]he African All People's Conference be established with a *permanent* [italics mine] Secretariat in Accra with the following aims and objectives:

1. To promote understanding and unity among peoples of Africa.
2. To accelerate the liberation of Africa from Imperialism and Colonialism.
3. To mobilize world opinion against the denial of political rights and fundamental human rights to Africans.
4. To develop the feeling of one community among the peoples of Africa with the object of enhancing the emergence of a United States of Africa (Thompson, 1969, p. 128).

For all practical purposes, the resolution above could be seen as "Ghanacentric" in the sense that everything – a permanent secretariat – revolves around Ghanaian leadership. The terminology in some of the points above, suggests an imposed ideological stance – socialist Africa -- for all emerging independent African states. Ghana becomes the soil in which continental unity would be nurtured with the potential for it to take the initial leadership of a United States of Africa. Rhetorically, a perceived Ghanacentric approach to African unity might have created a major constraint.

The two conferences convened in Ghana placed Kwame Nkrumah in a major position to influence the direction of post-colonial Africa, particularly on the issue of continental union. He demonstrated leadership by example when he and Sekou Toure, the President of the newly independent state of Guinea, formed the Ghana-Guinea Union. Guinea had been rendered cash-strapped when the French retaliated against it for refusing to remain in the French Community, and opted for independence. The French payback was a complete withdrawal and removal of all aspects of French colonial administrative and technical

infrastructure. Nkrumah offered ten million dollars to aid Toure's effort in establishing the Republic of Guinea. Other "union" initiatives fostered by Nkrumah came into existence. For example, he and Toure, together with Modibo Keita of Mali fashioned a Charter that formed the basis for the creation of Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union. There was, however, an increasing polarization of the Pan-African movement leading to formation of different groups of African states. Two of the most significant were the Monrovia and Casablanca Groups – the former conservative and the latter, radical. Nkrumah was with the Casablanca Group that argued for support of liberation movements. The Monrovia Group was led by President William Tubman whose group argued for a gradual, rather than a militant/liberation struggle for decolonization of the remaining European colonies in the continent (Esedebe, 1994, p. 176). The dominant rhetoric of Pan-Africanism was driven by a desire for a quick political union of independent African states, spearheaded by Nkrumah. The counter rhetoric was more conservative with a strong gradualist trend that would delay the realization of a United States of Africa.

The two groups, however, came together at a conference on May 22, 1963 in Addis Ababa during which a compromise was struck between the two camps on *approaches* for the realization of the eventual unification of African states. The opening statements by Emperor Haile Selassie of Ehtiopia set the defining context for a rhetoric of Pan-Africanism that delineated brilliantly, the rhetorical situation in the continent. He stated: "...while we agree that the ultimate destiny of this continent lies in political union, we must at the same time recognize that the obstacles to be overcome in its achievement are at once numerous and formidable to overcome" (Esedebe, 1980, p. 192). The Emperor could not have framed the rhetorical situation better. His was a restatement of the gradualist approach. Nkrumah retorted: "Unite we must. Without necessarily sacrificing our sovereignties, big or small, we can here and now forge a political union based on Defense, Foreign Affairs and Diplomacy, and a common citizenship, an African Currency, an African Monetary Zone and an African Central Bank" (Edebebe, 1994, p. 193). Nkrumah's retort complicated further, the rhetorical situation.

To conclude, this article had as its objective, to provide the missing link in the study and analysis of the Pan-African movement, with a terminal date of 1958. That missing link was rhetorical theory. There are indeed other rhetorical theories that may have applications for

analysis as well. The choice of theory was influenced by the nature of the rhetorical environment in which the idea and ideal of Pan-Africanism flourished and some may even venture to say perished, due to the burden of constraints, and because of the apparent inability to date of the leaders of the African continent to create a unified continent under one government.

The situation in the continent against the background of the rhetorical tradition of Pan-Africanism indeed required resolution. However, with the existence of many states gaining independence from their European colonizers, obstacles of the nature mentioned in Emperor Selassie's speech could not be treated lightly, even though with a shared vision of a united Africa. The Addis Ababa conference brought to an end Kwame Nkrumah's high expectations of "unity now." It did not happen during his lifetime, and the prospects for the realization of his vision of a United States of Africa remain elusive. The Addis Ababa spirit seems to be present in the African Union.

But of more significance is the lesson that the current African leadership structure should learn from the Pan-African rhetorical tradition up to the demise of the OAU: the major failure in their rhetoric and that of their predecessors to link the message to what one could call "mainstream African culture," and make direct appeals to the African masses. The expression "mainstream African culture," is used in the Diopian sense – *The Cultural Unity of Black Africa* (Diop, 1990). There is no convincing evidence to show that there was a well-designed and well-orchestrated rhetorical campaign by the African leadership structure to bring the masses of the continent to be an integral part of the audience, with warrants grounded in mainstream African culture in their promulgation of continental unity.

An argument could be made that Nkrumah, in his *Conscienticism* (1964) sought to establish an organic linkage that shows a bond between African socialism and African communalism. In fact he wrote: "If one seeks the social-political ancestor of socialism, one must go to communalism" (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 73). Furthermore, "In traditional African society, no sectional interest could be regarded as supreme: nor did legislative and executive power aid the interests of any particular group. The welfare of the people was supreme" (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 68). But the bond was not used as a basis to mobilize the *mass African* audience in the rhetoric of Pan-Africanism at the continental level.

The absence of the use of what may be called a bonded ideology continentally is quite evident in Nyerere's rhetoric. Nyerere, in his

Uhuru Na Ujamaa (1968) asserted that “Ujamaa is Tanzanian Socialism.” He posited that “The word “ujamaa” was chosen for special reasons. First, it is an African word and thus emphasizes the African-ness of the policies we intend to follow. Second, its literal meaning is ‘family-hood’, so that it brings to the mind of our people the idea of mutual involvement in the family as we know it.” From this African warrant, he indeed established the bonding between ujaama and socialism thus: “By the use of the word ‘ujamaa’, therefore, we state that for us socialism involves building on our past, and building also *to our own design*” (Italics mine). He gave agency to African culture within the bonding by stating further, ‘We are not importing a foreign ideology into Tanzania and trying to smother our distinct social patterns with it’ (Nyerere, 1968, p. 2).

However, rather than elevating the warrant to a Pan-African level and, through it, fashion messages for continental unity, he stated categorically that Tanzanians are “trying to create something which is uniquely ours, and by methods which may be unique to Tanzania” (Nyerere, 1968, p. 2). True to his ideas about the problems of creating a United States of Africa cited earlier, he does invoke and involve African culture for Tanzanians as needed for the development of Tanzania. For him, “Socialism is international,” and therefore relates to Tanzania. Ujamaa, on the other hand is Tanzanian, with a thrust on serving the development needs of Tanzania.

Clearly one could see how the African leaders failed to adopt a strategy that would have grounded their rhetoric on core African values at the same time showing the organic linkage between African culture and African socialism. Instead, African socialism was used as the architectonic art and formed the basis for a rhetoric of Pan-Africanism, at least from the perspective of Nkrumah, undoubtedly the staunchest advocate of and leading ideologue for continental unity in his time. For Pan-Africanism to succeed in a meaningful way, particularly with the use of public address, African culture cannot be left out as part of a continental rhetorical campaign. Rhetorical venues have to expand beyond the meeting halls of continental headquarters such as the African Union, to address mass audiences in small towns and villages in the continent.

The message design has to incorporate cultural amplification devices known to work well in oramedia channels. The amplification devices should emphasize the *communal – political, social and economic –* benefits for all in a united Africa. What we witness presently, however,

is a massive obsession by the African leaders with showing the world that they are committed to the principles of Western democracy without much regard for the important role African culture could play in targeting and getting the mass of Africans to understand Pan-Africanism and how its aims and objectives are consistent with the day to day mores of large communal societies in the continent, and would result in the elevation of living standards for all.

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Language, mobility, African writers and Pan-Africanism

By Francis B. Nyamnjoh & Katleho Shoro

Abstract

This article argues that Pan-Africanism is best seen and articulated as a flexible, inclusive, dynamic and complex aspiration in identity making and belonging. The micro- and macro-level importance of pan-Africanism, makes writing it both abstract and grounded, local and global, just as the unity, solidarities and relevance it seeks and promotes. Pan-Africanism, far from promising a single identity, is about offering a mental space for disparate identities to co-exist in freedom and dignity. The paper explores how African writers have dealt with the issue of language and mobility central to Pan-Africanism, and argued in favor of recognizing the creative negotiation and navigation by Africans of various linguistic and identity margins in their flexibility and conviviality about what it means to be African.

Key words: Pan-Africanism, African writers, African literature, African languages, African nationalism, African diasporas

Introduction:

Pan-Africanism emphasizes African unity beyond identities confined by geography, primordialism and narrow nationalism, and champions socio-political inclusiveness for all those who willingly claim or are compelled to identify with the “Black” race and a place called “Africa” (Fanon, 1967; Senghor, 1977; Mkandawire, 2005; Bah, 2005; Biney, 2011). As a quest for a global Black or African community, Pan-Africanism is an *aspirational* project towards a world informed by

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solidarities and identities shaped by a humanity of common predicaments. It is the glue to hold together the dreams and aspirations of Blacks divided, *inter alia*, by geography, ethnicity, class, gender, age, culture or religion. Far from overlooking the divisions that these factors give rise to amongst Blacks locally and globally, Pan-Africanism promotes a strategic essentialism around the fact and experience of being Black in a world of hierarchies of purity shaped by being White. The fact of the forced or voluntary mobility that has made of being Black and African a global and dynamic reality, means that Pan-Africanism as an ideology and an aspiration is realizable anywhere in the world.

Little wonder that Pan-Africanism is claimed not only on the continent called Africa, but globally (Europe, United States, the Caribbean, Latin America, parts of South Asia, the Middle East, India, Australia, New Guinea, etc.). Indeed, as a movement, Pan-Africanism originated not in Africa, but in the West Indies, amid feelings of nostalgia about and occasional dreams of an eventual return to a lost home land – mother Africa. We are all familiar with the literature and music of nostalgia and dreams of an idealized Africa by diasporic writers and artists claiming descent with the continent (Chapman, 1968). Just as we are familiar with the growing number of African-Americans who are tracing their DNA ancestry back to various regions and countries in Africa (J. & J. Comaroff, 2009, pp. 40-41).

The term “Pan-Africanism” is credited to Henry Sylvestre-Williams and Marcus Garvey, amongst others, renowned for organizing the largest Pan-African movement in history (Dieng, 2005). The ideal of unity for all peoples of African descent has found resonance globally, attracting intellectuals, writers, artists, leaders of religious and cultural movements, and politicians of varying renown. Pan-Africanism has inspired scholarly traditions that privilege African-centred knowledge production, epistemologies and perspectives that challenge perceived Euro-centric (mis)representations of Africa and people of African descent (Obenga, 2001).

In what concerns the scripting of Pan-Africanism on the continent of Africa itself, one need only browse through a few of Nkrumah’s speeches to learn that “Africa must unite”¹ is the slogan that underlines and provides foundation to all his philosophies and, in fact, his legacy. For Nkrumah, Pan-Africanism was not merely an intellectual catchphrase used to garner political support but a series of actions directed at total liberation and consolidation of freedom for those who

identified themselves as African – whether *Africans of the soil* or *Africans of the blood* (Mazrui, 2005, p. 70). Accompanying his devotion to the idea of a united, borderless Africa were the ideas of total African independence (both political and economic), African agency, cooperation among African states, nationalist policies complementing continental and diasporic endeavors, active rediscovery of African history and past achievements as well as an awareness of the “triple consciousness” embodied by Africans (Poe, 2003, pp. 1-7).

This, of course, is an oversimplification of *Nkrumahism* – Nkrumah’s version of Pan-Africanism (Biney, 2011). However, these six elements, as invaluable limbs to the idea of African unity as Nkrumah perceived it, highlight the complexity of his idea of Africa. Moreover, it is with care, with careful consideration of the multiple and varying strains as well as contexts that feed into any single African’s identity, that Pan-African endeavors should be approached and critiqued.

It is in light of these complexities and nuances on the dynamic and complex reality of being African – of which Nkrumah was mindful and sympathetic – that this article explores scripting Pan-Africanism in African literature. The paper seeks to establish the extent to which African writers have embraced and promoted Pan-Africanism, and examines how open and inclusive they have been in this regard. Hence the paper looks at aspects and themes such as African/Black unity, African/Black ways of knowing (African-centred epistemologies), African/Black pride and dignity, cultural revalorization, Pan-African experiences (how these inform characterization, themes, plots, creativity and innovation). It also examines the extent to which Pan-Africanism remains popular with successive generations of authors, and among female and male, francophone and anglophone, lusophone and arabophone, authors, among others (Achebe, 2000; Mkwandawire, 2005; Sutherland-Addy and Diaw, 2005; Beckman and Adeoti, 2006; Okolo, 2007; Bah, 2005).

Scripting Pan-Africanism – A complex aspiration

What does it mean to write in a Pan-African manner? This is a question as difficult to answer as one that seeks to limit the possibilities of what it means to be Pan-African in a dynamic and creative world, where Africans have the capacity, or at least the hope, to keep re-inventing themselves. Thus, to knight some literary contributors with the “Pan-Africanist” title while condemning others as “anti” or “non” pan-African seems too godly a task. Furthermore, searching for

literature that merely epitomizes Nkrumah's views seems an approach that demands an active neglect of the extent to which interpretation, appropriation and context play a role even within the minds and practices of the most religious Nkrumah followers. Meaning being contextual and subject to renegotiation with changing experiences, means that every text is capable of enhancing and even outgrowing its intended meaning.

Thus, we would like to conclude right here, at the beginning of this article, that no single author, piece of writing, performer, performance, sculptor, sculpture, politician, policy, intellectual, or theory, etc, can single-handedly be expected to actualize Nkrumah's or whoever's dream of Pan-Africanism. And perhaps we should not expect them to. Nkrumah advocated African agency, and it is with such freedom of thought and action that authors have sought to articulate the complex realities of post-colonial Africa, in the characters they create and the stories they craft. Even when authors have caricatured ideas and persons, it should be understood more like a literary or pedagogical device aimed at foregrounding often taken for granted aspects of human nature or what it means to be African and Pan-African in real terms in a world on the move.

It is also with agency that Pan-Africanist magazines, journals and networks such as the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and South Africa (OSSREA), the Association of African Universities (AAU), Chimurenga and Pambazuka News, have sought not only to revive Pan-Africanism, but also to render such revivalism relevant to the challenges of the present context. Nkrumah advocated pride in the cultures, histories and peoples of Africa and African descent, a plea re-actualized by musicians such as Fela Kuti of Nigeria and Bob Marley of Jamaica, and creatively appropriated by a younger generation of writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who are constantly negotiating and navigating such myriad identity margins as epitomized by President Barrack Obama (Obama 2004).

It is in heeding such a call that authors such as Achebe and p'Bitek have not only documented the richness of Igbo and Acholi cultures respectively, but have made their writings epitomes of the imagery and figures of speech that make of the Igbo and Acholi languages the heritage, pride and treasure of their people, without seeking to limit the ambitions of these very same people to a monolithic sense of heritage, pride and treasure. The writings are

crafted with such care and are so colorfully embedded in the cultures and languages from which the authors draw, that they serve to invite readers not only to admire and desire the writers' oratory but also to ponder their own and reflect on the similarities behind an appearance of difference. When Achebe, for example, writes that proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten in his Igbo community, he offers readers throughout Africa and the African diaspora, an opportunity to compare and situate his work in relation to their own lived experiences and practices, thereby fostering, even unconsciously, the idea of Pan-Africanism as an aspiration for shared meaning (Achebe, 1986, 2000; p'Biteh, 1984; Okolo, 2007; Beckman and Adeoti, 2006).

Nkrumah advocated political independence for Africa, drawing as much from as he fed into the experiences of Africans in the diaspora (Biney, 2011). Ngugi raised his hand the highest in the class of noteworthy Anglophone writers and pronounced his shift to writing, first and foremost, in Gikuyu, despite criticism that such a focus on his native Gikuyu community and language would make his writing inaccessible to his other African readers. He saw in this move the best form of the mental decolonization he sought, what effective independence as a writer meant, and what he imagined his obligations to be. To him, Pan-Africanism translated into pride and self-worth, but had its foundation in the valorization of endogenous African languages, which under colonial education and might were relegated to the background in favor of European languages (Ngugi 1986, 1997, 2005).

In light of the different positions by African writers on what African cultures mean and the role of language in promoting them, each African literary work should not be judged at face value with cosmetic indicators, but rather, should be seen as open to multiple interpretations. Each text is thus potentially for or against Pan-Africanism, depending on what meaning is given such an aspirational identity. Critical of narrow nationalism though the idea of pan-African unity is, every claim or seeming articulation of narrow nationalism could always be justified in the argument that continental and transcontinental Pan-Africanism can only succeed to the extent that it is solidly founded on local and micro level solidarities within the constituent nation-states of Africa and the African diaspora. In the same way, writers can only appeal to universal humanity by writing about the human experiences they know at a local, national level.

It is thus not by denying culture difference or glossing over the challenges of multiple languages, multiple identities, borders and

boundaries that Pan-Africanism shall be attained. Rather, it is in recognizing how different writers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds encourage African independence, freedom, unity, and dreams. Difference is thus best thought of as complementary to the Pan-African aspiration that is premised on cooperation, not homogeneity of thought and action. Differently stated, perhaps in the assessing of Pan-Africanism in literature, we should explore how Ngugi's insistence on Gikuyu builds pride and how that pride helps in reading Tutuola's, Achebe's and Wole's pidginization/creolization or the quest for lingua franca as authentic means of representation and popularization as opposed to a mere quirk (Okolo, 2007; Barber, 1995). Consequently, in taking seriously the complexity of a Nigerian character's identity, a South African could, even in the slightest way, identify with the character or appreciate the nuances that exist beyond *District 9's* portrayal of Nigerians as a catalogue of negativities. In appreciating nuances, we may begin looking at Nyamnjuh's (2008) *Mimboland* not as a single country occupied by *those* binge-drinkers that look like Dieudonné, but as a space we all occupy or would love to occupy in one way or the other, and with which we all must reckon as we seek to forge Pan-African conviviality. In this way, Pan-Africanism, far from promising a single identity, is about offering a mental space for disparate identities to co-exist in freedom and dignity.

In viewing the efforts and works of writers in this way, moments of unity on a macro-level are given the space to emerge from very micro-level efforts. Thus, small scale endeavors and activities are just as important to Pan-Africanism as are large scale initiatives and abstract academic debates about the challenges of putting together what geography, race, ethnicity, class, language, gender and generation are so determined to put asunder. As eloquently articulated in a classroom debate on the subject of revising the role of the intellectual in present-day scholarship, this process of overcoming the differences and difficulties that exist amongst Africans, especially racial and ethnic differences, cannot be achieved through a miraculous, osmotic phenomenon. This process requires active strategizing, revising, and reflexivity. It requires as well taking into account the reality of Africans, big and small, as negotiators and navigators of various encounters with difference, local and global.

The challenges, posed by narrow identities or rigid yardsticks of inclusion were long predicated by DuBois, in his rendition of Pan-Africanism. Nkrumah, on the other hand, believed that in unity lay the

solution to African problems (Biney, 2011). It seems more relevant to our present Africa to consider dealing with these differences before, or better yet, whilst attempting to unite. An active pursuit of literary cooperation, or rather ways in which different literatures and literary differences can complement each other, needs to be brought to the fore in contemporary analyses of writing relevant to Pan-Africanism. This is not to say it does not exist but to stress that instead of asking for all writers, all the time, to be faithful ambassadors for their traditions while simultaneously requiring them to be obviously Africa-friendly, it may be more useful to see what conversations the small scale has been having with the large scale and decipher what has worked thus far.

One of the most significant aspects of Nkrumah's vision of unity is that it leaves much space for collective and individual interpretation, thus allowing unity to be actualized from different angles and levels. Of course, this means that there will be conflicting views about how to go about uniting Africans and uniting as Africans, but then again, who ever heard of relatives who do not bicker at the peak of their affection for one another? In being open for discussion and interpretation, Pan-Africanism is allowed to exist amongst the most mundane lived moments, belong to ordinary Africans, while also existing in academic, broad theory, and as a social project. In this way, it is always in the process of becoming, always a fulfilling aspiration. This paper explores varying African texts with a specific focus on the language debate, and on accelerated flexible mobility and the reality of multiple identities in a continent and world glued, paradoxically, to ever diminishing circles of inclusion.

Language in the scripting of Pan-Africanism

Central to the valorization and reproduction of every culture or movement is communication, and the key to communication is language. Colonialism was instrumental in the devaluation of endogenous African languages. A central Pan-Africanism objective therefore, has been to seek ways of revalorizing African languages, seeking lingua franca from the creative domestication and blending of colonial languages with endogenous African languages, and simply using the colonial languages in authentically African ways, in the manner artfully employed by Tutuola in the *Palm Wine Drinkard* and his other novels. Amos Tutuola's writings are an example of how Africans are busy creolizing inherited European languages through promoting intercourse with African languages, and in turn enriching

local languages through borrowings.

The question of language has thus received much attention, especially after 1963 when Obi Wali asked African writers to be mindful of the detrimental effects of using European languages uncritically (Wali, 1963). Language was, and remains, highly contested and important to consider in the bid to foster and consolidate African independence and fulfil the ideal of being African. Language is intrinsically connected to a people's culture, history, ability to relate, in sum: a people's identity (Isola, 1992; Ngugi, 1986, 1997, 2005; Anyidoho, 1989; Mazrui, 2005, p. 64; Okolo, 2007). Despite the many, conflicting debates that have ensued from the heyday of new independence, a clear resolution cannot be said to have emerged. Still, the question of language has certainly not lost its value especially in this period of active Pan-African revivalism in which we find ourselves, this very article being a token of the revivalism.

The debate about a writer's choice in language, as Gyasi (1999) insists, is really a debate about a writer's attitude with regard to the European language; the value the writer assigns to the European language, how the writer uses the language and to what ends (Gyasi, 1999, p. 75). This attitude, in turn, speaks to the writers attitudes towards their own language and perhaps more significantly, their own identity. Of course, this very argument should be, and has been, inversed for writers using African languages. The attitude that writers have vis-à-vis the African language they use is also indicative of the writer's attitude toward European languages and, yet again, their own identity. Mafeje on the other hand argues that "[i]t is not the language used which makes modern African literature 'African' but rather the symbols, the rhetoric, and the ethos invoked" (Mafeje, 1997, p. 17). "These are identifiable as authentically African," he continues. "That does not mean, however, that they are fixed. They are changeable according to the historical and social context" (Mafeje, 1997, p.17). It is thus important to see how African writers creatively appropriate or endogenize European languages by infusing them with African symbolism and idioms.

Thus, in this paper, when we speak of language we take into consideration these changeable cultural aspects of language of which Majefe speaks. However, to this list, characterization should be added. The addition seems fitting because it is through characters, particularly protagonists, their interaction with their environments, self-identification and the symbols, rhetoric and ethos invoked through

their language that we gain great insight into an author's attitude vis-à-vis language – indigenous or endogenous –, culture and identities. In accepting that language with the symbols, rhetoric and ethos embedded within it as well as characters moulded from it are what truly determine the Africanity of a text, we also accept that the perception of Africanity changes from author to author, and from text to text with the same author. Consequently, the changeable perception of Africanity translates into a changeable perception of how Pan-Africanism is evoked within texts.

There are two dominant arguments included in the language debate that this paper explores in light of Pan-Africanism. The first is an argument endorsed by Ngugi through his switch to writing in Gikuyu and Swahili. This argument holds that the only way to truly preserve African cultures is by preserving the languages in which they exist and grow. Writers like Ngugi therefore view writing in African languages as vital to this preservation process. Their quest to protect endangered languages and cultures is thus their contribution to Pan-Africanism – seeking to restore pride in cultures at local levels and, more specifically, speaking to and in a language recognizable to their local communities. In this way he seeks to guarantee that he and his people shall not be gatecrashers or bystanders in the stories of their lives. Even Nkrumah, in his advocacy for unity, made no secret that Ghana and the British pattern may, at times, be emphasized because these were part of his personal experience and sources of inspiration for his political philosophies and intellectual processes (Nkrumah, 1963, p. xi). When noted in line with Nkrumah's acknowledgement of the role specific cultural systems played in shaping his very philosophies, one cannot help but realize the importance of cultures in their specificity. Moreover, one realizes that actively seeking to preserve and promote particular cultural communities are by no means acts of anti-Pan-Africanism, given that Pan-Africanism is an aspiration with no predetermined footpaths beyond desired unity in diversity.

The second perspective in the language debate belongs to most writers including Achebe, Ekwensi, p'Bitek and Wole Soyinka who have chosen to "Africanize" or endogenize colonial languages and/or write in pidgin instead of committing to "clean" versions of either colonial or indigenous languages. These authors not only consciously attempt to straddle the two languages, and in fact cultures, as effectively as possible, but have also placed emphasis on the multiculturalism and complexity involved in the lives of colonized

peoples. This second category of literary contributors who write in colonial languages extends to encompass those who see colonial languages as tools for speaking to a larger African audience, including diasporic Africans and, depending on the author, the Arabic audience often and arbitrarily excluded from the African peoples checklist. These writers appeal to the practicality of colonial languages and, in so doing, attempt to foster more inclusive conversations through their work. The reason these writers do not necessarily receive a category of their own is because although they first and foremost write in colonial languages, they aim to do so in a manner which speaks of and to African experiences. Consequently, as regards Majefe's definition of an Africanized text, by speaking to and of African experiences these authors include African symbols, characters, rhetoric, ethos and creative use of colonial languages within their texts. Here, the litmus test for Pan-Africanism is not necessarily in how authentically African a language is, but rather, in how creative Africans are in their appropriation of colonial languages to address issues of Pan-African resonance. In this way, colonial languages lose their foreignness through creative local usage.

It is in this regard that Karin Barber (1995) is instructive in her critique of the stringent binary between colonial and African languages which African literary critics, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, have come to emphasize in their dealing with the language question. She holds that by applying the binary without paying attention to the complexities involved, Africans' experiences with the two languages are distorted and oversimplified. Furthermore, often, the implicit assumption in this binary has been that colonial languages possess a better value than African languages; a perpetuation of the colonial view of language (Barber, 1995, p. 11). The notion that African identity is a complex one and Pan-Africanism an aspiration and dynamic quest for inclusion should be reiterated to avoid oversimplification. Language categories are best seen as heuristic devices meant to illuminate the different yet often complementary Pan-African rhetoric.

The workings of Pan-Africanism in an African tongue

Ngugi has, on multiple occasions, stated that the struggle for liberation translates into a struggle for self-regulation and self-determination – the autonomy and dignity that Nkrumah saw as essential to making possible one's idea of being African (Ngugi, 1986, p.4 and from personal interviews). The choice of language in literature

is important because language is central to self-definition in relation to one's own body and mind, one's nature, environment and universe as well as one's relation to others (Ngugi 1986, 1997, 2005). Thus, for Ngugi, language, as a means of communication, reinforces the culture embedded within it while language, as a carrier of culture, sustains the ability of people to communicate and reproduce themselves in dignity (Ngugi, 1986, pp.13-14). Once again the idea of language being intrinsically tied to identity comes to the fore.

In 1977, Ngugi and his colleagues at Nairobi University sought to explore matters of literature, theatre and culture outside the academic context, in a village near Nairobi². It is here that the impracticalities of English as a means of communication amongst ordinary, non-literate Gikuyu-speaking Africans became most glaring to Ngugi. He made the switch from English to producing his creative works in Gikuyu as a way of being relevant and effectively communicating with ordinary folks. The result of the shift was that his audience also became his prime market³, particularly in light of rural-based theatre. The effectiveness of this switch is often measured through the banning and arresting of Ngugi for his politically-charged play, *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I will marry when I choose, 1982)* as well as *Matigari ma njirunngi (1989)* (Anyidoho, 1988, p.21). In applying his literature to a lived context – among predominantly non-literate, rural Gikuyu speakers – Ngugi was able to deal with the question of promoting and preserving culture through language in the most practical terms: through Gikuyu, and through theatre (Okolo, 2007).

Ngugi, as writer, responded directly to the neo-colonial situation in Kenya by raising consciousness⁴. This entailed challenging himself to overcome language as an obstacle between the intellectuals who often speak of the liberation and politics of “the masses” instead of speaking *to* and *with* “the masses” about liberation and politics. Moreover, Ngugi was also able to identify theatre as a practical means of conveying his literature. Thus, the meaning of the politics within his work had to be relevant, had to be *of the people* and through this, communication and culture were closely entwined. Ayi Kwei Armah(2008)⁵ speaks of how important it is for empowered, thinking, self-trusting and self-sustaining communities to be encouraged, instead of having communities of people depend on leaders who prefer to withhold knowledge for their convenience, manipulate trust and understandably, who are incapable of popular governance, even with the best of good intentions. This simple yet crucial point is in line with

the ideal of being African envisaged by Nkrumah: a self-determining, independent and confident personality able to look inward for answers and solutions to their own problems⁶. Ayi Kwei Armah's point is also in close conversation with Ngugi's decision to use Gikuyu.

Ngugi's shift to Gikuyu has, of course, been criticized as an anti-Pan-Africanist move because of the way writing in Gikuyu limits his literature to those who speak the language, thus excluding the majority of Africans. Notwithstanding the criticism, one cannot deny that Africa is in fact a fragmented, largely oral, continent. Thus, even if Ngugi had written solely in English there would still be a large number of people unacquainted with his work. It is in looking to produce literature that speaks directly to and of his own environment that Ngugi decreases his risk of making abstract assertions about the obstacles facing "his people" in their bid for attaining and maintaining liberation and their ability to self-determine and self-regulate, the way academia often does. Also, in looking to the particular geographical spaces with which the literary contributor's identity is entwined, the idea of African solutions for African problems as advocated by Nkrumah is given the chance to materialize. Concentrating on the particular also leaves room for literature, in whatever form, to be translated into other languages thus bridging the gap between the national and international. What is more, translation made as mindfully as original texts⁷, allows these subsequent translated texts to take into consideration the idiosyncrasies of the presumed audience. This is not to assume that there exists a homogenized English or Swahili audience but to allow for the Gikuyu version to be translated by the author in a way that makes the material relevant and meaningful to these audiences too.

Notwithstanding the attractions of writing in African languages, there are indeed only a few writers who have taken the decision, like Ngugi, to write in endogenous African languages and received enough attention for them to be featured in the language debate. There are two reasons that immediately help explain this phenomenon, or lack thereof. The first is that often the audience really is not the market, especially for written texts, and writers - even those with intentions to raise the consciousness of people and build their particular countries and communities - tend to aspire to make a living out of their writing and perhaps even earn recognition beyond the community demographic (Owomoyela, 1993, pp.353-4). The second reason, which steers us to the next set of African writers, is that a growing number of people in Africa actually straddle both an African and colonial language thus

inheriting cultures and memories embedded in both. Still, although there are only a handful of authors who choose to produce their written works in only an African language, conception of literature cannot be limited to written forms. The more interactive forms of literature such as performance poetry – as in Zulu oral poetry, *izinbongo*, live audio drama and theatre (like in Ngugi's case as well as Yoruba theatre) - are forms of literature that not only rely on African languages but also often thrive on being relevant to particular social contexts and details.

Ngugi and his followers have a point in the route they have chosen to emphasize in the pursuit of African dignity and dreams of Pan-Africanism. Like him, Akinwumi Isola (1992) argues that African literature has to be in African languages, for African children to enjoy it not only as literature, but also as their identity, a source of pride. Others, like Karin Barber (1995), while agreeing with the need for the valorization of endogenous African languages, are critical of any assertion that seems to suggest Africans are passive consumers of colonial languages. Such views and their binary opposition, as far as she is concerned, oversimplify African experiences and creative appropriation and uses of languages, both foreign and local in origin. Just as endogenous African languages are the repository of the memories of the Africans who use these languages⁸, so too have Africans who have learned to use colonial languages and function in local and global contexts shaped by those languages, have memories of which colonial languages are repositories. The challenge is thus not to seek to undo colonial influences in Africa, but rather to creatively blend them with endogenous influences, drawing on memories made possible by intimate encounters of both. It is, therefore, a people's capacity to pass down the memory embedded in language to succeeding generations as well as their capacity to negotiate the construction and preservation of new memories that make language a recurring, vital, dynamic topic of discussion.

Straddling colonial and endogenous languages and cultures

Multilingualism and multiculturalism may not be a new, surprising phenomenon especially on a continent housing a multitude of mobile language groups, often within close geopolitical and cultural proximity to each other. With the language debate, however, as Barber (1995) objects, the post-colonial writer's choice of language, thus culture, has often been painted as a simple choice between a European and an

African language, thus a choice between identifying as faux European or proud African. As Barber asserts, the choice is not that simple because Africans have had different experiences with colonial languages as creative users. For example, many ordinary South Africans are more fluent in Afrikaans as opposed to English, and Swahili in East Africa was encouraged as a common means of communication and trade between Arabs, the British and Africans thus making it the most prevalent language to date in the region.

Also on this point, while African Americans cannot choose to write in an African language even if they so wished, Yoruba-speaking Nigerians' narrative around colonial imposition includes missionaries *promoting* Yoruba-literacy as well the use of Yoruba in creative expression as opposed to the prevalent narrative of pawning "underprivileged" Yoruba off for "valuable" English (Barber, 1995, p.15). In addition to the varying experiences with colonial languages, the diverse appropriations of endogenous languages and their blends with colonial languages have resulted in an amazing and constantly changing linguistic landscape in Africa. One need only slightly eavesdrop into a conversation between a group of township-bred males in a place like Soweto to hear a single sentence containing elaborate Afrikaans words, infused with hints of English and sandwiched between a combination of isiZulu and Sesotho-Tswana. Similarly, young cell phone and internet users combine endogenous African and European languages with fascinating creativity, in their chats and SMS texts (Demeurt and Masinyana, 2008).

These are the kinds of sentences that make grandmothers cringe at their impurity, grandfathers catch a case of déjà vu and school-teachers shake their heads in regret about falling standards of English and Afrikaans amongst modern-day youth. The point here is that, because of the different experiences with African and colonial languages and, in fact, the varying experiences involved in being African, no Pan-African blueprint can be provided. Majefe notes:

...a difference is discernible between even contemporary modern African writers such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, and Okot p'Biket on the one hand, and Ousmane Sembene and Ngugi wa Thiong'o on the other. The former implicitly accepted the classical European model of "gemeinschaft" versus "Gesellschaft" but could not fully commit themselves to its logical imperative because they remained loyal to the traditional African ethos in conjunction with bourgeois liberal values. In our view, this is vividly reflected in works such as Chinua Achebe's *Things fall apart*,

No longer at Ease, a Man of the People, and Arrow of God: Wole Soyinka's Interpreters; Okot p'Bitek's Song of Lawino, notwithstanding the nationalistic rhetoric in their texts. In contrast, Ousmane Sembene and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's works represent a critique of both traditional African societies and the perversions of bourgeois neo-colonialism in Africa... Yet, neither side could be accused of losing sight of what they perceive as the "Africanness" or "Africanity" of the landscapes they paint." (Mafeje, 1997, p. 17)

It is evident that different authors tackle Pan-Africanism from varying angles. Whereas some look to preserve and reproduce that which they believe can only be found in particular geopolitical spaces, others attempt to reconcile what is usually seen as opposing identities to create a postcolonial identity resembling their own lived experience as complex, dynamic and constantly renegotiated. Other authors look, first and foremost, to speak to Africans in the colonial languages and lingua franca that have presented themselves as vehicles for common communication. However, in viewing these approaches as complementary, one can see how important the micro- and the macro-levels are in articulating and keeping alive dreams of Pan-Africanism. The relationship between the micro and the macro should not be viewed simply as a relationship between the national and international but also relationships between homes and community, villages and the national, the national and inter-continental, the individual and the group. It is in not promoting difference but accepting it nonetheless that both the choices of presenting texts in African languages and colonial languages can be seen as complementary. Indeed, all languages actively and creatively appropriated by Africans become endogenous African languages regardless of their origins. The test of what constitutes an African language thus becomes *how* Africans actively use and relate to any language, and not necessarily on whether or not the language is originally African.

The dangers of narrow nationalism

One of the greatest threats to Pan-Africanism in an Africa of flexible mobility – where it is all too common for people to move around like the “wandering cattlemen” of northern Nigeria in Cyprian Ekwensi's *Burning Grass* (1964) – is the danger of narrow nationalism. This was a problem perceptively predicted by Franz Fanon in the nascent years of post-colonial nationalisms. As Fanon argued, citizenship, “instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the

whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people”, has turned out to be “only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been” with a greater sense of flexible inclusion (Fanon, 1967, p.119). Under the coercive illusion of the “nation-state”, citizenship, far from celebrating a common humanity, has merely served to justify the trivialization and debasement of some and the glorification of others. This is especially the case in today’s world of accelerated mobility. As a continent of people on the move, it is a contradiction for nationalism to be predicated upon policing identities and seeking to confine flexible mobility to a handful of elite. Faced with ever more insidious ways by states and markets to police the movements of people and alternative cultural influences, all writers that choose not to take identities and belonging at face value, but to critically interrogate the boundaries of exclusion, can only be of service to pan-Africanism. These writers are an aspiration capable of uniting not only continental Africa and the African diaspora, but humanity at large, around the core values of what it means to be human and free.

In this regard, we would like to pay special tribute to the late South African novelist, Phaswane Mpe, author of *Welcome to our Hillbrow*. The novel explores the tensions and temptations of the sort of narrow nationalism which Fanon cautions against. Written basically in two voices, the novel dwells at length on the pros and cons of narrow nationalism and pan-Africanism. The first voice, in favour of narrow nationalism, celebrates official rhetoric internalized by ordinary black South Africans of having graduated into citizenship, only for this to be endangered by the influx of *Makwerekwere* (black Africans from countries further up beyond the Limpopo River) with little but trouble to offer.

There are black South Africans who feel strongly that *Makwerekwere* “should remain in their own countries and try to sort out the problems of these respective countries, rather than fleeing them”, since South Africa has “too many problems of its own”, and “cannot be expected to solve all the problems of Africa”. Negative views about African migrants are particularly dangerous when held by the police. We gather from the novel how policemen arrest *Makwerekwere*, “Drive them around Hillbrow for infinite periods of time”, saying: “See it for the last time, bastards” (Mpe, 2001, p. 21).

The second voice is more measured, and constantly tries to mitigate the tendency to scapegoat and stereotype *Makwerekwere*, who, most of

the time, are not as guilty as they are painted. As we gather from the novel, it is outright dishonest to blame the woes of post-apartheid South Africa entirely on *Makwerekwere*, who are often “too much in need of sanctuary... to risk attracting the attention of police and security services.” Unlike South African blacks, *Makwerekwere* are only too aware of how limited their recourse to legal defence is if they are caught. “The police could detain or deport them without allowing them any trial at all. Even the Department of Home Affairs ... [is] not sympathetic to their cause” and few seem to care that the treatment of *Makwerekwere* by the police, and the lack of sympathy from the influential Department of Home Affairs, runs “contrary to the human rights clauses detailed in the new constitution of the country” (Mpe, 2001, p. 23).

If South Africa is overflowing with *Makwerekwere* seeking greener pastures, it is partly in response to the welcoming gestures of the first president of the new South Africa, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, “unlike his predecessors who erected deadly electric wire fences around the boundaries of South Africa trying to keep out the barbarians from Mozambique, Zaire, Nigeria, Congo, Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe, Angola, Zambia and from all over Africa fleeing their war-torn countries populated with starvation like Ethiopia flashing across” (Mpe, 2001, p. 26). But once in South Africa, *Makwerekwere* are seldom welcome to stay, as South African media, television especially, drum up xenophobic sentiments with images of *Makwerekwere* “every now and then ... stretching their legs and spreading like pumpkin plants filling every corner of our city and turning each patch into a Hillbrow coming to take our jobs in the new democratic rainbowism of African Renaissance that threatened the future of the locals Bafana Bafana fans” (Mpe, 2001, pp. 26-27). While they may show vocal support for Black non-South African football teams, whenever they played against European clubs, some local Bafana Bafana fans demonstrate “glaringly ... prejudice towards Black foreigners the rest of the time”, snatching every opportunity “to complain about the crime and grime in Hillbrow,” for which they hold such foreigners responsible – “not just for the physical decay of the place, but the moral decay” as well. Black and white South Africans tend to be agreed that “Hillbrow had been just fine until those Nigerians came in here with all their drug dealing” (Mpe, 2001, pp. 17,118).

Mpe reminds us of how easily narrow nationalism can jeopardize

Pan Africanism. How, he asks, through one of his characters, could South Africans have become so oblivious of the gestures of Pan-African hospitality and solidarity they received in the days of apartheid? How could they forget that “some *Makwerekwere* were fleeing their war-torn countries to seek sanctuary here in our country, in the same way that many South Africans were forced into exile in Zambia, Zaire, Nigeria and other African and Non- African countries during the Apartheid era”? (Mpe, 2001, pp. 18-19; see also Neocosmos, 2010).

Obsession with narrow nationalism is not just a South African issue (Nyamnjuh 2006, 2010; Englebert 2009, pp.197-218). The rhetoric of Pan-Africanism, free flows and dissolving boundaries is countered by the intensifying reality of borders, divisions and violent strategies of exclusion almost everywhere on the continent. Nkrumah, addressing heads of state in Addis Ababa, warned that a gradual approach to African unity would possibly deepen isolations and exclusiveness, thus making unity and peace harder to actualize. As the current reality of national and intra-national tensions reveals, Nkrumah was right (Nkrumah, 1963; Biney, 2011). The questioning of previous assumptions about nationality, citizenship, solidarity and inter-connectedness is on the increase. This is as true of how nationals and citizens perceive and behave towards one another as insiders, as it is of how they behave towards immigrants, migrants, and/or foreigners as outsiders. The crisis of citizenship and subjection flamed by mutually exclusionary discourses and claims of entitlement and injury by the Hutu-Tutsi divide in Rwanda that resulted in the genocidal extravaganza of 1994 (Mamdani, 2001), along with the current conflict in Côte d’Ivoire fuelled by competing and exclusionary claims of *Ivoirité* [Ivorianness] (Thiémélé, 2003) are sufficiently indicative of how increasingly difficult it is to be sanguine about belonging in Africa, despite continued aspirations towards Pan-Africanism.

Acting out the Pan-African script: counter-actions to narrow nationalism

Up until this point of the article, we have argued for single acts and texts from literary contributors to be viewed as branches that potentially make up the ideological and aspirational tree that is Pan-Africanism. In the section above, we have noted that the perils of overly-narrow and excluding narratives cannot and should not be overlooked. Nevertheless, we still insist that it is in cultivating a spirit of independence and pride for many ordinary, often non-Europhone

people, together with attempting to unify Africans on a broader level that Pan-Africanism can really be realized. This part of the paper, however, serves as telling of the multitude of literary works, organizations and literary contributors that actively work to foster Pan-African unity, cross-border collaborations and inter-continental partnerships amongst Africans. While it is clearly not within the scope of this paper to discuss such initiatives in detail, a brief overview of a few should suffice to demonstrate our point.

At the beginning of his career, Wole Soyinka had a preoccupation with Southern Africa and wrote extensively about colonialism in the region. Soyinka has written poems for Nyerere in "Ujamaa" and has published an anthology titled *Mandela's Earth and Other Poems*. Moreover, in *The Fourth Stage*, Soyinka has gone beyond attempting to unite Africans by conjoining Greek and Yoruba deities and realities to illuminate the similarities running through humanity in general. In an interview with Biodun Jeyifo, Soyinka stated that those, such as Chinweizu, who have accused him of being a Europhile for drawing on European traditions and cultures and collapsing the dichotomy between what is seen as European and African, fail to recognize or rather appreciate that creativity draws from many sources (Jeyifo, 1985). His intra-continental as well as inter-continental contributions should still be viewed in light of the fact that he has produced poetry in Yoruba as well as creative works, including radio skits and theatre sketches, that speak directly to Nigeria and West Africa. These examples alone indicate the centrality of Pan-Africanism in Soyinka's works. What is more striking is his unapologetic attitude about not only being influenced by ideas and struggles beyond West Africa but also seeking to unearth creativity wherever it can be found. Thus, according to Soyinka, if Pan-Africanism is an aspiration towards reconquering Africa's humanity diminished by colonial encounters, what can be better than appealing to African and Greek deities to re-enchant the world as a whole with humanity?

Ayi Kwei Armah set out to write a modern novel using the plural voice of the people through the concept of Anansi – the tale of the trickster spider prevalent in West Africa. In order to attain this plural voice, he actively explored this concept of Anansi in the different African regions⁹. It is in seeking the similarities - the threads that run through supposedly different societies - and seeking them in the oral traditions in which such African cultural symbols exist that we

acknowledge Ayi Kwei Armah's efforts and contributions to the ever widening circles of inclusion that being African entails.

CODESRIA goes beyond being a research institute, to assume the position of intellectual flag-bearer of Pan-Africanism. It champions the quest for African perspectives and methodologies to inform African knowledge production. Conscious of the cultural and linguistic diversity of the continent, CODESRIA plays a leading role of encouraging interaction and networking across the various subregions, disciplines and language divides. It organizes workshops and seminars that provide for simultaneous interpretation between French, English, Portuguese and Arabic, as its four working languages. In addition to publishing in all four languages, CODESRIA also translates from one language to another, the books it publishes. CODESRIA regularly celebrates African achievements, illuminate histories, and pays tributes to outstanding African intellectuals such as Kwame Nkrumah, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, Archie Mafeje, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Wole Soyinka. In this way, CODESRIA contributes to keeping alive Pan-Africanism and its aspirations in scholarly debates, research endeavors, and policy circles through promoting policy dialogue between scholars and political and civil society leaders.

FESPACO (Festival panafricain du cinéma et de la télévision de Ouagadougou) is the largest film and television festival in Africa, hosted biennially in Burkina Faso, which focuses on African Film and African Filmmakers. PAFF (Pan African Film Festival), on the other hand, is a larger version of FESPACO held in the United States. PAFF, from 1992 when it first began, not only attempts to promote the African American film industry but also hosts films and other culturally inspired forms of art such as poetry and art from Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe and other people of African descent. The point here is not to glamourize the reach of PAFF over FESPACO but attempt to illuminate the multiple efforts that have gone into promoting visual literature on the continent and amongst Africans. Similar efforts have been made on smaller scales.

Poetry Africa as well as other Pan-African poetry endeavors such as Badilisha play a vital role in promoting storytelling, creative writing and performance in its many forms. Not only do they bring together poets to perform annually, these organizations also bring them together to conduct workshops, produce collaborative works and host talks in alternative spaces such as schools and community-based arts groups - usually among younger people. It is through Poetry Africa that poets

from across South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and even the USA gather as audiences and performers. It is in the spirit of establishing and encouraging artistic networks that poets such as D'Bi Young, a Jamaican-Canadian, have returned to places like South Africa to produce shows with Cape Townian arts, including students, beyond the initial Badilisha spaces. As of 2010, Badilisha also established itself as a space to connect poets online by allowing and encouraging poets to post and share their recorded works. Not only has this allowed oral literature to, necessarily, exist in virtual spaces that young people occupy but it has also made access to poetry and storytelling easier for those who cannot attend these annual performances.

Thus, it is the networking, making literature accessible, appealing to younger generations and allowing for performances to be defined and redefined as artists see fit that unity (across races, generations and nationalities), innovation and pride around the oral forms of literature are fostered. It is through efforts such that Pan-Africanism is conjured up and enacted.

"Who no know go know". This quote from Fela Kuti is one intrinsically associated with the *Chimurenga*. Fela Kuti himself was a leading Pan-Africanist¹⁰ who looked to other forms of music, especially African, to create his *Afrobeat* music, thus making his constantly included quote mimetic of *Chimurenga's* objectives. "Chimurenga" is a Zimbabwean term popularized by Thomas Mapfumo, whose music was named *Chimurenga* because it represented the struggles of the common people. Since then, "Chimurenga" has come to be synonymous with a Pan-Africanist journal, founded by Ntone Edjabe in 2002. The journal is aimed at bringing to the fore past African icons, present ways of exploring what it means to be African and proud, as well problems such as xenophobia, with which Africans, in their flexible mobility, are faced. The topics covered include literary works, poetry, other Pan-Africanist movements, trends, art and cover a large spectrum of people and icons from Africans. *Chimurenga* publishes a journal both online and in hard copy. One of the most crucial attributes of *Chimurenga* is that it is intently aimed at bringing Pan-Africanism to the younger generation, who are increasingly border-crossers and bridge-builders across a broad range of cultures locally and globally. Thus, its achievements lie not only in bridging the gap between borders and intellectuals but also between generations and the fragmented youth publics on the continent.

Pambazuka News is in its tenth year as a leading electronic bulletin for “Pan-African voices for freedom and justice”. *Pambazuka*, which means “dawn” or “to arise” in Kiswahili, has as its mission to “disseminate analysis and debate on the struggle for freedom and justice” in Africa and the global South. “*Pambazuka News* is produced by a Pan-African community of some 2,600 citizens and organizations – academics, policy makers, social activists, women’s organizations, civil society organizations, writers, artists, poets, bloggers, and commentators who together produce insightful, sharp and thoughtful analyses and make it one of the largest and most innovative and influential web forums for social justice in Africa.”

It is significant, not only that its founder and editor-in-chief – Firoze Manji – is a leading Kenyan public intellectual of Indian descent, but also, that *Pambazuka News* has rapidly become an authoritative platform for weekly commentary on topical local and global issues by intellectuals and activists for social change from Africa and the African diaspora.¹¹ To deny Firoze Manji his Indian origins in the making of his Kenyanness and Pan-Africanism, would be to impoverish the otherwise infinite possibilities of being African epitomized by diasporas in general, and the African diaspora in particular. This is indicative of the sort of flexibility and inclusiveness in belonging that best guarantees the attainment of Pan-Africanism as an aspiration in a world where Africanity is dynamic, complex and constantly renegotiated by Africans and African diasporas, especially the youth.

While these examples are clearly limited, they represent ongoing efforts made by writers and Pan-African organizations towards keeping alive the Pan-African aspirations of Africans and diasporic Africans as open-ended identities. They are testimonies of achieved and achievable Pan-Africanist efforts. Present day Pan-Africanism draws from and feeds into the Pan-Africanism of the past, and its decentralized nature promises an even more accommodating future those seeking solidarities as Africans and Africans in the making (Mazrui, 2005, p. 64). The fact that the interests of Pan-Africanism may also be served by non-Africans, and sometimes even by those considered by Africans as imperialists, is best illustrated by the story of the setting up by Alan Hill of Heinemann publishers of the “African Writers Series”, that made African literature available in Africa and to the wider world, and that has published most of the writers discussed in this paper (Currey, 2008).

Conclusion

Pan-Africanism as an aspiration and work in progress has left few writers in Africa and the African diaspora indifferent. There is no single route for attaining the Pan-African dream, and as Anyidoho observes, “writers of the Pan-Africanism world have always operated and continue to operate along lines that are remarkably similar, in basic orientation as well as in artistic strategy and technique” despite the geographical, historical, cultural, linguistic and political challenges facing them. The fact that they have refused to give up in the face of myriad adversities, means that African writers at home and in the diaspora are not lost to one another and to themselves regardless of their history and present circumstances (Anyidoho, 1989, p. 43).

Writing as communication is subject to multiple interpretations, with intended and unintended meanings. It is therefore not in enough to simply dwell on whether or not the author is consciously Pan-African in the crafting of their texts, but to seek to establish the effects and interpretation of the text in the short, medium and long term that could contribute, often indirectly to the crystallization and edification of Pan-African aspirations. Thus, it is not unthinkable that the same text would at different times in history and in different contexts be simultaneously Pan-African and anti-Pan-African, universalist and nationalist, fix and fluid, African and beyond African. Such ambivalence is in the nature of text and contextual meaning making. For every powerful, violent, and anti-Pan-Africanist example that one witnesses an equally powerful, ambitious and hope-bearing Pan-Africanist talks back to it.

We have argued that the promotion of indigenous and endogenous languages and cultures does not have to be at odds with the use of colonial languages and cultures, in a context where Africans, big and small, are actively navigating and negotiating their various heritages in favour of Pan-Africanism as a complex, inclusive and dynamic aspiration towards dignity and humanity for all. In this regard, different conceptions of Pan-Africanism do not have to be at odds with one another but can be viewed as complementary – a sort of unity in diversity that being Pan-African calls for. The promotion of Pan-Africanism cannot be a promotion of sameness, even as Africans should be encouraged to emphasize inclusion over and above exclusion.

Africanizing texts, upholding African languages in creative endeavors, utilizing concepts and subject matter from other Africans’

experiences and letting younger generations (re)define Africanism and Pan-Africanism for themselves are all simple yet promising ways of achieving Pan-Africanism. As a text in the making, Pan-Africanism is a collective effort in diversity, where the experience of difference both enriches and challenges, and victimhood galvanized to offer the world an opportunity to Africanize humanity and humanize Africanity.

(Footnotes)

¹ Title to one of his books.

² Ibid

³ Akinwumi Isola asserts that there is a clear distinction between a writer's market and audience (Isola, 1992, p. 25). The audience applies to the people for whom the content of the text is relevant while the market refers to the people the book is marketed toward. For Isola, writers who publish their works in foreign languages confuse their market with their audience.

⁴ The writer who responds directly to the problems in his own country and generally raises consciousness is what Ngugi stated as the role of can be found in a compilation of interviews with Ngugi titled *Ngugi wa Thiongo Speaks* (see bibliography).

⁵ This assertion is taken from Part 2 of Ayi Kwei Armah's eight-part video recording on the topic of Africa's need to reawaken. These can be found on *Youtube* under "Awakening" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lv7JZceMCag&feature=related>)

⁶ Momoh makes a similar point in his rejection of Africanist endeavours that openly embrace Eurocentric views instead of redefining African and Africans in a pan-Africanist, Afrocentric light. In his assertions he states that Afrocentric endeavours should look to imbue African people with hope and confidence (Momoh, 1999, p.13). This is an action that this paper has proposed Ngugi and others who have taken the steps to build and preserve the particular have aimed at achieving.

⁷ The phrase is made in light of Gyasi's claim that Ngugi attempted to make the original, Gikuyu version of *Matigari* superior to the translated versions by not imbuing the latter version with the Gikuyu symbols, rhetoric and ethos Gyasi thought made the form a noteworthy text (Gyasi, 1999, p. 81). If nothing else, this very criticism proves the cultural value with which language is laden.

⁸ Ngugi reccurringly makes this point about language being the carrier of memory. An exemplary occasion is at his talk on "Planting African

Memory: The Role of a Scholar in a Postcolonial World” which he delivered on On March 30 2005 for The UO International Studies. This address can be found on *Youtube* through the following hyperlink(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oz87K9l3y2s&feature=related>)

⁹ This can be found in Part 5 of Ayi Kwei Armah’s “Awakening”, (2008) on Youtube.

¹⁰ Randall Grass has written an impressive account of Fela Kuti as a musical maestro, a rebel, political critic as well as an extreme pan-Africanist whose views and actions often asked of Africans to revert back to traditionalism to be truly pan-African and African (Grass, 1986)

¹¹ <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/about.php>

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The oral-aesthetic of Michael Jackson: A model of Pan-African communication

By Malaika Mutere

Abstract

Sankofa is an Akan word from Ghana referring to the quest/journey to return to the source to fetch that which has been lost. Using Michael Jackson as a model, this article presents an Africa-centered perspective of communication based on the oral dynamic that is at the core of what Kwame Nkrumah referred to as an African “personality and identity” - which reveals itself through the language of Africa’s musical traditions. The *oral-aesthetic*, a term coined by the author to capture this cultural essence, is broken down into several motifs – each of which performs a role and provides a lens through which we can identify and interpret the evolution of our individual and collective mythoform(s) on the Pan African stage and in the global village in a holistic way.

Key words: Pan Africanism, oral tradition, matriarchal aesthetics, Michael Jackson, ebonics, monomyth, nommo.

Introduction: *“Where there is no vision, the people perish”*

Kwame Nkrumah was a visionary of Pan-Africanism who led Ghana to independence in 1957, but declared this milestone as “meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of the African continent.” His vision transcended delineations of difference both in Africa and within the diaspora where figures such as Marcus Garvey, George Padmore, and W.E.B. DuBois inspired Nkrumah to promote the panorama of a continent with a shared “African personality and identity” that was emancipated from its European legacy (BBC, 2008).

Ghana’s independence had profound repercussions throughout the Pan-African world and, along with subsequent independence and civil rights victories across Africa and the US, helped generate a new and

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global celebration of Black pride that gained power and revitalized creative expression through the 1960s and beyond. Black Studies emerged in the American academy as a significant corollary of these 1960s emancipation struggles, in contrast to pre-existing African Studies that were born from a Cold War agenda (Mutere, 1992). These new programs, out of which *Afrocentrism* (Asante, 2003 & 1990; Keto, 1989) later evolved, demanded recognition by the university for its academic responsibility to the well-being of America's multicultural social sphere (Karenga, 1993).

It was within this renascent period that the one who would in later years be crowned as the "King of Pop" made his first entrance into the world. James Brown's anthem, *Say It Loud - I'm Black and Proud*, came out in 1968, around the time Motown signed The Jackson 5 to a record deal that would introduce the world to the prodigious talent of the family group's then 10-year-old lead singer, Michael. Billed as bubblegum soul, *I Want You Back*; *ABC*; *The Love You Save*; and *I'll Be There* - their first four singles that made history by all reaching Billboard Top 100 (Gordy, 2009) - are not necessarily the stuff one would associate with Nkrumah's "African personality and identity." Neither, many would argue, was the music or identity that Michael Jackson subsequently presented in his later solo career that earned for him his official bestowal in the ranks of musical royalty.

However, as this paper will examine, one has to delve deeper than the paradox of his surface attributes and wider than either Black or African Studies in the American academy has allowed itself to go in order to discover, from an Africa-centered perspective, that Michael Jackson models a quintessentially African communication style in his musical custodianship and sense of agency. The formidable platform from which Michael communicated his vision to the global village was built on methodologies and aesthetic sensibilities which remain firmly rooted in and informed by the orally-based traditions of the prototypical African community.

The fact that Africa's indigenous personality has remained intact in such modern-day expression as he represents is particularly remarkable given the concerted efforts of European powers to destroy Africa's cultural forms along with its political, economic and social structures during the twin enterprises of colonialism and slavery.

Beyond the geographic separation of the traumatic "middle passage," Africans would be alienated from their natal contexts by such means as dividing ethnic groups en route to the New World; renaming

Africans with slave names; and removing African instruments - particularly drums - from their midst for fear that they would be used to communicate. However, as discussed in this paper, successful outcomes of resistance by enslaved Africans exploited the inability of outsiders to appreciate the depth of these inner cultural processes. Taking a cue from McLuhan's argument of media as "extensions of man" (1964), the author ventures beyond linear, outwardly-focused models of communication - source, message, channel, receiver, and effects (Wilson, 2008) - and examines these as metaphors, intended through aesthetic expression to create a deeper revelation of our individual and collective humanity. As such, the matriarchal orientation of this study (Detels, 1994; Diop, 1990; Gottner-Abendroth, 1985; Mutere, 1995) takes liberties with terms such as "broadcast" which, before it was used in relation to media, originally referred to the literal sowing of seeds by scattering them widely on farms or over fields.

Sankofa is an Akan word from Ghana referring to the quest/journey to return to the source to fetch that which has been lost. In Nkrumah's view, the "African personality and identity" was in danger of being co-opted by prescriptive European models and practices of development. The motifs that collectively comprise what the author has coined as the *Oral-Aesthetic* (1995 & 1997) attempt to create a relevant context within which to discuss how one can identify with - through cultural agency such as Michael Jackson represents - and appreciate this dynamic personality in its culturally-congruent and updated forms in the global village.

The African Oral-Aesthetic

Creational order begins in much the same way for many of the world's peoples: a Supreme Creator whose powers of speech are able to bring the phenomenal realm into existence. In Kemetic (ancient Egyptian) mythology, Thoth - the goddess Ma'at's male counterpart - caused four twin elements or gods to arise out of the primeval matriarchal waters by the words he spoke, and thus created the world. Each twin was male and female, as were the number and pairing of the original ancestors of the Dogon of Mali who emerged from the fullness of *nommo* (Griaule, 1965).

Mbiti (1969), Diop (1990), and others assert the unity of philosophy that lies at the core of the African world. *Nommo* originates from Bantu philosophical thought regarding the universe of forces in which the

visible and invisible are interactive realms of each other, unified in all its forms by *Ntu* – the Creator principle (Jahn, 1990; Kagame, 1976; & Kamalu, 1990). In his documentary entitled *New York, the Secret African City* and in related writings, Robert Farris Thompson has suggested that the Bantu and Yoruba are the strongest African civilizing forces in America today (1974 & 2005).

Much, if not all visually-perceived forms of creativity derives from a vital African oral basis. As Thompson states, “Sculpture is not the central art, but neither is the dance, for both depend on words and music and even dreams and divination” (1974, p. xii). Jahn (1990, p. 122) furthermore points to the contention in Bantu philosophy that the senses of touch, smell and taste are subsumed under the sense of hearing. And as Ong points out, “oral expression can exist and mostly has existed without any writing at all, writing never without orality” (1982, p. 8).

As a broadly-used Africa-centered term, *nommo* denotes the generative power of the spoken Word... the seed... a life-force which nevertheless requires a fertile environment to receive, nurture, bring to fruition, and give ultimate passage to its potential life. That which calls life into being (creation) through such interplay between masculine and feminine life-forces does good, and is therefore beautiful in “aesthetic” terms. There is no separate African linguistic term to distinguish goodness from beauty because one without the other would negate the whole aesthetic concept as it is traditionally understood and built in accordance with nature. *Nommo’s* principle imperative is to aesthetize, or to bring otherwise dormant forces to life, which is consistent with but not limited to the animist view that there is no separation between the spiritual and physical or material world. Both masculine and feminine represent a complementary creational force that explains and necessitates the other and collectively informs the structure and harmonious functioning of the universe. African traditions have ritualized this principle in the oral-aesthetic event that unifies movement in time (music) and space (dance) as a continuum of creation and metaphor for life.

“Music”, in the Western semantic sense, does not exist as a separate African term (Keil, 1975, p. 27; Waterman, 1993, p. 250) but is indigenously understood as an enhanced sounding of the Word... *nommo*. Traditionally regarded as an enhanced form of walking and physical extension of sound, neither is the “dance” separated as an aesthetic category. Colonial languages have imposed such perceptual

distortions on the traditional African cosmological order (Gourlay, 1984: 35). To detach “music” from its “dance” would interfere with the oral-aesthetic conceptual process... its patterns of creational order... its integrative and communal imperatives... its governing narratives... and its transcendental passageways.

Therefore a culturally-congruent vocabulary is made necessary in order to understand the dynamic essence of orally-based phenomenon in the Africa-centered cosmology, and to validate and maintain its integrity within the context of human struggle... as *art-for-life's-sake*, as opposed to the more Eurocentric and patriarchal notion of *art-for-art's sake*. The oral-aesthetic provides a fresh context within which to examine Michael Jackson's human agency and custodianship as “King of Pop” on the global stage.

Motif #1: Call-Response

*“You and I must make a pact
We must bring salvation back
Where there is love... I'll be there.
I'll reach out my hand to you,
I'll have faith in all you do...
Just call my name, and I'll be there...”*

I'll Be There (1970), the Jackson 5's final number 1 Hot 100 hit as a group, has been covered by several performers since its original debut. However, the level of emotion Michael exhibited every time he performed this ballad in his world tours as a solo artist suggests that he had taken his custodianship of it quite seriously. It was the *call*... his *nommo*. He sent this call out as a child, broadcasting his mission, and reiterating it as an adult through this and other self-composed songs. *Will You Be There?* (1993) came out over twenty years later as an entreaty, a more urgent broadcast... a *call* from Michael to his muse/ consort - “brother... mother... friend...” - asking if they will “...care enough to bear me?” Admitting the struggle and confusion he has about his intended role in life, Michael then ends this song by rededicating his love from *I'll Be There* by promising “...I'll never let you part, for you're always in my heart.” In Africa it is said that each person has a rhythm to which they dance, or alternatively - since words are nested in these rhythms - a *call* to which they *respond*. The oral-aesthetic event brings the *call-response* principle of creation into play in a variety of dynamic forms such as the intercourse between spirit and

flesh... the antiphonal patterns of sound between the leader and chorus...the audio-visual integration of music and dance... the bridging of the "middle-passage" during which slavery tried to alienate Diaspora consciousness from the *raison d'être* and earth of its existence...

As mythoform the oral-aesthetic may be regarded as the spirit dancing-in-sound as an overture to the visual component of the dance-in-flesh. And through the interaction of audio-visual movement the event becomes both creator and creation, being and becoming, spirit and flesh, masculine and feminine, *call-response*... a transaction of life's forces of conception, creation, and agency resident in each person. Mythologized as the *hero's journey* (Campbell, 1973), in essence it is the evolution of the seed/*nommo*...

The prototypical *hero's journey* or *monomyth* involves three major phases: departure (a *call* to adventure... broadcast of the seed); initiation (the road of trials... the seed finding nourishing earth in which to take root and evolve through the weathering of a series of tests); and return (closure of the quest... the fully evolved seed that has become of benefit to humanity). In his extensive research, mythologist Joseph Campbell found this basic mythoform recurring in many narratives from around the world, suggesting that it is deeply ingrained throughout nature, and in our collective psyche and functioning as a human species.

Call-response is a means of training discernment of this mythoform, of demonstrating the process of creation and evolution within the outer African matrix of time and space. It is not a detached intellectual learning but a lived experience mediated through the oral-aesthetic which accompanies the African through every activity and rite-of-passage in their communal life (Nketia, 1979, p. 50). Music thus plays a crucial role in education and socialization, creating a working balance between the developing individual and the extended community by eliciting conscious interaction between the various agents on either side of the *call-response* motif. These agents include the ancestors and the unborn who, although invisible, nevertheless are believed to participate in the arena of everyday life as active members of the community. Michael Jackson acknowledged his indebtedness to the realm of the invisible for his musical outpourings during his interview – the first in 14 years – with Oprah Winfrey, which took place at his Neverland Ranch in February, 1993. Elaboration on this profound statement regarding his role as a medium of the invisible realm is best gleaned from the platform the King of Pop ruled within the communal arena...

the stage he felt comfortable enough to bare his soul from.

Call-response is also a key mechanism that establishes and reinforces social and political order within African communities as suggested by Waterman (1993). For instance the interlocking hocket-style employed by hunting-and-gathering societies in which each member contributes a note or phrase at predetermined points in their performance reflects their decentralized system of consensus and nurtures the inter-dependence that is necessary for group success. By comparison the centralized authority characteristic of agricultural societies is supported and exposed by leader-chorus forms of *call-response*. Interactive and cohesive communities are of paramount importance in the enactment of this motif. The leader-chorus forms of this motif elucidate the proverb that states that it is the people that make a leader great. The *leader* in African tradition must be able to demonstrate oral-aesthetic skills that elicit confidence from the *chorus* whose responses represent a barometer of public approval. As the symbolic custodians of the tradition or the collective *nommo* which inspires the community, the authority granted to such African leaders is sacred. Therefore, their moral condition is as much an issue as the aesthetic impact of their performance because the leader mediates between the deeper mythoforms of the spiritual-ancestral realm and the outward oral-aesthetic extensions and responses of the community. African leaders who do not uphold the oral-aesthetic traditions well by singing or dancing awkwardly for instance are known to have been removed by the people. The Apollo Theater in Harlem, NY continues this tradition with performers who don't draw audience support.

It is within this cultural rationale that designations such as the *Godfather of Soul* (James Brown); the *Queen of Soul* (Aretha Franklin); *Black Moses* (Isaac Hayes); the Supremes; the Miracles; and *King of Pop* (Michael Jackson) gain significance and authority in the traditional African sense. Their command of the oral-aesthetic is largely attributable to growing up within the cultural dynamic sustained by the black folk church which maintained the sacrality and nurtured African traditions such as the leader-chorus/preacher-congregation *call-response* relationship.

Motif #2: Mojo / Kimoyo

As an African-American blues lyric goes: "*Got my mojo workin'...*" (Waters, 1957). The Ebonic nature and usage of the term *mojo* is rooted

in the Bantu term *kimoyo*, meaning “[language] of the spirit.” As a motif *mojo* is congruent with the oral-aesthetic creative order, validating a conceptual process that integrates and gives primacy to the spirit (animating force) that generates the audio and visual extensions of *Nommo*. Spirit, Word, and Rhythm - the latter of which animates the Word in speech, song, and dance - operate collectively as an Africa-centered creative trinity.

Diasporan African terms and forms of expression remain faithful in their acknowledgment of this traditional oral-aesthetic principle. African-American musical genres such as *spirituals ...gospel ...blues ...ragtime ...rhythm-and-blues ...soul ...rap ...jazz* clearly express this oral-aesthetic consciousness. *Jazz* in its African-American colloquial usage refers to male seed in the process of ejaculating, which comports with the masculine principle of *nommo* in the dynamic and interactive process of creation.

There is no conflict in the Africa-centered mind between spirit and flesh, and our outward methods and forms of creativity in the fleshly/sensory realm in fact inform us of the invisible and primary motifs of life that operate at a spiritual level. The King of Pop’s infamous crotch-grabbing and simulations of sex during his performances suggest his comfort in exercising such cultural license while remaining true to the spirit of love that his work expresses.

The conflict that has been created between spirit and flesh is largely an outcome of European religious sensibilities which were imposed upon the African in the twin contexts of colonialism and slavery. When describing the African oral-aesthetic event, missionaries’ reports would commonly use pejorative terms such as “lewd ambling” and “imitative fornication” which they associated with evil. Because the body represented “carnal” and “fallen” man, the dynamic ways in which Africans engaged, even in the context of church with the traditional *call-response* interaction, was for them excessive and irreverent. In the missionaries’ worldview, the worship of god was supposed to be conducted with a reverent stillness. They did not comprehend the modalities of the African oral life-world or the workings of its *mojo*.

Mojo provides a nexus that bridges the “middle passages” of such ambivalent westernized thinking, transacting a harmonious relationship between spirit and flesh... creator and creation... sacred and secular... the eternal and the present... For instance in the context of the funeral, dirges and dances will often transition from expressions of grief to joyous sounds and fertility dances thus serving to transform

the trauma and confrontation with death by these temporal and spatial enactments of life for the benefit of those still living in the flesh.

The spiritual realm was a place Michael enjoyed engaging. This was apparent in the original music video of *Ghosts* (1997) and of his record-making hit, *Thriller* (1984), in which he enjoyed hands-on involvement such as we witness in the 3-D filming and staging of the latter during preparations for his *This Is It* tour (2009). The staging involved floating a parade of dead brides and grooms through the aisles of the audience as well as Michael emerging from the womb of a black widow spider during the song's performance, which begins with Vincent Price's dramatically gleeful voice-over warning in *Thriller*:

"And whosoever shall be found without the soul for *getting down*,
must stand and face the hounds of hell and rot inside a corpse's
shell..."

There is an African belief that in response to certain music the ancestors continue their existence during special communal events by inhabiting the dancer's body, causing him or her to appear very young while dancing in an apparent state of timelessness or "great time" (Vansina, 1964, pp. 372-3). And among some groups, when an individual breaks the dance patterns - "break-dancing" - they are believed to be in contact with the other side from where therapeutic and additional powers are accessible. For Michael, this other ancestral side became just another playground that set the stage for his and his fans' performances of *Thriller*. Choreographed for the blockbuster hit song, the *Thriller* dance continues to engage millions around the world in group celebrations where various communities simultaneously "get-down" with each other, usually around Halloween. (Note: The 4th annual *Thrill the World* simultaneous global *Thriller* dance event took place on October 23rd, 2010.)

Historically, *mojo* has created interesting cultural trends in its mediation of the "spiritual-blues" impulse for instance whose "secular" component crossed back into the "sacred" realm. This oral-aesthetic motif thus helped give life to the body of music called "gospel." Gospel in turn, as it had been nurtured in the oral-aesthetic modalities of the Black folk church, maintained a reservoir of African resources that contributed to the development of the "rhythm-and-blues" style. And during the civil-rights period, "soul" emerged as a musical genre that was interchangeable with gospel.

This “spiritual-blues” and “gospel-rhythm-and-blues/soul” interaction also demonstrates the *call-and-response* motif at work building bridges and reconstructing an Africa-centered cosmological order despite the disruptive contexts of colonialism or slavery. New World testimonials provide powerful statements of the triumph of the African spirit and the aesthetizing, *art-for-life’s-sake* imperatives of the oral-aesthetic which recognize that the path of the Creator is the path of harmony... the spirit of love seeking resolution where two or more are gathered - in community.

Common unity is the yearning expressed time and again in Michael Jackson’s rendering of the oral-aesthetic in songs such as *Beat It* (1983); *We Are the World* (1985); *Man In the Mirror* (1988); *Black or White* (1991); *Heal the World* (1992); *Earth Song* (1995); *They Don’t Care About Us* (1996); and *Cry* (2001). The mission of *nommo* is to convey the language of the Spirit (*Kimoyo*) which in the aesthetic realm equates doing good with being beautiful, thus providing revelation of and placing one in accord with the deeper forces that govern all life. As Michael’s journey reveals, this has meant dealing with conflicts that life initiates us into different ways through.

At London’s Oxford University where Jackson delivered his first public lecture, he said, “the foundation of all human knowledge, the beginning of human consciousness, must be that each and every one of us is an object of love” (2001). As he eulogizes a father/son bond that lay sacrificed on the altar of the commercial success Joe Jackson often brutally pushed his son to achieve, Michael’s speech unfolds as a plea to repair such breaches that result in painful and lost childhoods. The lyrics of *Childhood* (1995) appeal from this place of Michael’s sense of his own suffering, “Before you judge me, try hard to love me... the painful youth I’ve had. Have you seen my childhood?”

Michael carries this yearning for love into his Kingship role, instructing his *This Is It* family that, as extensions of him, they are part of a “great adventure” in which the audience “wants wonderful experiences” from them as performers. He exhorts that they are to help remind the world that love is important. “Love each other... We’re all one... Take care of the planet... We have an important message to give...” Michael underscores this pep-talk in a poem on the posthumously recorded CD by making a heartfelt and personalized appeal to *Planet Earth* (2009), addressing Her as his “sweetheart” and his “home.”

Motif #3: Masquerade

The mask is an artifact which has often been studied as such and collected for display in the European context of the museum. When presented in this way, as a disinterested visual commodity surrounded by other artifacts which are related only by the significance that the curator has ascribed to the collection, the ancestral African mask is no more the potent force it was created to be. For only in the human action context of the *masquerade* does its deeper cultural significance and efficacy as an oral-aesthetic motif become apparent. During its construction, the ancestral mask is given features which distinguish it from other masks that may be used in the context of entertainment. The artisan integrates communally-recognizable codes such as the color white to represent death, or — since animals are not believed to exist after death — the rendering of animal forms into the mask. The particular animal forms used add to the textual content and revelation of what the mask represents, e.g. the lion as strength, the spider as prudence, or horns as the moon and fertility. Thus the artisan provides the first designation of the mask. The dancer who wears it provides the second designation in performance. Without this second designation in the *masquerade*, the mask is incomplete because it has no efficacy as *nommo*. The mask provides a visual representation of the otherwise invisible, and the *masquerade* becomes the metaphor for life, and for the manner in which the divine or ancestral spirits often intervene from behind masks that we have learned to take for granted.

The musician's role may be to invoke the spirit to enter the masquerader, whereafter the mask and dancer are considered sacrosanct and not to be desecrated for fear of harm to the miscreant. Therefore, during the *masquerade* the masked dancer is granted symbolic status and representational immunity, because any comments that they make (*nommo*) are believed to be coming from the particular ancestor or god (indicated by the mask) that is now in possession of their body.

Through such ritual events the supernatural becomes a tangible presence, accessible for propitiation and intervention in the affairs of the living (Diallo, 1989, pp. 141-171). Alternatively such occasions may also be used to judiciously convey messages and critiques to members of the community which might otherwise, if delivered in a different context, produce friction and hostility (Hanna, 1979, p. 122). This African *masquerade* tradition has been maintained in Diasporan communities in various ways, necessitated in large part as a strategy for

survival. Enslaved Africans mastered different techniques of developing outward forms (masks) that appeased hostile authorities while striving to maintain the deeper integrity of their cultural traditions. For instance the African and Spanish syncretisms that one finds in Afro-Dominican musical traditions came about largely as a result of the Catholic Church's suppression of African spiritual expression among slaves. This oppressive action by the Church forced African spiritual expression underground only to emerge in this disguised creolized form. The adoption of Catholic saints, Christian liturgy, Spanish melodies and vocal techniques was the mask that Africans created in the Afro-Dominican context in order to preserve the essence of their tradition.

During the period of the *Underground Railroad*, the black folk church in America created ingenious applications of the *masquerade* motif. When enslaved Africans were planning and executing their dramatic escape to the north, they would sing in codes such as "steal away to Jesus..." To the slave-owners, these words sounded like a harmless longing to be with the heavenly master, but in reality they masked the *call-and-response* to freedom.

The association of the *masquerade* motif with Michael Jackson, a consummate performer whose face and body always extended his *Nommo*, is a logical one. One could reason that Michael provided both the first (plastic surgery, skin bleaching, etc.) and second (performance) designations of the *mask* in his application of the *masquerade* motif. However, some argue that the difficulty for him here lay in the expectation for his audience to accept his permanent physical transformations as a catalyst for the paradigm shift to the unconditional love he championed as his mission. Scholars continue to passionately dispute over the signification of the physical evolution of Michael Jackson over the years. The more charitable disputes include the possibility that it was an attempt by the King of Pop to transcend America's entrenched racial barriers per his lyrics, "It don't matter if you're black or white" (*Black or White*, 1991). Some have suggested that the performativity of Michael's body further blurred the lines - "middle passages" of the physical realm if you will - between male/female, child/adult, and even human/animal, thus creating a fictional world of one-ness... of peace and equality through a manufactured hybridity (Vigo, 2010).

The public's sympathy for Michael's zealous quest to transcend such boundaries is "schizophrenic" according to others who point out that the evolving visual of Michael effectively created increasing skepticism

of him in people of African descent and ultimately left this important segment of his audience feeling betrayed. His pathology of appearance to them bespoke an "intense self-hatred" and "abnegation of blackness" that has plagued his community of origin since slavery (Scriven, 2010). As W.E.B. DuBois famously noted, "One ever feels his two-ness,- an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (DuBois, 1969)." The struggle to evolve from a "Negro" to a "Black-" to an "African-American" sense of identity suggests in its historical progression that emancipation from a painful legacy of slavery becomes more whole and empowering with the conscious embrace of the root culture. Thus slavery need not be the hard-boundary or baseline that many in the West still accommodate in lieu of taking that step towards cultural atonement (at-one-ment). The dilemma expressed in Michael's defiant lyrics, "I'm not going to spend my life being a color," (*Black or White*, 1991) exposes this conceptual barrier. Thus, as a quintessential icon who struggled with this ongoing American construct - the racist dichotomy of "Black" versus "Whit" ultimately continue to cause both personal and social introspection at profound, and hopefully therapeutic levels.

Motif #4: The "Talking Drum"

As the *masquerade* trains perceptions of forces that operate behind outward forms in the universe, so too does the musical instrument play a crucial role in reinforcing and adding to this perceptual training.

From the moment of contemplating its construction to the performance on the finished product, the musical instrument plays a symbolic role as co-creator whose "body" and "voice" are an anthropomorphic extension of the African being. The instrument maker who uses the resources of a tree to construct the instrument may go through an initial ritual of offering libations in order to honor the ancestral spirits who are believed to reside therein. The resonating space within the completed instrument is then believed to amplify the ancestral voice (*nommo*), and it is the musician's performance on particular instruments that enables the ancestors to be present through the medium of the dancers. As such therefore, the dancer's body is often also considered as an instrument that can be "played" by the sounds of a skilled musician. The dancer who is conversant with the language of the music knows to make certain audible and/or physical

responses to particular sounds and rhythms, thereby entering into the dialogue in a linguistically congruent and visually appropriate way. In so doing *nommo* becomes amplified and extended through audio-visual patterns of socially-constructed movement. In part this explains why it is impossible to understand African "music" by the Eurocentric approach of writing it down in its audible aspects only (Kubik, 1972, p. 29).

Moreover the iconographic Eurocentric orientation towards dance as a distinct aesthetic category from music is problematic in the African context because it disregards the interchangeable and/or simultaneous roles of dancer as musician, rhythmic collaborator, and musical instrument. In the oral life-world, the human body - as the instrument and extension of the Supreme Creator - is the prototype for the secondary models we recognize as musical instruments. Aerophones (winds), chordophones (strings), membranophones (drums), and idiophones (percussion) extend the principles that govern sound production in the human.

The body-politic is a complex interactive network regulated by the life-sustaining rhythms of breathing in collaboration with the heartbeat, extending through the body's inner resonating spaces where the soul of the ancestor resides and from where *nommo* as life is generated. And as a specialized receptor of sound, our middle-ear (tympanum) is a drum-like structure consisting of a hammer and anvil that acts upon the vibratory membrane of the eardrum. Principles such as these are incorporated into oral-aesthetic forms and concepts. Therefore African musical instruments will often be carved to resemble human forms either in whole or in part in order to train a deeper understanding of what they, as sound-producing entities represent.

As a general rule instruments are constructed individually according to the particular tastes and traditional norms of the musician. The tuning of these instruments is subject to the language patterns of the musician's mother-tongue, as are the rhythms that are generated in performance. The musician thus *teaches* the instrument the traditional language it will *speak* in its role as a speech-surrogate and co-creator (Bebey, 1975, p. 40). The ability to remain true to linguistic patterns is especially crucial in the many African languages where tones serve phonemically to distinguish the meanings of words. In such cases one word may have a number of different meanings depending upon which syllable is intoned higher or given more stress. This is the principle by which the *talking-drum* motif operates in order to render

the thoughts, language, and emotions of the community as faithfully as possible.

As a communications technique the *talking-drum* principle is a quest for truth in which musical instruments as speech surrogates become co-creators and conveyors of *nommo*. Often the drum has been used to convey messages over long distances to others familiar with the language. And in a number of instances music has been put to journalistic use in interesting ways, e.g. performances by Jabo musicians who sit in the Liberian marketplace and offer a running on-scene commentary on their talking-xylophones (Roberts, 1972, p. 7). This is a variation on the role of the *griot* who is often attached to leading households in African class-societies or alternatively acts as a freelance poet, in either event exercising their special knowledge of traditional history, language, and the lineage of their patron by way of praise-singing, commentary, and instrumental accompaniment. As an oral-aesthetic motif therefore, the *talking-drum* principle lends itself in a variety of ways to the understanding of the deep structures of African-derived music in the global village. It also brings into question the Eurocentric distinctions between vocal and instrumental music; music and dance; and musician and dancer.

One hears the linguistic imperatives in the African-American blues scale which flatten the 3rd, 7th, and sometimes 5th of the western diatonic major scale, and also in the musical rhythms which, having lost their original ethnic specificity nevertheless inform and are informed by Ebonic speech patterns in the diaspora. So the fact that African instruments such as the drum were banned from use by the slave master because of their communicative power, does not preclude the application of the *talking-drum* motif in this context. It simply *masquerades* in other culturally-congruent forms.

Further examples abound in the diaspora of musicians who create within this Africa-centered conceptual tradition. Blues instrumentalist and singer B.B. King and his guitar which he has anthropomorphized in the co-creative person of "Lucille" is one such example. Other examples include the scatting-style of an Ella Fitzgerald, and the performances of a Bobby McFerrin or the group, Take-6, in which they employ their bodies as surrogate-instruments, imitating the sounds of trumpets and various percussion instruments.

Michael Jackson performed his human beat-box technique during the Oprah interview, masterfully interweaving different instrument sounds and rhythms together through his gifted vocals. It was apparent

from the information he shared that he consciously embraced his being as an instrument and co-creator of the invisible divine. Michael's sense of the sacredness that informed the *mojo* and *nommo* of his creative process translated into a rare standard of perfectionism that characterized his creative custodianship. His drum - the master drum that is he - continues to talk...

Motif #5: Kinetic Orality

It has been said that a person who *hears* African music *understands* it in dance or some form of physical movement. Movement in the African musical context is not simply about the dance, because in its existential sense - having been transported in rhythmic sound and then transformed into the visual patterns of the flesh - it expresses the generative force that constitutes life. Taking its cues from the spiritual- or tele-kinetic that was earlier referred to as *mojo/kimoyo*, this energy is maintained and transformed into a visual kinetic through the oral-aesthetic, thus creating a culturally-distinctive continuum in the motif *kinetic orality*. It is this *kinetic* imperative that creates the misapplication of formal Eurocentric methods of transcribing, performing, and analyzing *music* (versus *dance*) to the understanding of African cultural processes. These so-called "rational" methods created little understanding and much less appreciation of the principles that characterize and inform African life (Mudimbe 1988, p. 20), inferiorizing the African oral-aesthetic in its Darwinistic paradigm of progress as *pre-logical* or *pre-rational*.

Rhythm is a critical element of *kinetic orality* and a major reason for a relevant Africa-centered approach to its forms and processes of oral-aesthetic expression. Because it is heavily emphasized in the African context, rhythm creates the weakest link to formalist and isolationist Eurocentric music theories and static forms of transcription, and it reveals African values and their dynamic and conducive forms of cultural agency. Waterman explains the crucial role that transcription has played both as an analytical tool and as an emblem of professional competence in the academy's development of ethnomusicology (1993, p. 247), and Agawu advocates a culturally-congruent approach thus:

The way forward in our attempts to understand African rhythm does not lie in the production of more analyses of the mechanical aspects of its organization, but rather in a careful investigation of

its basis in the various modes of signification that characterize... African life itself. (1987, p. 418)

Community is paramount...and African rhythms, which carry indigenous speech patterns, initiate processes of community by their emotional and physical impact in the dance. As mentioned previously, it is said that every person has a rhythm to which they dance. The vast cultural array of rhythmic and dance motifs not only attest to this fact, but the metaphor of the rhythm validates the uniqueness of the individual, even as the polyrhythms that are conveyed in performance suggest and elicit community. The generative and transformative power of *nommo* therefore lies to a great extent in the *kinetic* modalities of rhythm, and in its unique abilities to functionalize the concept of community. Here too lies a significant cultural distinction with the formal Eurocentric separation between performer and audience. As a collective entity whose *oral-kinetic* requires an interactive relationship for aesthetic fulfillment, the African communal imperative overrides these boundaries, even in performances set on the western context of the stage. The Black audience arrives at such a venue fully expecting to "come and jam with...party with...get down with...and be moved by" the performance. As the designated *chorus* in the *call-response* dynamic, they may provide responsorial accompaniment such as "tell the truth... sing it baby;" hand-clapping, finger-snapping, foot-stomping, and other movements conveying the *kineticism* of communal vitality (Maultsby, 2005).

This performance format took off in a big way with a growing young White audience who were in a mood of rebellion against authority and ripe for cultural experimentation during the early years of rock 'n' roll. Their exposure to rhythm and blues artists such as Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and Fats Domino and the growing popularity of the genre amongst White youth spawned the creation of rock'n'roll as a white version of this pop music style. Artists such as Elvis Presley, Pat Boone, Bill Haley, Ricky Nelson, and Andy Williams earned their initial popularity by covering black R&B songs. The overt sexual connotations of the term rock'n'roll were not lost on "Elvis the pelvis" as he became known from his performance style. In any event it is interesting to note that such white appropriations of African oral-aesthetic motifs were interpreted and expressed as a duality of sex and rebellion.

Syncopated African rhythms and the "back beat" (so designated in

relation to the metronomic and mechanical Eurocentric time-line) suddenly became hot commercial properties. On its own cultural terms this rhythm demonstrated the *talking drum* motif by reflecting and informing the *kineticism* of African/Ebonic speech patterns. So the appropriation of these rhythms by rock'n'roll artists brought them in touch with *nommo* and restructured time-space patterns of perception, interpretation, expression, and interaction as they relate to sound and subsequently translate to image. In contrast to formal distinctions and hard boundaries between music as a sound phenomenon and dance as iconographic, *nommo* precedes and conceives the Africa-centered image or the visual kinetic which is always itself in a dynamic relationship with sound. And it is through the motif of *kinetic orality* that one participates in and finds revelation of the deeper mythoforms that govern the oral life-world. African musicians exploit the visual kinetic elements of dress, facial expressions, and body movements including dance in order to magnify *nommo* - the oral-kinetic - thus optimizing the passage of the spiritual kinetic, and establishing a successful rapport with the community. They consciously use their entire bodies in musical expression, relating to the rhythm as if it were the heartbeat of life itself and conceiving music and movement as an audio-visual unit.

The interactive motif of *kinetic orality* therefore facilitates the being and becoming of life via an Africa-centered spiritual-oral-visual continuum, and the musician-dancer-instrument unity demonstrates this abundantly in the Pan-African context. Dances such as the "charleston," the "twist," and the "funky chicken" that were created respectively by musicians James P. Johnson, Chubby Checker, and Rufus Thomas are examples of this relationship.

But one only need witness the phenomenon of a Michael Jackson music-dance performance to understand how potent, integral, and current this Africa-centered motif remains as a legacy of his custodianship. He constantly exploited elements of dress (fedoras... loafers... sequined glove... armbands... casts... knee-pads... finger-tape... jackets... belts... sunglasses...); facial expression and alteration or disguise; and body movements (dance) - or conversely, statuesque stillness - in order to optimize the impact of his *kinetic-orality*. Michael's *Thriller* dance only grows in popularity the world over, just as his trademark glitter-socks and gravity-defying, toe-standing penny loafers

maintain the magic of the world's best known dance since the King of Pop's 1983 performance ...the mythical *moonwalk*.

Motif #6: Jazz

When the original colloquial usage of the African-American term *jazz* is combined with its present meaning in the realm of music, one is struck by how profound and persistent the Africa-centered conceptual memory and oral-aesthetic mythoform is. In either sense of the word, *jazz* remains consistent with the oral concept of *nommo* as a masculine principle of conception and creation in the traditional African sense as previously discussed... the seed being broadcast. Moreover it is in such contemporary forms of music such as *jazz* that Africa-centered principles of orality can clearly be heard to be fulfilling and authenticating their traditional role, and thereby exonerating themselves from the burden that still minimizes Africa's contributions to civilization. *Jazz* is considered by many to be America's greatest art form even though its true essence remains African. As an oral-aesthetic motif, *jazz* refers to an Africa-centered mission and mode of discourse that is subsequently achieved in musical performance. And what is especially notable is the consistency and integrity of key oral mechanisms of traditional African culture as they negotiate time and space in modern *jazz* forms. From a Western perspective one would regard *jazz* as a performer's art rather than a composer's art because its predominant driving force is the art of improvisation.

And in this sense it becomes a very present-oriented form of expression which is not bound to a prescribed - i.e. composed - text, and is subject to the forces at play in the moment. Temporal homeostasis has always been a practical element of oral culture which, while serving to maintain a vital kinetic context also lends itself to the performance technique of the *griot* (as record-keeper) and to the exercise of the *call-and-response* motif.

If improvisation is the art of mediating the present, it nevertheless is informed by the past, the familiar, or that which carries the ancestral memory. And in such a sense the *call-and-response* motif provides a mechanism that allows for this procession of life to move forward in the manipulations of time, text, and pitch by a soloist or leader who is dependent upon the stability and support of a rhythmically-modulated, responsorial chorus. One represents youth and the present while the rhythmic structure and chorus provide the context of

tradition as an interactive parental-ancestral-traditional presence. This is a pattern that can be heard in urban popular music feeding off rural musical traditions on the continent, and in the development of new musical genres in the West, which ultimately retains a powerful African “personality and identity” in emerging modes of global musical discourse. In its existential sense this is *jazz*.

The *jazz* paradigm generates a unique working model of democracy, demonstrating its remarkable capacity to be inclusionary and interactive while simultaneously respecting and reflecting difference. The entire spectrum of musical expression available to humankind is able to be incorporated into this Africa-centered family dialogue according to the creative discretion of the performers involved, and in this sense *jazz* is a music of...for...and by the people. And it is in the latter sense that it is especially African, whether in its *call-and-response* motifs where often each performer shifts between the leader and chorus roles, or in the array and predominance of intricate rhythms that continue to weave a social fabric of individual complexity. *Jazz* is not merely an aesthetic arrangement of sound, but an Africa-centered process of communication as it creates and reflects the community, in a way that might be contrasted with the information-oriented genre of rap as another Africa-centered mode of discourse. In its reflection of and comfort with a multi-cultural community, *jazz* also becomes a measure of the fully-evolved seed/*nommo*: of the success of its broadcast and mission... human experience being the final empirical authority.

Conclusion

To the African, therefore, music is not merely a pleasant sound phenomenon that is incidental to life, but is rather an integral oral-aesthetic vehicle that mediates that life - the life of the seed/*nommo* - and awakens it to its fullest potential. This is the mythoform of the *hero's journey* that is embedded in the oral-aesthetic toolkit. The universality and orality of the “music” that began in the African village - that kept faith with its diaspora communities through their various and historic evolutions, and flourished in the popular imagination of global villagers under the custodianship of the King of Pop among others - is an inspiring testament to the potency of this genealogy. Not as self-evident however, particularly under culturally-biased readings, is how *nommo* has informed the lives of its missionaries, seers, prophets, angels... Analyses of Michael have tended to objectify him as a

phenomenal *art-for-art's-sake* entertainer who, while his standards of performance and impact on the industry bottom-line revolutionized the state-of-the-art, nevertheless lived a personal life that was riddled with eccentricities and other perceived deficiencies.

But by remaining true to his mission, this self-proclaimed emissary of "the everlasting love that shines" (from *We Are Here to Change the World*, 1986), AKA *Captain EO*, kept stretching beyond such shortsighted judgments to the "light" (from *This Is It*, 2009) and "salvation" (from *I'll Be There*, 1970) in his higher self. It was from here that he ultimately reached out his hand to *Planet Earth* (2009), the matriarchal center... No less a visionary than Kwame Nkrumah who heroically pursued unity under a Pan-African umbrella, Michael Jackson made *love* the unifying/universal message of his *hero's journey*. The dynamic *oral-aesthetic* modalities he deployed in his *sankofa* are unabashedly Africa-centered, challenging the limitations of the entertainment and Eurocentric intellectual industries, while winning over hearts and minds in the public sphere. The lasting currency that Michael Jackson has been able to create for himself in the global village testifies that the *jazz/nommo* that came through him indeed found its fertile ground... the *earth* of its existence.

In their traditional African context, the modalities/motifs that support the journey of *nommo* - *call-response*... *mojo*... *masquerade*... *talking drum*... *kinetic orality*... *jazz* - ideally act to awaken and evolve human understanding of itself, and of the mythoforms that order the greater universe of forces of which we are all agents. Unlike the more passive mind-oriented observer role that has characterized Western literate cultures, the inherent expectation of *oral-aesthetic* traditions is that recipients of sound will simultaneously interact with it - mind, body, and spirit - in conscious transformations of time and space... vested human-beings participating holistically in this communal paradigm of life. The *oral-aesthetic*, which the King of Pop modeled in exemplary fashion, is the quintessential cultural vehicle that has remained faithful to its traditional *art-for-life's-sake* mission and continues to transport the global village on a collective, humanizing odyssey.

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Nollywood and post-colonial Pan-Africanism: Deciphering the trans-nationality of African cultures in the Nigerian popular film industry

By Innocent Ebere Uwah

Abstract

Many philosophies and theories have influenced the emancipation of Africa from colonial powers before their independence in the 1950s and 1960s. Significant among these were Nyerere's philosophy of *Ujamaa*, Nkrumah's *Consciencism*, Aime Cesaire and Senghor's *Negritude*. The basic tenet of all these was communalistic Pan-Africanism and the call for all Africans to unite. For Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana and originator of "consciencism" unity is the key to Africa's continental development. "All must unite" was his familiar call that signaled a revolution in continuity with traditional African values. In Nollywood films as in most other African cultural industries, this ideals of unity, affirmation of African identity and justice are being pursued in various ways that continue to build loyal audiences across Africa and around the world. In this article, therefore, I have argued that the Nigerian popular film industry is "Pan-Africanizing" by means of its aesthetics, storylines, representations, themes and landscapes. Through textual analysis of some select films of the industry these themes of Pan-Africanism have been deconstructed and interpreted.

Key words: Nollywood, Pan-Africanism, African films, African film markets, marketing Nigerian films internationally

Introduction:

With the recent UNESCO's rating¹ of the Nigerian film industry as second in the world, there is increasing evidence that the expanding production and distribution is making it significant among cultural industries not only in the continent of Africa but internationally. Like every other successful media industry it is not only setting the agenda

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for others to follow but also asserting in its aesthetics and cultural representations a “new” African identity construction.

Nollywood, within the short period of its existence, has brought about what Mbye (2007) believes is a paradigm shift in post-colonial African cinemas. Nollywood has created an image of “Africanness” that is explored in films in its aesthetics, cosmogonies and construction of African identities. Through largely informal networks, Nollywood films are distributed across Africa and throughout the world, especially among the African diaspora. What is of interest in this article is how Nollywood has contributed to a Pan-African ideology. What discussions of philosophy in Africa have debated at a more intellectual level, the Nollywood film industry by means of its cultural affirmations has introduced in a process of self reflection in Africa at a more popular level. But just what kind of Pan-Africanism is emerging in Nollywood films?

This article, therefore, explores how many Nollywood films draw from the continent’s indigenous cultures, themes, plots, characters and historical perspectives to foreground the unity of Africans. Nollywood films, I would argue, construct storylines in the spirit of Pan-Africanism which most African founding fathers applied as the root paradigm of Africa’s co-existence. In the view of Mbye (2007) these common cultural experiences are the basis of the industry’s potential as a viable audio-visual industry gaining a wide market in the continent and among the African diaspora. By building into its storylines these common cultural experiences, Nollywood films are important in shaping and promoting current projects of national, regional, continental and Pan-African integration (Mbye, 2007). To explore this thesis I have selected for textual analysis a series of rather typical Nollywood movies such as *African Heroes* (2005), *Coronation* (2004), *Hear My Cry* (2005), *Bless Me* (2005), *Festival of Fire* (1999), *Last Ofala* (2002), *Fool at 40* (2006), *A Cry for Africa* (2004) and *Shakira* (2009). A central question in this paper is how the narrative lines and character construction of these films deal with many of the projects of Pan-Africanism as spelled out by many early political leaders on the continent.

But first, what is meant by Pan-Africanism and what are central arguments in its ideology? Pan-Africanism and its ideological vision of Pan-Africanism above all envisages the development of Africa as moving toward the unity of African political and cultural diversity. Those who led the movements for Africa’s independence from the

colonial masters believed that, given commonalities of race and culture and unity of purpose and mission, all Africans can help to develop Africa. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Sedar Senghor of Senegal, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia all appealed to Africa's sense of unity as a fundamental objective. They especially espoused forms of communalism, self reliance in Africa's development and peaceful participatory co-existence as defined from an insiders' perspective. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana was the most explicit and energetic leader in spelling out this task, and he devoted much of his time and writings to the ideology and objectives of Pan-Africanism.

Generally the idea of Pan-Africanism emerges in the context of exploring the identity and existence of Africans through their cultures. This entails letting the people have "their own voice" and speaking out of their own concerns by themselves rather than being spoken "to" or "for" as was the case before Africa's political independence. In contrast to the stereotypical distortions that branded Africans as a people without ideation and foregrounded the absolute darkness of the continent, the founding political leaders of independence challenged the European concept of national identity as a continual war among peoples with a vision of peaceful pan-Africanism as fundamental in their ideology and nation-building principles. They wanted a unity from "within" that would question the distorted notions about the continent and its cultures against conflictive Western ethnocentricisms. Irele sees Hegel's philosophy² as some of the most influential statements rationalizing Europe's ethnocentricisms in regard to the rest of the world. It is, he argues, "the standard that provides a powerful philosophical base for the chorus of denigration of the non-White races by European colonial adventures all through the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century" (Irele, 2007, p. 12). According to him, "this ideological significance of Europe's contemplation of a world in which it was master by reason of the quality of its collective mind emerges most clearly in Hegel who, by excluding Africa from the historical process through which the human spirit fulfils itself, places Africa at the opposite pole of Europe and as its spiritual antithesis" (Irele, 1983, p. 11).

Irele focuses the interpretation of Europe's ethnocentricisms on Levy-Bruhl who is regarded as a pro-Hegelian acolyte. According to him, "the high point of European ethnocentrism was attained by the

work of Lucien Levy-Bruhl who devoted time to demonstrating the disparity between the nature and quality of the European mind and what he called the "primitive mentality" of the non-Western peoples and cultures" (Irele, 1983, pp. 11-13).

Levy-Bruhl and Hegel (Bayart, 1993) arguably are both proponents of the kind of binary opposition that characterized Western colonial thinking in relation to Africa. Hawkes speaks of Nietzsche as contending that "this idea [legitimation of binary oppositions] is to justify and perpetuate the division of society into a privileged group of Greek, aristocratic men, and the excluded "others": women, slaves, and barbarians" (Hawkes, 1996, p.156). Particularly in his book, *Ideology*, Hawkes highlights Nietzsche's ideas by presenting it as a foundation for the classification of things between the "good" and the "bad", "us" and "them", and "we" and the "other" and as grounded on an egoism that excludes the "other" as different and inferior. It is the view held by most colonial warlords and used against Africa in the colonial days. According to him, "in the past, civilizations have generally developed sophisticated criteria to demonstrate the errors of their victims or rivals. The Greeks declared foreigners to be uncivilized, primitive barbarians who lacked the gift of rational thought; the early Christians portrayed pagans as sinful, worldly idolaters, addicted to the things of this world and the pleasures of the flesh (Hawkes, 1996, p. 13). This too, I argue, extends to most filmic representations produced in the West which define Africa predominantly in terms of their "primitiveness" and not in relation to their social ideals. Notable among such films are *King Solomon's Mines* (1937), *Kongo* (1932), *Naked Terror* (1961), *So This is Africa* (1933), *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1981), *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951), *Come back Africa* (1959), *Out of Africa* (1985), *African Queen* (1951), *Dogs of War* (1980), *Zulu* (1963) and *Zulu Dawn* (1979).

However, the post-colonial discourse which questions such ideological oppositions emerged in Africa in the context of asking "what is African" and "what is African identity?" This questioning has not only brought most African philosophers into vigorous debates since independence, but also has motivated most African filmmakers to chart their own course. Generally, given the scenario of misrepresentations, African cinema mainly started on the basis of contesting and subverting the conventional European accounts and histories of imperialism in Africa. Bakari and Cham for instance, argue that "African film making is in a way a child of African political independence. It was born in the era of heady nationalism and

nationalist anti-colonial struggles and has been undergoing a process of painful growth and development in a post-colonial context of general socio-economic decay and decline" (Bakari and Cham, 1996, p. 1). Filmmaking in Africa, starting with Sembene Ousmane and others, came to be noted as "part of a collective influence: a continental drift towards a very specific notion of Africanity" (Akomfrah, 2006, p. 274).

Particularly influential is African philosophy which Okolo argues "articulates and critically reflects on the total experience of the African" (Okolo, 1987, p. 11). African cinemas currently reflect on the notion of African identity and personality that is already expressed in various ways to re-address Western (propagated) misconceptions and ideological frameworks on the continent. Scholars and political nationalists like Nkrumah, Cesaire, Senghor and Nyerere, among others, have attempted to reinvent African identity. In many ways, African filmmakers have continued on the same journey, starting with the invitation of FESPACI (Federation Pan-Africain Des Cineaste/ Federation of African filmmakers) in 1975 with its Algiers Charter. In this document, which addresses African filmmakers, sub-Saharan African filmmakers are called "to entrench some form of authenticity into their cultural products by focusing essentially on African cultures" (Bisschoff and Murphy, 2007, p. 494).

The Organization of African Unity (OAU), founded by the aforementioned group of African leaders in 1963, was aimed at propagating the vision of Pan-Africanism which is the main basis of the unity of African peoples and nations. Currently the African Union (AU), which succeeded the OAU, is also following the same ideology. Its charter includes the fostering of unity as orchestrated by African shared experiences and values against outside exploitations. Thus, while affirming the centrality of their unity as a people, the ideological mission of Pan-Africanism has been focused more on the decolonizing of African minds, especially in the aftermath of political independence in the 1950s and 1960s. Kwame Nkrumah and Sedar Senghor were particularly intent on pursuing the ideological mission of Pan-Africanism for all Africans. For instance, "Senghor's theory of Negritude rests upon a theory of culture which postulates a reciprocity between the collective character of each race as conditioned by an original formative environment and the different cultural forms and civilizations to be found in the world" (Irele, 1983, p. 18). For Nkrumah, the dominant feature of Pan-Africanism is the heterogeneity of African cultures which is founded on a unified vision for mutual co-

existence. Thirteen of the books of Nkrumah touch on this theme in some way: *What I mean by Positive Action* (1949), *Ghana: Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (1957), *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology* (1961), *Towards Colonial Freedom* (1962), *Africa Must Unite* (1963), *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization and Development with Particular Reference to African Revolution* (1964), *Neocolonialism – The Last Stage of Imperialism* (1965), *Challenge of the Congo* (1965), *Voices From Conakry* (1967), *Axioms of Nkrumah* (1967), *Dark Days in Ghana* (1968), *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare* (1968) and *Class Struggle in Africa* (1970). Central in all of these works is the logic of communal unity based on the conviction that in all of Africa, the community plays a deeply significant role in the development of the individual person and therefore must be preserved by all.

To pursue and realize the mission of Pan-Africanism, Nkrumah particularly was of the view that all African nations and peoples should come together and form alliances which would forever keep them together. Among these he included the formation of instruments of coordination such as: The All African People's Revolutionary Party (AAPRP), The All African Committee for Political Co-ordination (AACPC), and The All African People's Army (AAPRA) (Hountondji, 1983, p.139). In the light of these associations which arguably influenced the formation of both the OAU and AU, he was looking for possible meeting points for promoting significant values and discussing developmental necessities for Africa. Other terminologies that were used by other African leaders of the same spirit include Senghor's "Negritude", Azikiwe's "Welfarism", Nyerere's "Ujamaa" and Nkrumah's "Consciencism". Again, in all of these, the emphasis and goal has been on communal unity, fellowship, and cultural unity among pluralism of all Africans. Nyerere, Obote and Kenyatta, (all former presidents of different countries of Africa), in a statement to emphasize this point of Africa's common heritage, once remarked, thus; "we share a common past and are convinced of our common destinies. We have a common history, culture and customs which make our unity both logical and natural. Our futures are inevitably bound together by the identical aspirations and hopes of our people and the need for similar efforts in facing the tasks that lie ahead for each of our free nations" (1963; cited in Ngugi, 2005, p. 2).

It is generally these factors of common history, culture and customs that this paper prefers to call "communalism" or "Pan-African cultures". And this, it must be said, does not imply essentializing

African cultures as if there are no “specificities”, but rather emphasizes the fact of their “modus vivendi” and ideological orientations that emerge and are debated in the narratives of Nollywood films. Another way of approaching this notion of communalism lies in exploring the themes of unity in “cultural pluralism” as understood in social science research. Hountonji emphasizes three aspects of this:

(1) the coexistence of cultures belonging, at least in principle, to different geographical areas; (2) the recognition of cultural commonalities; and (3) the advocacy of it in one way or another, either by preserving these cultures from mutual contamination or by organizing a peaceful dialogue among them for their mutual enrichment’ (Hountonji, 2007).

Identifying how most leaders applied communalism to their nationalistic struggles for independence, Faniran calls it the “African root paradigm”. For him, it is what Leopold Sedar Senghor and Aime Cesaire defined in terms of “negritude”. Julius Nyerere defended it as the philosophy of Ujamaa or African “family-hood”, while Kenneth Kaunda enthroned it in his notion of “African humanism” and Kwame Nkrumah called it “consciencism”. Most recently, another scholar, Martin Nkafu has also identified it as “the vital union of Africans characterized by a vision of totality in which ‘beings’ while perceived as distinct are nevertheless ontologically and intimately related with one another” (Faniran, 2003, p 11). This does not only signal the understanding of communalism and Africa’s cultural pluralism as a significant aspect of Pan-Africanism, but also encapsulates the notion of its mission and ideology.

Here we propose to explore to what extent the ideological objectives of Pan-Africanism are emerging in Nollywood films. In other words, can Nollywood be said to be emphasizing Pan-Africanism in its production and marketing around Africa and beyond? And what are the criteria or indicators for discovering Pan-African themes in Nigerian popular films?

Pan-Africanism and the Nollywood Film Practice

The Nigerian film industry is by far the largest but not the only such indigenous film industry in Africa. The term “Nollywood” is derived the same way that “Bollywood” of India is derived from “Hollywood” [American national film industry]. It is a name that is “unofficially” given to the Nigerian national film industry which has an

uncertain origin. The only verified reading of its original usage is purportedly from outside Nigeria. This according to Haynes was in an article by Matt Steinglass who wrote about it in the *New York Times* in 2002 (Haynes, 2005). The name, having become so popular among film audiences has other competing names like “Naijawood” coined by those who wish to be part of history in naming the nascent industry in Nigeria. In Ghana [close next-door neighbors to Nigeria] presently, the influence is also being noticed as film fans there are settling with “Ghallywood” to refer to their national film industry despite other names like “Ghanawood” and “Ghollywood” while for Liberia it is “Lolliwood” thereby making the filmmaking practice and “naming” a “an-African cultural practice in itself.

Nollywood films in particular, according to Kunzler, are “an industry that [has] developed out of a context related to domestic and international cultural, economic, and political environments [...]. It is heterogeneous in nature and can be divided roughly into Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo video films which designate their production centers in the South-West, North and South-East of Nigeria respectively” (Kunzler, 2007, p. 1). Thus, like any other national cinema, such as the Irish cinema, which “sustains and challenges the myths of a country’s nationhood” (Hill and Rocket, 2004, p. 10), or as Williams argues, “functions as an economic weapon in the competitive arena of world capitalism, promoting national values” (Williams, 2002, p. 6), Nollywood uses languages and themes that resonate with Nigerians’ desire to tell their stories. Even though the filmmakers make films “essentially” to make money, as Akomfrah argues, they have systematically been “guided by the tenets of African nationalism and cultural identity which help them address local concerns” (2006, p. 282). Nigerian production exists “almost entirely outside Pan-African institutions and international circuits that shaped most of the politicized African Cinemas”³ (Haynes, 2000, p. 5) and “borrows from state media and the transnational flows of Indian and American films and Nigerian folklores” (Dul, 2000, p. 238).

Generally the productions reflect the lived-in situations of Nigerians and represent many issues that both Nigerians and other African citizens can relate with. As Kunzler argues, “they affect Africans more than other foreign films” (Kunzler, 2007, p. 10). They emerge out of life experience of Africans with an impetus imbued with audiences’ participation. In the context of being a technologically driven commercial industry, it is effecting what Mbye (2007) describes as a

paradigm shift in African Cinema. And for Okome, with Nollywood on stage, "the discourse of African cinema will need to be rephrased in very radical ways" (2007, p. 3). As Mbye argues, Nigeians have managed "to put in place the rudiments of an industry...working out in a relatively short period of time⁴ ...the challenges of production, distribution... financing African cinema, ... African distributors distributing African films within Africa primarily and beyond, and (maintain in) a certain measure of autonomy" (Mbye, 2007, p. 12).

Even though, ironically, Nollywood does not enjoy cross-national sponsorships like most other African cinemas especially in the Francophone areas of Africa, it nevertheless covers a wide range of themes that are Pan-African in its representations. In portraying African cultures the industry underscores not only tribal and national concerns but also "invoke an implicit sense of shared destiny as they contemplate the social relations through which 'nation' is constituted in Africa" (Akudinobi, 2001, p. 139).

On the general rate of distributing the films, Haynes notes that "the export of Nigerian films has been remarkable, even if most of the profits do not end up in the right hands. They are what is on television in Namibia and on sale on the streets in Kenya. In the Congo, they are broadcast with soundtrack tuned down, while an interpreter tells the story in Lingala or other languages. In New York, Chinese people are buying them. In Holland, Nollywood stars are recognized on the streets by people from Suriname, and in London they are hailed by Jamaicans" (Haynes, 2005). The distribution of Nollywood films throughout Africa and among the worldwide African diaspora sets the stage for the industry's pan-African mission. The use of the English language in most texts makes it possible to reach a wide range of audiences both at home and abroad.

The promotion of advertisements through multimedia channels of the web, print media (newspapers, magazines, posters, and fliers), radio and television also spreads the availability. Confirming the popularity of Nollywood films with the world-wide pan-African audiences, *The Economist* (December 16, 2010) reports that "Nigerian films are as popular abroad as they are at home. Ivorian rebels in the bush stop fighting when a shipment of DVDs arrives from Lagos. Zambian mothers say their children talk with accents learned from Nigerian television. When the President of Sierra Leone asked Genevieve Nnaji, a Lagosian screen goddess, to join him on the campaign trail he attracted record crowds at rallies....". Even in the

Caribbean, these films are making waves, pan-Africanizing values and aspirations. Phillip Cartelli writes that “Nigerian films in the Caribbean are not limited to St Lucia; their popularity extends through all of the former British colonies in the region including Dominica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana” (2007). Otas claims that “from the stalls of Brooklyn’s Odyssey African market in New York to its European headquarters in Peckham, London to the streets of Accra, Ghana, Nollywood’s dominance and growth beyond the shores of Nigeria has no boundaries” (Otas, 2010).

Further evidence regarding Pan-African audiences comes from statistics supplied by Aderinokun (2005). He argues that Nollywood audiences are scattered all over the world. “Every film in Nigeria has a potential audience of fifteen million people within the country and about five million outside, but these statistics may be somewhat conservative considering that half of West Africa’s 250 million people are Nigerians and according to the World Bank records, slightly over 7 million Nigerians are scattered around the world, most of them in the developed economies”. This means that it is not only in Nigeria, but also all over Africa and around the world that Nollywood is making its impacts on audiences.

The Internet also helps to make the films readily available to audiences all over the world at large. As a marketing strategy, some websites are designed to review and sell the movies. What Buckingham (2006) explains regarding the use of Internet for media access in the West can be applied to Nollywood: “the web offers a means of distribution as well, via web streaming of moving images and audio materials”. Added to the Internet is the distribution among the Nigerian diaspora through video retail and rental shops both within and outside of Africa. Coupled with this is the availability of the AfricaMagic channel on the DSTV package that carries Nollywood films on a daily 24 hour basis. This extends the Pan-African outreach towards South Africa, the official provider of the cable network among those who subscribe to it.

Generally audiences are attracted to Nollywood movies due to their Pan-African cultural elements. The narrative themes approximate general African lifestyles and locations. The film personalities are those that audiences around Africa can easily identify with. The genres in the industry attract audiences’ quest for a variant entertainment. Nwachukwu on this note comments that “with a plethora of genres in the new cinema products, Nollywood, set either in the local language

with English subtitles or in pidgin English is successful" (Nwachukwu, 2003, p. 135). For Haynes, this "has made the industry's products burn bright all over Africa, Europe and America. Once colonized by Hollywood and Bollywood", he states, "Nigeria may now seem to others to be a cultural imperial power" (Haynes, 2005).

How Nigerian producers build in Pan-African themes

Even at the level of co-productions, Nigerian producers are today employing other African celebrities to join them in the entertainment industry. For instance, there are films jointly produced with Nigerian and Ghanaian actors and others with Kenyan and Nigerian actors. The belief is that Africans, no matter their specific background actually do share common worldviews and therefore have no problem featuring in any film with a Pan-African theme. *Shakira* (2009) is one Nollywood film that captures this logic. Directed by Paschal Amanfo and shot in Ghana it combines actors from both Ghana and Nigeria to showcase its Pan-African orientation. Mercy Johnson (Shakira) of Nigeria is the heroine of the film but had to be married to Rubby Williams a Ghanaian whom she killed with the help of another boy friend of hers, Richard, also a Ghanaian. Not only does *Shakira* uses actors from various African countries but the marketing aims at distributing the film in both countries where these celebrities have a huge number of fans. The themes of romance and intrigue is a universal language especially among the younger generation and promotes the circulation of the film throughout the continent.

The opening sequence of *Shakira* depicts brightly painted female lips in a tight close-up frame speaking words of love poetically to an unknown cherished lover. And side by side with these female lips are also the male lips that respond to these words of a lover in an equally secret and poetic fashion. Gradually the close-up shot zooms out of screen to reveal the people behind the "love" desires. In effect, it is Nollywood's way of representing emotions, aspirations and mental desires which most African viewers share. Following this establishing shot, a young man [owner of the speaking lips] is seen rushing out of his office to go and present his love with a bouquet of flowers and propose to her to marry him. Unfortunately, the proposal never happened since the young man (Richard), upon entering the girl friend's room caught her in bed with another man. All this is attractive not only to fans of African background for whom the scene resonates

with many experiences, but also with young people all over the world who are falling in and out of love.

The stream of love scenes in a very graphic mimesis with a storyline of outlandish contradictions is entertaining not only to African audiences but has a global attraction. The closeness of Nollywood films to people's everyday experiences, cultures and contexts is one reason why the industry is successful. A glimpse of how young Africans perceive Nigeria, but also identify with Nigerian films is revealed in an interview I had with Harry,⁵ a young student from Malawi studying in Nigeria, regarding the popularity of Nigerian films in his country. Just to test the extent the films are circulating outside of Nigeria, I asked him if he had ever seen any Nollywood film before coming to Nigeria. In his own words,

“before I came to Nigeria we were always seeing Nigerian Nollywood films. If you go to Malawi you will see Nollywood films sold along the streets. If you go to some parts of the mall you will see people watching the films. Usually what we see in them are themes like violence, armed robbers attacking houses, fine buildings and even the village part of it. So the impression we get is that Nigeria is a place where the gap between the rich and the poor is very wide...”.

From this young man's observations one discovers how Nollywood offers to audiences a fascinating range of problematic life experiences of Nigeria and Africa in general. In this way, the industry helps affirm cultures from around Africa. As the young student noted in his interview, “I think they bring out African cultures ...and I think that's the reason why I like Nigerian movies. I can identify with them. I see a lot of similarities in Nigerian cultures with my own Malawian cultures; that is, in the way we are brought up. I see more similarities than differences really. For instance the way bride price is paid. We do those things as well”. Thus, Nollywood encodes the common history and background in a filmic language that constructs a Pan-African vision of living reality.

Communalism as an Expression of Unity in Diversity in Nollywood

A central theme in many Nigerian-produced films is the supremacy of community and the central role of communitarian rituals. This communalism brings together many of the common

African beliefs, ethos, mores and worldviews. Communalism is a kind of eco-system that underlies many aspects of African cosmology and serves as a core attribute of pan-Africanism. This is brought out particularly well in the film *Coronation* (2004) directed by Ifeanyi Azodo. Here communalism is showcased as a typical cultural celebration of Africa which people of many African nations could identify with. The storyline deals with the aspirations of a young man for a chieftaincy title in a community in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria. The struggles which this entails no doubt resonate with experiences of audiences all over Africa. Central to gaining the title of a village leader are rituals and celebrations that reflect communalistic practices. For instance, the presentation of kola-nuts, communal dancing, greeting patterns and symbolic cultural gestures and the actual conferment of the chieftaincy title are some of the elements that form the storyline. The film in all its representations is a cultural tale that combines village politics, the traditional title-taking ceremony and the quest for power and authority repeated throughout Africa.

Coronation is designed as a critique of the power struggles surrounding the *ozo*⁶ title in an Igbo community of South-Eastern Nigeria. It is the story of Akwaika, a wealthy young man who desired by all means to belong to the cult of the elders in his community. Originally a poor man, trained by his brother and uncle, Akwaika becomes rich and forgets all those who helped educate him. His only desire was to become more respectable by joining this group of king makers, traditionally called *ndi ozo*. Given the symbolism of the celebration in this film and the mood of participants as guided by the director's use of typical cultural costumes, the film reveals communalistic values common in African cultures.

The film satirizes the cult as unbecoming of Pan-African communalistic tenets by emphasizing the differences between the rich *ozo* title holders and their poor relatives. In depicting the extent to which ambitious young men go to achieve this title, the film brings out the evil in those who oppose communalistic values. In the case of Akwaika, bribes had to be given to other members of the cult to recommend him and some who opposed him or refused to be sponsored by him were killed by his agents who were swept along by his wealth. In the end, even his brother Okonta, was killed [by him] for standing on his way to the title taking preparations.

Coronation becomes a kind of parable commenting on the ruthless ambitions of so many "big men" in African cultures who are seen as

destroying African communitarian values. The critique of these ambitions from the perspective of deeper African values is brought out by the expression of disgust of many in the community, especially the poor, of the ways that the rich get richer while the poor get poorer. A scene that reveals this is the gossip sequence of three girls at the village stream, where they had gone to fetch water. One of the girls ridiculing the hypocritical philanthropy of the powerful *ozo* Nnabuenyi (Pete Edochie), points to his spending a lot of money to bury his only brother who died in poverty. The other girls retort with dismay by highlighting that he (Nnabuenyi) was helped to gain wealth by his brother whom he left to die in abject poverty. And after rejecting his brother he spends fortunes at his funeral so that the public will praise him as a generous title holder. These poor village girls are like the chorus of a tragic play revealing the feelings of members of Nigerian society regarding the quest for power and wealth. These villagers represent the views of millions in African countries, oppressed by ambitious politicians and businessmen. One of the villagers asks contemptuously, "is the *ozo* title after all an achievement?" the other two replied simultaneously, "Don't mind men...some of them are fools", and adds with irony, "don't you know of the respect and regard given to them in our society?"

The discourse of these three girls symbolizes the sentiment of people in African society who are opposed to the rich for violating communalistic values and forgetting to help their poor relatives. In this film, *ozo* Nnabuenyi even betrays the reverence of the society for this title when he shouts at his wife for advising him to help his poor uncle with some money for eye treatment. He (Nnabuenyi) retorted, "do you wear a red cap?" implying that she [the wife] has no right to speak and contribute to the discussion between *ozo* Nnabuenyi and his poor uncle, *ozo* Okudo, since she, a woman, is not an *ozo* titled person in the society. The implication of this is to depict how patriarchal African communalistic society is while at the same signaling the characteristic symbolic activities that imbue communal rituals and the injustice of the *ozo* title among men.

Throughout the film, *Coronation* showcases the joy and significance of celebrations in Africa with traditional drums, dancing steps and cultural tunes. In one of the scenes, where the late Oliver De Coque leads the titled men in dancing, the dignity of community-based titles is depicted as meriting reverence, but in a very ironic manner. The film both respects and questions the kind of honor given to elders in

African society in a way that makes it easy for every African to grasp. Attesting to why most people respect the *ozo* title, Melie and Wass argue that “the *ozo* title-taking ceremonies are the means by which an [African] man gains higher religious, social, economic, and political status” (1983, p. 65). The *ozo* title particularly is a sacred institution that has remained rooted in tradition and introduces communalistic symbols in its celebrations. The *ozo* title holders according to Melie and Wass are traditionally expected to ‘break kola nut’, the greatest symbol of Igbo hospitality, and pour libations of wine while praying to *chukwu* (God) and *ndimmuo* (the spirits) at home, at village meetings and at social gatherings of ethnic significance. In this role the titled man occupies an intermediate position between the people and the ancestral spirits (Melie and Wass, 1983, p. 67). At the same time, the film is a criticism of the way that many African leaders instrumentalize communalistic values in a way that violates them.

This same drive for community recognition by seeking traditional title in Africa is the theme of another Nollywood film, *Fool at 40* (2006) where a young man who has been judged a failure in life due to poverty and lack of financial success, is rallied around by his community members once the oracle purportedly pronounces him to be the next ruler of the community. It is the celebration of this title that features the public recognition which society accords title bearers. Thus, even though the theme of the film revolves around Nigerian cultures and communities, the emphasis here is on practices widespread in many African societies that support the unity of purpose operative among the people as a group. In Nollywood films, the communalistic values are re-enacted in the portrayal of the myths of the people, in the retelling of traditional stories, and even by reproducing traditional songs and music in the film’s music scores. Thus, societal values are handed over to younger generations in the common entertainment of the people.. Here, the films are “products of man’s initiative and creative instincts intersecting with his language, art and religion to the extent that they are products of his traditions and cultures” (Adediji, 1971, p. 134). They are therefore agents of pan-Africanism as well as channels of preservation of cultural values for all Africans.

Last Ofala 1 & 2 (2002) is still another film of great popularity that highlights common African experiences. Directed by Andy Amenechi, the intrigues that surround the choice and crowning of an African king

are again revisited. The background of the film is the ancient tradition of rulership and the politics that go with it. Here the hereditary institution of the monarchy is being questioned and challenged by a section of a community whose dying king insists that his son should succeed him. In the view of the majority, however, kingship should be won by a democratic process based on rotational slots that allows equal participation of all the villages that make up the clan and not merely the prerogative of one village at the behest of the pronouncement of a dying king. The African value of respect for elders and especially for ancestors is being put up against the value of fair justice, participatory election of leadership and the African sense of the community as supreme over individual quest for power. In the background, of course, is the current debate throughout Africa of dictatorial, patrimonial leadership vs. an accountable and transparent leadership..

The typical symbolism that surrounds the rite of passage of the king in this film is so significant and revealing that it draws viewers into the sacredness that surrounds the honoring of the words of a dying king. The portrayal probes the issue of "will" in African tradition. The question that the audience is invited to think about is: must the will of the elders be honored as traditionally sanctioned by the gods and ancestors, invariably the custodians of the land? Or should it be treated as depicting the greed of the king who does that to enrich his immediate family with pride and honor?

Many aspects of African cultures are represented in *Ofala*. Apart from the ritual ceremonies, the use of proverbs as a mode of speech in Africa also stand out in the communalistic discourses of the elders. Here words are couched with multiple meanings to confuse the uninitiated while depicting wisdom, creativity, logic and sacredness of the speakers on traditional matters. The dying king for instance announces his choice of a successor with words to his son framed as proverbial wisdom: "The lion can never win a wrestling contest with the tortoise". "Like the dew that trickles and laughs in the morning, even so is your laughter". "You will never go wrong. He who carries a burden in his heart is like a hunch back". "The ancestors beckon to me. I have lived a good life". "Like the iroko tree, my branches are spread wide. It is time for the lion to go". "My son, you carry the seed of the harvest. You carry the water of life. You, it is, that will be the next *Igwe*".

Igwe is translated “king” in Anambra State of Nigeria, the setting for this film. In other areas, its substitute is “Eze”, which also means “ruler” or “monarchical king”. The use of this terminology gives one a status very close to the ancestors and very sacred in almost all functions. With the use of ancient proverbs and the sounding of ritual flutes and drums, this film uses a language familiar to African cultures which all African viewers can resonate with. Most African villages do not only practice the chieftom system where one person is considered a *primus inter pares* (first among equals) but also think that rulers should be chosen on the basis of their leadership qualities, a debate that this film highlights. Whether it is in the political terrain or at cultural assemblies, the idea of leadership roles and who succeeds a leader after his or her tenure is a recurring question in Africa which makes this film appeal to all with roots in African cultures.

Religion as the bedrock of Pan-African existential reality as seen in films

It is not only around debated issues of leadership and traditional cultural practices that Nollywood builds its stories, but also around questions of faith and morals. The films most often showcase the “Jesus” and “God” element that draws attention to religion as part of life in the African worldview (Mbiti, 1969, 1990; Dipio, 2007; 2009). In most African cultures every person is regarded as being guided by a personal divinity, similar to the “guardian angel” concept in Christian theology. The presence of the divinity is an integral part of all African belief systems. As Mbiti states, “religion is the way of life of Africans” (1969, p. 29).

The film, *Festival of Fire* (1999) directed by Chico Ejiro, portrays this Pan-African religious worldview as its central theme. Shot in a typical pre-colonial location, reminiscent of Chinua Achebe’s Umuofia village before the advent of Christianity in *Things Fall Apart*, this movie pays great tribute to the heroic pioneering spirit of the early female missionaries while presenting the tenacity of a people’s love and defense of their traditional religion and culture. The establishing shot, filmed from a wide angle perspective, gives at a glance, the romantic exotic nature of the rural African village, Amani, in 1885, where people were tenaciously committed to the killing of twin babies for fear of upsetting the harmony of the land, purportedly guided by the local deity who prohibits the bearing of twins because it is an evil omen.

The film tells the story of a certain man, who, to avert the killing of his twin babies as custom demands, separates them by handing them over to different women of two different villages to bring them up in their own houses outside Amani. The twins, Ike (male) and Mary (female), were given identical tattoos on their bodies, in case they survive and come to learn of their background. In the beliefs of the Amani tradition, the family of Ike happens to be a priestly clan and therefore privileged to serve the communal deity at the level of chief-priests. Of course, the primary priestly function here includes the killing of twin babies as well as offering of sacrifices to the deity on behalf of the people. Twenty five years after the birth of Ike and his sister, Ike comes to be chosen as the chief priest of the village. This also is the time when the early missionary nuns decide to come to Amani for evangelization for the first time. Mary, the twin sister of Ike is one of the nuns, and has become the leader of the religious community soon after their European leader was killed while rescuing a woman being stoned to death by a mob for giving birth to twins.

In their fight to combat this tradition, Mary and the other nuns have to battle to rescue some abandoned twins as well as offer medical assistance to the villagers. But Ike, as one of the custodians of Amani traditions would not tolerate the women's new religion. He turns the minds of the entire community against them. While some were killed and buried, Mary is brutally flogged and disrobed by a mob led by Amaeshi, the prince of the land and his guards. Just at the point of getting ready to kill Mary in sacrifice to appease the god of the land, Ike sees the tattoo on Mary's chest which symbolically reminds him of the warning of the deity who once told him at the shrine: "you can't destroy your own! You cannot kill yourself!"

Like the biblical episode of Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac, Ike withdraws his sword from the sacrifice in order to consult his aged father, who, once again, narrated the story of his birth to him, reminding him in clear terms: "the woman with the tattoo on her chest is your sister". At this point, like the spell of a bad dream, the screen zoomed slowly to a flash-back that relocates the audience into the distant past when Ike and his sister were born and rescued by separating them. Thus, like a privileged revelation, the audience is here reminded that Ike too is a twin, and might, after all, be encountering his sister unknowingly, who herself also is not aware of this fact either.

Bewildered by these hidden revelations of his father, Ike approaches Mary in her secluded cave and sorts out their identity and family

background by asking family questions that revealed them as siblings. At the end, the king of Amani was baptized and most of the people were converted to the new religion. *Festival of Fire* not only tells about the history of the 1885 missionary journey of the Catholic Church to the old Eastern region of Nigeria, but also showcases how the beliefs of Catholicism were able to lead the people to rethink the traditions and move toward the acceptance of a more humane religious practice. The film leads the audience to ponder more deeply the question of religious history present in all parts of Africa.

Festival of Fire is couched in symbolic proverbial words and ritualized actions depicting the tension that arises in the confrontation of the lingering African belief system with its contradictions and puts before the audience an alternative set of religious practices. One better understand the attractiveness of Nollywood films by seeing how producers select typical village value debates to solicit audiences' interest across Africa. Because the issue of religion and belief in the supernatural and the discussions of the contrasts in the traditional and modern representations are so widely present, Nollywood films are able to enter deeply into people's experiences.

Bless Me (2005) is another Nollywood film that depicts religious issues common throughout Africa, but religion in the more contemporary context. Typically, discussion of contemporary religious issues is Pentecostal or Charismatic in both content and outlook, and evokes the sense of religion as a way of life by many people in the continent. It systematically uses family hardships to moralize faith in the consciousness of viewers who might see it as a reflection of their society and perhaps, their own life-stories. As Philip Cartelli (2007) says, "people see more of themselves in a literal sense in Nigerian films".

Directed by Ernest Obi, this movie suggests a reading founded on the theology of evangelization by means of media outreach programs and technologies. It uses the screen as a pulpit to preach faith and the faithfulness to God in the midst of difficult challenges. Again, it is a practical film that confronts once again the reality and problem of evil in the world created by an all-good God. The basic theme of its narrative is the age-old philosophical question: "why do the innocent suffer while the guilty prosper?" Situations like this actually reflect the Pan-African sense in a way that has generated so many new churches and new evangelists across Africa. Looking at different television channels also confirm the centrality of the evangelistic movements in

the African continent, a reality which creates much dramatic material Nollywood films try to re-create.

Using Festus (Mike Ezuruonye) as the protagonist of this movie, the producers question the “why” of the presence of evil in human existence. The irony which even Festus could not comprehend, even as he helps viewers identify with the narrative flow of his sufferings, is why should he, a devout Christian and worshipper of God, be left in abject poverty and squalor, while his neighbours involved in “double-dealing” businesses succeed in all their transactions. Like the biblical saintly Job, he asks the “why me” questions.

The opening scene of *Bless Me* begins with a wide angle shot of sun rays shining softly on the houses of the rural area of the South-East of Nigeria as family members are seen getting up from sleep. Swiftly panning the camera around the old and rusted corrugated iron-sheet houses in the area, to give a view of the environmental outlook of the place and depict the calmness of the night that was coming to an end with day-break, the lens technically penetrates a particular bedroom and reveals to audiences a young couple in pyjamas, standing in the middle of their bedroom and singing “worship songs” to God in a morning prayer session.

While the idea of standing and singing hymns to God is not recent in Africa, the Pentecostal way of doing it is quite different from those of the historical churches, indicating the dawn of a new religious reality in the continent. The screen expresses this point when it shows a scene of the morning prayer of Festus and his wife Amaka (Rita Dominic). Like devout “born again” Christians, this young couple lift high their bibles, with eyes tightly closed and speak a multitude of words “to God” in a frenzied manner. The traditional film aesthetics of the Nollywood industry often have elders of families lead traditional religious prayers by pouring libations to personal and family gods, as seen in films such as *Things Fall Apart* or *Festival of Fire*. The film *Bless Me* highlights the Pentecostal modern way of worship among most African families. Significantly it depicts the daily situational experiences that arguably are increasingly frequent throughout Africa. Even though one might think that *Bless Me* is Nollywood’s attempt to adapt to market demands and conform to the religious inclinations of audiences, still, it is a way of addressing the people on their problems at the level they can understand them. It is a desperate call to God for redemption out of poverty and personal desperation which is an increasingly common African concern. Not only the prayers but the

songs in the film's music score reveal a desire of a couple burning not for spiritual upliftment but for material success, a desire which is expressed in many if not most gospel songs on sale across the continent presently. Or put in another way, they manifest the devout faith of Pan-African families wishing all "blessings" to turn economic situations around at the behest of God whom they serve.

Poverty and conflicts as challenges of Pan-African nature in Nollywood Films

Most mainstream film industries in the global South feature the challenges of poverty, conflicts, underdevelopment and crisis-ridden situations afflicting not only Africa but the masses in all developing countries. In Nollywood films, however, these issues are treated as central, deep-seated concerns in the lives of people across the continent. In most films, the challenges have presented younger Africans as people on the margin of existence but as somehow responsible for the impossible task of pulling Africa out of poverty. One Nollywood film that portrays the disenchantment with the the topsy-turvy nature of things in Africa is *African Heroes* (2005). The film portrays the ambition of young people trying to survive hardships by means of their talents, but also with dreams of a new Africa. The film highlights the societal values of young Africans seeking success, overcoming the economic challenges, willing to do hard work and maintaining unflagging ambition. Yet, the film brings out the frustrations due to lack of infrastructural opportunities in the continent to help them achieve success in life. Directed and produced by Lancelot Oduwa Imaseun, this film portrays Africa's journey and aspirations towards the future in a way that reveals its historic struggles and continued attempts to turn failure into success.

From the moment of its title credits *African Heroes* challenges viewers to decipher what storyline is represented. It begins by showcasing a categorical distinction between two groups of youth: one, made up of young musicians seeking to use their talents for survival, and another group of seemingly disoriented young people stealing from the public for a living. Since the film terminates the screen life of the anti-social group as soon as they surfaced by letting them be caught and be dealt with by the police, this reading centers on the group whose screen actions are eventually at the center of the narrative flow of the film. These become, the title reveals, emerging *African Heroes*.

With their friendship and mutual interests, this group discover their love for music and determine to make a living out of it. Graphically, the

screen presents the lyrical combination of these talents as they rehearse and sing of Africa's redemption in a reggae manner, reminiscent of the late Jamaican musician, Bob Marley. Here, their strength as young people is felt as very energetic and passionate which comes across through the tonality of their voices but mainly through their dancing steps that are hit strong on touching the ground. Unfortunately, due to their poverty, so typical in Africa, none of them has a place of his own except the only girl in their company who happens to be a friend to one of them and a daughter of an ambassador in Nigeria, studying at the University of Lagos. In this film, the Pan-African theme is seen not only in the poverty of the young musicians but also in the different social and national backgrounds of the protagonists. The insecurity of their lives is revealed not only in the inability of these young adults to have a house of one's own but also the seeming impossibility for bright young university graduates like these musicians to get jobs. Thus, as in most African films, it is mainly the politicians and their Western friends working in the country that have good lives, while young people live in jobless insecurity. The security of the rich ambassador's daughter in the midst of these jobless young people only serves to underline the hopelessness of their lives.

Day by day these young musicians gather to sing in their friend's house, continuing to think of achieving their dream as emerging "African heroes". When they hear of a music contest in the city of Benin, a Nigerian city about four hours drive from Lagos, they set their hearts on participating in it and hope to make use of the prize money to start their life careers. But again like most Pan-African problems where good will is not good enough, they don't even have the resources to transport themselves to the venue of the contest.. Here again, the idea of African "dreams" comes to mind, where most people have good plans and intentions but lack the where-whithal to achieve them them. Thus, their dreams revolve around some rich relative or foreign donor coming to their rescue.

In many ways, the plight of these seven young musicians is not too different from many African political leaders. *African Heroes* could be read allegorically as different leaders of Pan-African nations, (represented by the seven young men and ambassador's daughter), discovering what unites them as a continent (for instance, by music), and hoping miraculously to make a revolutionary success out of a difficult situation. But always unforeseen challenges continually frustrate them. Hence, *African Heroes* is a film that has a Pan-African vision as well as a Pan-African theme. The connection with Tunisia and Jerry Smith, the chief host of the music competition showcases the ideological belief of most people in

Africa that a Western connection is a way of developing Africa. Even though the European entrepreneur in this film is seen to tap into Africa's resources (music), the film does not indicate that they [Africans] know what to do without his help.

Throughout the film, one thinks that Africans are speaking to themselves proverbially. The screen's visual representations show symbolic arid places that are cut off from ordinary human activities. As these young "emerging African heroes" finally solve their transport problem and move along the long dry motor way to Benin, their vehicle break downs. One recalls the typical scenery of Hollywood road movies that symbolize with "nature" scenes the emotions of the film (Brereton, 2005, p. 91). The difference here being that, while in Hollywood films, the characters take their mission as adventures and equip themselves for their journey, in this film, nature scenes symbolize the continual frustrations of their dreams. They are caught up with the frantic pressure of being late to reach the music contest without water to drink, food to eat or somebody to help them get a mechanic to fix their borrowed vehicle. The film editors of African Heroes use the desert scenes of Africa's arid landscape along the road to awaken sentiments regarding the sufferings and frustrations of young people like these musicians. To heighten the feeling of the impossibility of realizing their dreams, the editing kept transversing between the stranded musicians on the highway and the impatience of the organizers in far-away Benin City waiting for them. The imagery of endless landscapes which are used by the horizontal camera tracks helps to express an ecological symbiosis of Africa juxtaposing youthful lives with no realizable goals on the horizon.

Like most other African stories on the road to success, difficulties abound, and this is the problematic being questioned in this film as regards Africa's journey in real life contexts. Eventually a dispatched messenger sees the distressed musicians beside the jeep parked by the road side and brings them to the competition arena in his own car to entertain the awaiting crowd. Their successful performance eventually dramatizes as much as qualifies the belief in the tenacity of Africans that in spite of difficulties that things will someday be better. The film, therefore, is a Pan-African story dramatized to question the post-colonial destiny of Africa as a continent. Not only do individuals share in the hardships that besiege life ambitions, but also government leaders seem frustrated, despite genuine efforts to turn things around, that often make them seek outside assistance from Europe and

America as their only hope. The young musicians eventually find success, but is this simply a dream or is it real life in Africa? This is the question the film continually poses.

A sequel to this Pan-African theme of deep seated concern, is another film with a similar worry presented from a different perspective and entitled *A Cry for Africa* (2004). It is also the story of young Africans who, because they seem to have no future in the continent, decide to leave and go over to Europe for a better life. Shot in different locations between Lagos and Switzerland, this film focuses on the story of Dozie (Hakem Kazim) who fled Nigeria in order to help create a future for himself and his younger siblings. Upon arrival in Switzerland he discovers that, like many other Nigerian immigrants before him, he is not allowed to work in the country due to prejudice and discrimination. Thus, the theme that this film portrays is the difficulty that haunts Africans in Europe not only in finding jobs but problems in gaining any acceptance.

The music score of *A Cry for Africa* cries out in form of a lamentation not only on the fate of Africans in Europe but the bitterness of life on the continent of Africa. This music coupled with Dozie's musings in his joblessness and in prison about the hopelessness of his homeland brings audiences to think about the causes of the despair and misfortune of Africans outside their continent. The source of misfortunes in Europe is highlighted when one Nigerian with his certificates approaches an European officer for a job and is told that "Nigerians cannot be trusted because people who come here arrive with forged certificates". The question of the dignity of the African personality on screen was once again problematized and showcased as a source of worry to those who bear this identity. This not only brought Africans in the film to gather to ask themselves questions but also challenged them to think about their continent and why they left it to come to Europe to live in shame. In one of their lamentations, Dozie, who leads the discussion, is seen and heard saying, "no peace, no good road, and no work...in the whole continent...the situation is even becoming worse...". With this he sums up the title of the film and how they decide, after making some money, to return home to rebuild Africa even in their small way.

This again is Pan-Africanism in its argument and in its ideology. The final scene of *A Cry for Africa* dramatically depicts this theme when, after Dozie's release from prison and in the company of other Africans, the film ends with them leaving their room with travelling bags hung

over their shoulders. That the film is shot between Africa and Europe emphasizes that this story is meant for Africans both at home and in diaspora since the majority of people have either relatives outside the country or are themselves victims of such treatment abroad.

The theme of conflict and civil war

Another area that Nollywood is often representing deals with Africa's conflicts across the continent. Whether it is in Nigeria, Sudan, Ivory Coast, Senegal, Somalia, Sierra Leone, or East Africa the issue of conflict is as much a challenge to the continent of Africa as poverty is. Most Nollywood films encode in the background of storylines and imagery this Pan-African reality of continuous civil—often ethnic—conflict.

The film *Hear My Cry*, 1 & 2 (2005) which dwells on the war of secession (1967 – 1970) that left Biafra, the present day Eastern Nigeria, impoverished, is one of the Nollywood films with the Pan-African theme of conflict. It can be read as Nollywood's attempt to resurface the post-independence tragedy that is most often avoided by mainstream media in Nigeria and Africa for fear of agitating reactions from those who lost people in the civil war. Its establishing shot starts with an echoing wail from a distant past, depicting woes and worries as the outcomes of the war, while revealing mishaps one after the other in the screenplay. The geopolitical locations of the film are the ruins of devastated buildings, similar to portrayals of past wars across African nations. Sick children are seen littered around the remains of their dead parents with protruding stomachs while flying insects perch on their bodies like maggots on rotting meat. Starring Chuka (Amaechi Mounagor), Emilia Azu (Adaku) and Desmond Eliot as Agha, *Hear My Cry*, directed by Uzee Madubuogwu, is a film that brings to reality the after effects of the war vis-a-vis the realities of African life in the face of so many crises. With the loss of almost everything, crime rates are rife, and life became the survival of the fittest. The lack of communications between families and most participants in the war made it possible to think that non – returnees have died in the war. Thus, believing that his brother, Major Obi Okonkwo was killed in the war, Chuka decides, according to an erstwhile tradition, to “inherit” his [brother's] wife, Adaku who does not agree to it and is asked to pack out of the house with her two children.

Interrogating African tradition, the film uses Chuka in the film narrative to explain to both Adaku and viewers the implications of being a widow in the hopeless circumstances in Africa. In the film this

includes being remarried by the male next of kin to the deceased husband in order to reproduce children in his name. This is purportedly to keep the lineage and memory of the late male alive, but often becomes the pretext for seizing property and inflicting other painful punishments on resisting widows.

In her land of exile, Adaku becomes sick and dies. Chuka, who has custody of the two children, then, "sells out" Uju, the daughter in an arranged early marriage. Her brother, Agha (Desmond Eliot) tries hard to fight the injustice of giving her sister's hand in marriage without her consent but his efforts are overcome by the uncle and in-laws. *Hear My Cry* is a film that opens the Pandora's box of the ills of traditional African communalistic cultures located in the background of civil, ethnic and other conflicts at individual, national and continental levels. In this film the viewer witnesses the injustices of the powerful exploiting the helpless young ones in intrigues using the pretext of maintaining supposedly sacred African traditions.

The revenge by Agha when he came of age is portrayed as an action not only against the cruelty and injustices of Chuka but also against the African culture that allowed these to thrive. Thus, the film is a dramatic plea for a review of the consequences of inhuman customs that brew a culture of conflict. The audiences are led to identify with Agha in order to bring the villain, Chuka, to shame. The film thus becomes the unspoken cry of the millions of victims of African conflicts who remain silent in the face of injustices and cruelty meted out against them. The suspense of the film and the hopeful expectation of spectators reaches its high point when Major Obi Okonkwo returns after the war from African country where he sought asylum. The sorrow of the film turns to the jubilation of the entire community which brings shame to Chuka his brother, whose injustices were based on the pretext that his brother was dead. Thus, the film frames Chuka as villain, losing both the moral battle and the physical one. In a desperate attempt to defend himself Chuka makes up deceptive stories to tell his brother. But Agha breaks into the conversation with the truth to revenge the death of his mother and forced marriage of his sister.

Ironically, Major Okonkwo does not recognize his own son and begins to fight his son to defend his brother Chuka until the community gathers to rescue the situation. Suddenly Major Okonkwo notices the tattoo he gave to his son, Agha, before leaving for war many years ago. Here the moment of truth is reached where Chuka breaks down and confesses his deceptions to all, now with bitter regrets. Like

so many Nollywood films, *Hear My Cry*, uses all the twists and turns of African popular melodrama that audiences in Africa and in the diaspora find so engrossing. The aftermath of civil war in Nigeria becomes the historical background for a drama that people in all parts of Africa can identify with. The suffering in the conflicts of Africa become a theme that Nollywood producers are quick to dramatize to provide audiences with a liminal, cathartic reflection since so many have pent up experiences of war, ethnic conflict or the challenges of natural disasters.

Conclusion

Discussing Nollywood from Pan-African viewpoints reveals that its filmic system of representation is close to Africa's perception of existential realities. Particularly noteworthy is the way the films provide audiences with different views of their identity construction. The portrayals of the people's cultures not only connect them to richer meanings and larger forces operating in their continental and ecological symbiosis, but also foregrounds the films' commitment towards realizing the ideological mission of Africa's founding independence leaders creating the vision of Pan-Africanism. In Barlet's view, the films' language can be said to "consist in a surrealism that is both mystical and metaphysical" (2000, p. 143) with a choice of dramatic themes, story lines, character construction and filmic symbolism that appeals to Africans in Africa and throughout the world. The Nollywood film industry, seeking its economic growth and survival, has contributed significantly to bringing African perspectives to others not only across Africa, but also in Europe and America via multimedia networks. In the attempt to appeal to the widest possible audience and market, the Nollywood films take up the widest possible range of themes, but at the same time these themes are treated from an African perspective because the primary audience is in Africa or Africans in the diaspora.

Since Pan-Africanism defines Africa's interconnections and interdependencies, the Nollywood films can be said to be imbued with a Pan-African orientation seen from the films' thematic resonance with people's life stories, proximity to cultural landscapes and wide range of coverage outreach across Africa and beyond. With the rapid rate of its productions and wide distribution as well as aesthetic representations The Nollywood film industry is a vibrant participant in the Pan-African market, not only because it is consumed via cable channels and Internet sources across the globe, but also, because it extends African

cultures and values to others outside the frontiers of its geopolitical production space. Thus, by participating and contributing to the global market of cultural industries, it brings something new to the table by correcting most misrepresented stereotypes of African worldviews and values by mainstream media especially from outside Africa, while at the same time affirming and transmitting its films across borders through global media interactions. To argue for the confinement of Nollywood films within Nigeria only, as against disseminating them through reciprocal mechanisms of pan-Africanism and globalization, defeats cultural development, signaling a tendency to cry foul and return to the ghettos of ugly experiences that undermine healthy and free exchange of creative ideas. This is not the case with Nollywood which as the second largest cultural industry in the world cannot just be stopped but must be allowed to flourish.

Notes

¹See UNESCO. 2009. Institute For Statistics. Analysis of the UIS International Survey on Feature Film Statistics. Montreal Quebec: [Online]. [Available from: <http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php> [Accessed 06 May 2009]. Here comparisons were made in the number of feature films produced by different countries by UNESCO and it was discovered that Nollywood produces more films than Hollywood, second only to Bollywood of India.

²An example of Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's (1770-1831) philosophy is buttressed by his judgment about the black race when he stated that, "Africa is not interesting from the point of view of its own history, but because we see man in a state of barbarism and savagery which is preventing him from being an integral part of civilization. Africa, as far back as history goes, has remained closed and without links with the rest of the world. It is the country of gold which is closed in on itself, the country of infancy, beyond the daylight of conscious history, wrapped in the blackness of night' (Hegel. 1965). Rethinking this type of image construction of Africans not only in literary works but especially in films such as *King Solomon's Mines* (1937), *Kongo* (1932), *Naked Terror* (1961), *So This is Africa* (1933), *Tarzan, the Ape Man* (1981), *Cry, the beloved Country* (1951), *Come back Africa* (1959), *Out of Africa* (1985), *African Queen* (1951), *Dogs of War* (1980), *Zulu* (1963) and *Zulu Dawn* (1979). In view of this, Cameron calls for a new way of representation both in the West and in Africa. He does

this because as he said, “in the mind of the West, by the nineteenth century, a conventional stereotyped-image of Africa that depended on a few repeated motifs, especially “jungle”, “darkness” and “savagery” were being created” (Cameron,1994, p. 11).

³African Cinema here refers to the cinemas of the French-speaking Africa produced by Africans especially in Francophone countries but sponsored by the West and distributed through their mainstream distribution channels. They are here distinguished from Nollywood, which is produced by African filmmakers, especially of the English-speaking area of Africa, sponsored by individual investors and merchants and distributed by local agents.

⁴The short period of time implied here is between 1992 when Nollywood started productions and 2007 when Mbye delivered his paper in the Republic of Ireland alongside this writer.

⁵Harry is in his early 30s and very interested in Nollywood. He was among the young people that agreed to participate in focus group interviews this writer conducted for an earlier work in 2008 at Holy Family Parish, Woji, in Rivers State, Port Harcourt.

⁶Ozo is a traditional concept referring to warlords, elders and king makers who are welcomed into the society by means of cultural initiation rites. This personage is widely familiar in the South East of Nigeria and can be likened to other traditional chieftaincy titles given to respectable elders in the community considered to be the custodians of customs and traditions.

Filmography

1. *African Heroes* (2005) Directed by Lancelot Oduwa Imaseun
2. *A Cry For Africa* (2004) Directed by Elvis Chucks
3. *Shakira* (2009) Directed by Paschal Amanfo
4. *Coronation* (2004) Directed by Ifeanyi Azodo
5. *Hear My Cry* (2005) Directed by Uzee Madubuogwu
6. *Bless Me* (2005) Directed by Ernest Obi
7. *Fool at 40* (2006) Directed by Franklin Chinedum Nwoko
8. *Last Ofala* (2002) Directed by Andy Amenechi
9. *Festival of Fire* (1999) Directed by Chico Ejiro

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Nonverbal forms of communication in Akan society

By Kofi Asare Opoku

Abstract

Nonverbal forms of communication are especially important in African communication and can be considered a particular emphasis in the communication in all African cultures. The present article describes the importance of nonverbal communication in one culture, the communication of the Akan culture in Ghana. The article focuses especially on the significance of drumming, horns, song, visual (especially body markings, linguist staffs), textile designs (especially the Kente cloth), gold weights, colors, and signs by hands and body.

Key words: Nonverbal communication, Akan nonverbal communication, nonverbal communication as Pan-African.

Introduction:

Communication generally involves the passing on or trans-mission of feelings, thoughts, reflections, opinions or information by means of articulate verbal utterances, writing or symbols. In terms of interpersonal relations, communication is the hoe with which relationships are cultivated, just as one uses a hoe to cultivate a farm or garden. Our traditions in Africa, place emphasis on communicating with those we live with, and the Akan say of a person who does not communicate with others, "*ne tiri mu wo sum*", his/her head is full of darkness. Our proverbial lore in Africa makes this very clear, and the Maasai of East Africa say: "Unkind is he who does not speak" (Massek & Sidai, 1974, p. 24); the Baganda of Uganda maintain that good public relations are superior to beauty or attractiveness in their proverb: "An ugly, talkative person, is better than a beautiful person who is reserved" (Lule, 2006, pp. 203-204); while the Yoruba add: "One does not qualify

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to live with a person without also qualifying to talk to the person” (Owomoyela, 200, p. 312).

The medium of communication emphasized in the proverbs cited above refers to the use of human language in face-to-face situations. But there is everywhere, in all human societies, communication without words, and it is the Akan practice of this nonverbal type of communication in Ghana, which is our concern here. And it is hoped that the information provided in this piece will contribute to a Pan-African project to thoroughly and exhaustively research into the foundations of the modern communication systems in Africa.

In our daily lives we use many contemporary forms of nonverbal communication: picture advertisements, hand signals that let the driver of the *tro-tro* (a cheap means of public transportation in towns and cities in Ghana) know where we want to go, or abstract symbols that are used in computer language, mathematics and the sciences. But these instances of nonverbal communication are only modern adaptations of ancient practices of nonverbal communication, which constitute both a significant basis and a powerful expression of our African cultural identity.

Communication by Sounds:

Early Akan society devised instruments whose sounds reproduce words or imitate speech. As Kyerematen wrote: “It is the musical instruments which ‘talk’ – those which convey messages, recount history, recite proverbs and wise sayings or sing praises – which have captivated and mystified the world (Kyerematen, 1964, p. 59). A primary instrument of this type is the drum, *akyene/twene*. Nketia explains why a drum can perform this function by pointing out: “A drum talks by reproducing the tones of intonation patterns and rhythms of utterance. Therefore the use of the drum as a medium is possible only where a language is tonal, that is, where the tones of a language are phonemic and are as much a part of the formation of words as vowels and consonants” (Nketia, 1979, p. 3).

There are three modes of drumming (Nketia, 1963, p. 17; 1968) in Akan society. There is first, the signal mode of drumming in which short texts or pieces are played over and over again, and for this function, the *twenesin*, short heraldic drum, is used. Other short drums that are used for similar purposes are the *etwie* and *mpebi* drums. The message of the *twenesin*, short heraldic drum, is usually thought to originate from the history of the particular royal household with which

it is associated. Thus, the *twenesin* of the Akyem Abuakwa royal house, says: "*Susu bribi! Susu bribi!*" — Imagine something! Think of something! (Antubam, 1963, p.138), or as Nketia renders it, "Ponder over something! Ponder over something!" (Nketia, 1963, p. 17). The *twenesin* of the *Omanhin*, Paramount Chief, of Asebu, in the Central Region of Ghana, says; "*Oson bribi! Oson mbre bi!*", "Things differ! Times differ!" A philosophical reflection on the reality of things and the need for judicious adaptation to changing situations.

A common *twenesin* piece used by Akan chiefs is, *Kantamanto!* True to his word! An allusion to the truthfulness, dependability and commitment to fundamental principles of justice — ideals that are reposed in the sacred stool of the chief. The *twenesin* is also used to express religious convictions, such as that of the chief of Kitase in the Akuapem District of the Eastern Region, which says: "*Onyame ne hene!*" (Brokensha, 1972, p. 274), God is the King, an affirmation of the omnipotence of God.

Speech Mode of Drumming:

A. B. Ellis, in his *Twi-Speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast* (1887), wrote:

The native ear and mind, trained to detect and interpret each beat, is never at fault. The language of the drums is as well understood as that which they use in their daily life (as cited in Nketia, 1963, p. 49).

Although the language of the drum is not as well known today as it was in the days Ellis wrote, the *atumpan*, talking drum, remains the preeminent talking drum of the Akan, and it is used to "speak", as the Akan affirm that "*atwene kasa*", the drum talks. The *atumpan* is a pair of drums, male and female, and the combination of the high (female) and low (male) tones reproduces sounds that are heard, understood, even ecstatically admired, and whole-heartedly appreciated as language. It is the drummer, *Okyerema*, who makes the drum talk and his role in society is greatly valued to the extent that a master drummer is referred to as *Odomankoma Kyerema*, the Creator's own Drummer, who has knowledge of sacred history and lore and brings them to the attention of the society on important occasions on the Akan calendar.

Kyerematen further explains the reverence accorded drummers by the Akan by saying that, "According to the Akan, craftsmen and musicians are the linguists or spokesmen of the Supreme Being

(Kyerematen, 1964, p.118). A *fontomfrom* text dates the respect shown to the drummers to the beginning of creation and states:

*Odomankoma boo adee,
Borebore boo adee.
Okyerema yeye no brebre,
Okyerema yeye no gye adee di.*

Since the Creator made things,
Since *Borebore* made things,
Men have treated drummers with respect,
Men have offered the drummers hospitality.
(Rattray, 1927, p. 294).

The talking drum is used to make announcements, to recite poetry, narrate events of historical importance, greet important people, and philosophize. A drum text that reflects on creation and the Creator says:

*Okwan tware asuo
Asuo tware okwan,
Opanyin ne whan?
Yetwaa kwan no kotoo asuo no.
Asuo no firi tete Odomankoma.*

O Path, thou crossest the River,
O River, thou crossest the Path.
Which of you is the elder?
We cut a Path, and it went and met the
River,
The River came forth long, long ago,
It came forth from the Creator of all
things (Rattray 1927, p. 286).

In other words, paths are made by humans, but rivers and other forms of nature point to *Odomankoma*, the Creator, as their originator and by merely reflecting on nature and posing questions, the Akan ancestors were led to the conclusion that nature has an Originator, whom they designated as *Odomankoma Oboadee*.

The text of the New Year greeting to the chief played on the *atumpan* says:

Afe ano ahyia, merebema wo adwo.

Mehyira wo kosekose.
Tweneboa Kodua se
Ohyira wo kosekose.
Nyini, nyini, nyini
Nyini bo akora.
Okyerema oyan atumpan se
Ohyira wo kosekose.
Nyini, nyini, nyini,
Nyini bo akora.
Otweduampon Nyame se
Ohyira wo kosekose.
Nyini bo akora.
Asase Amponyinamoa se
Ohyira wo kosekose.
Nyini bo akora.
Nyini, nyini, nyini
Nyini bo akora.
Mfee nto wo mfee so (Nketia, 1963, p.185).

Slowly and patiently I get on my feet.
Slowly and patiently I get on my feet.
The year has come round.
I have come to greet you,
To shower blessings on you.
Live long! Live long! Live long!
Live to a good old age.
The drummer of the talking drum says,
He showers his blessings on you.
Live long! Live long! Live long!
Live to a good old age.
The unfailing God of old, *Tweduampon*, says,
He showers his blessings on you.
Live to a good old age, chief.
The Earth, *Amponyinamoa*, says,
She showers her blessings on you.
Live to a good old age.
Live long! Live long! Live long!
Live to a good old age.

May years be added to your years (Nketia 1963:185).

Fontomfrom, the great state drums orchestra, made up of a pair of *atumpan* or talking drums; a pair of *bomaa* drums; three *twenesin* or short drums; and a pair of gongs (Kyerematen 1964:63), also has language of its own. The text of the *fontomfrom* of Wasa Akropong, given by Antubam (1963:143), is *Okwan tenten, woko no otenten* – a long journey is undertaken by those who prepare for it. The piece from Manhyia in Kumase, alludes to the prowess of the founder of the Asante Kingdom, Osei Tutu, and his successor, Opoku Ware, in the following words;

Yen sekan akonton
Yen sekan akonton,
Osei ne Poku sekan akonton
Nso etwa apem!

Our sword is bent,
Our sword is bent,
The grand sword of Osei and Poku is bent,
Yet it slaughters a thousand! (Antubam, 1963, p.144).

Another piece from the Asante wars with the British, that reflects the pertinacious resolve and fierce determination of the Asante is;

Asem beto Broni
Abansoro!
Asem beto Broni
Abansoro!
Asem kese beto Broni
Abansoro!

There will be trouble for the white man
Upstairs!
There will be trouble for the white man
Upstairs!
There will be trouble for the white man
Upstairs, upstairs, upstairs! (Antubam, 1963, pp.144-5).

The third mode of drumming is the dance mode of drumming to which we shall refer in our discussion of action communication.

Horns

The sound of horns (*mmentia*), usually short elephant tusk horns, also have their language of communication, and the *abentia* (singular), of the chief of Asiakwa in the Akyem Abuakwa District, in the Eastern Region of Ghana, expresses a particularly optimistic view of human nature by saying: “*Wotane me a, kata w’ani!* – Close your eyes, if you hate me! (Antubam, 1963, p. 138). In other words, human beings normally find it difficult to hurt each other with their eyes wide open, but they are able to do so only when their eyes are closed or when they are overcome by anger, hatred, jealousy or spite. The *abentia* of the chief of Brekuso, in the Akuapem State, in the Eastern Region of Ghana, blows the message, “*Okwan wo yen!*” (Brokensha, 1972, p. 259) – the road/path belongs to us, to proudly and publicly proclaim their role in the organization of the Akuapem State, as the scouts on the hills who, in the past, watched the movements of the Ga people who lived on the plains below the Akuapem hills during times of conflict and warfare; whilst that of the chief of Konkonnuru, near Aburi, in the Akuapem State, expresses the value of collective work by saying: “*Dodow na eye ade*” (Brokensha, 1972, p. 279), literally, numbers can accomplish much, an idea echoed in the proverb, “*Mfote baako nsi siw*” – One termite does not mould an anthill.

The *Mbenson* or *Ntamera*, Orchestra of Seven Elephant Tusk Horns, are owned by some prominent Akan chiefs and they sound the heroic deeds of their forbears in their histories. The *mbenson* of the chief of Wasa Akropong in the Western Region of Ghana, sound the heroic deeds of his stool ancestors in their fight with their enemies in the past:

Mitwaa no o,
Mitwaa no o,
Mitwaa no, mekyeree no o,
Metoo no berade mekyeree no o,
Mitwaa Bonsu mekyeree no o;
Mitwaa no o,
Mitwaa no o,
Metoo no berade mekyeree no o!
 I crossed him,
 I crossed him,
 I crossed it and caught him;
 I lured him and grabbed him,
 I crossed the River Bonsu and caught him;
 I crossed him,

I crossed him,
I lured him and caught him! (Antubam,
1963, p. 141).

The Song as a Medium of Communication:

Nketia wrote:

.....songs have served as a storehouse of information, a record of history, a vehicle for expressing feelings and thoughts or public opinion and criticism, as well as an avenue of social action. Hence songs may be used for boasting, for inciting people, for expressing public opinion, or for making social commentary (Nketia, 1979, p. 4).

An effective use of the song as a means of communication is found in the *Apo* festival celebrated in the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana. The reason for the celebration of the festival is given by an informant:

You know that everyone has a *sunsum* (soul), that may get hurt or knocked about or become sick, and so make the body ill. Very often, although there may be other causes, e.g. witchcraft, ill-health is caused by the evil and hate that another has in his head against you. Again, you too may have hatred in your head against another, because of something that person has done to you, and that, too, causes your *sunsum* to fret and become sick. Our forebears knew this to be the case, and so they ordained a time, once every year, when every man and woman, free and slave, should have freedom to speak out just what was in their head, to tell their neighbours just what they thought of them, and of their actions, and not only their neighbours, but also the king and chief. When a man has spoken freely thus, he will feel his *sunsum* cooled and quieted, and the *sunsum* of the other person against whom he has now openly spoken will be quieted also (Opoku, 1978, p.97).

Speaking out freely during the festival has been institutionalized in the form of a song, and "any individual who has something to say must do so within a performing group by taking the solo lead or by getting the group to take up what he wants to express. If anyone who feels offended by a singing group wishes to hit back, he must do so in a song with a counter performing group. Hence the expression of group solidarity is also part of this institution, and insult may give way to praise and the expression of group sentiment" (Nketia, 1979, p. 4).

And to poignantly remind the chief and the entire society of their worth, hunters sing:

*Ohene, wosene bofoo?
 Ahantan! Obofoo! Ahantan!
 Fefe, fefe, fefe, a ehye wo nan,
 Mpaboa a ehye wo nan,
 Eyee den na eyee den?
 Obofoo na okum twe:
 Yede otwe-nwoma na eyoee.
 Ohene, wosen bofoo, yei see nko
 Wosen bofoo?
 Ahantan! Obofoo/ Ahantan!*

Is the chief greater than the hunter?
 Arrogance! Hunter? Arrogance!
 That pair of beautiful things on your feet,
 The sandals you wear,
 How did it all happen?
 It is the hunter that killed the duyker:
 The sandals are made of the hide of the duyker.
 Does the chief say he is greater than the hunter?
 Arrogance! Hunter? Arrogance!
 The noisy train that leads you away,
 The drums that precede you,
 The hunter killed the elephant,
 The drum head is the ear of the elephant.
 Does the chief say he is greater than the hunter?
 Arrogance! Hunter? Arrogance! (Nketia, 1963,
 p.76).

Visual Forms of Communication:

An important medium of communication in Akan society which is even more lasting or permanent than speech or action, is the visual. Through symbols, designs, material objects and colors, the Akan give expression to their feelings, beliefs, ideas, social values, philosophy of life, and the relationship between the living and the dead.

Body Markings

The Akan have body markings in the form of paintings, scarifications and cicatrices which give meaning to societal beliefs, quite apart from the fact that such markings have aesthetic appeal. The body markings may be for the purpose of identification, such as the

markings on the bodies of *akomfo*, priests/priestesses, especially on their backs and arms that identify them as such, along with the matted hair and white clothes.

The Akan also give special body markings called *odonko* (*odo nti nko*- don't go back because we love you), by other Akan groups besides the Fante, who call them *kosama akam* (*ko san ba akam*- gone and returned markings, or markings for a child who has died and is believed to have returned). These markings, three in number, are made at the corner of each eye (they may also be made at the corners of the mouth), and resemble crow's feet. Davis gives a full explanation for this practice:

When a woman who has previously lost a child gives birth to a new baby, it is assumed that it is the same child which is commuting between the human and ghost worlds. The child is called *kosama* – he who has gone and come back. To break this cycle and make the child stay alive, it is believed that the child must be marked – indeed, deformed to mask its face from any spirit or ghost that might try to take it back if it could identify the child. The child's hair is treated in a special way so that it grows into tassels. Amulets and talismans, cowrie shells and sea shells are tied around the ankle to make noise to scare off evil spirits. Three deep marks resembling crow's feet are made at the corners of each eye. A derogatory name, not a proper Akan name is given to it. *Donko* – slave; *Saara* – a substitute for the real thing; *Sumina* – dunghill. Rendered thus unattractive, the child survives because, it is believed, the spirit world or its spirit mother either cannot identify it and take it away or rejects it (Davis, 1986:27-28).

Markings are also made for curative and preventive purposes, as well as for victory in fights. And in the latter case, markings called *Nya ko a fre me akam*, call me when you have a fight, made up of six tiny vertical incisions on each upper portion of the arm, are believed to offer additional spiritual power (Davis, 1968).

Linguist Staffs

The staffs used by the *Okyeame*, spokesperson for the chief, called *akyeame poma*, have carved symbols on top of each which express ideas, values, proverbs, historical incidents or even qualities possessed by the chief, in visual, concrete form and constitute a unique way of recording and preserving human experience and insights. These symbols constitute art in the real sense of the word, but it is art as an expression of values and beliefs as opposed to art for art's sake. A few examples of *akyeame poma* symbols and their meanings may be given:

- A hand holding an egg – *Nsa a, ekura nkesua* -power must be handled in the manner of holding an egg in the hand; if you hold it tightly, it breaks; if you hold it loosely, it drops. Power must therefore be handled as delicately as you hold an egg in the hand.
- A chicken standing by its water basin with its head raised skyward – - - *Akoko nom nsu a, ode kyere Nyame* - when the chicken drinks water it shows it to God (in gratitude). The symbol underscores the need to show gratitude to our benefactors and condemns ingratitude. Interestingly, the Oromo people of Ethiopia have the same proverb and it says: “To God reverence”, said the hen as it drank water (raising its head) (Cotter, 1996, p. 29).
- A pineapple – *Wopere wo ho di abrobe a, wudi ne bun* - if you are in a hurry to eat a pineapple, you end up eating it green (an unripe one). However anxious or impatient one may be, the right thing must be done at the right time (Opoku, 1997, p. 129).
- A chameleon sitting on top of a metal box – *Obosomakotre adane a, odane dea n’ani ahu, nye dee ewo adaka mu* - The chameleon can only change its colours to suit what it sees, not what is hidden in a box. The symbol expresses the insight that there are limits to human possibility or political power, a clear warning to those who wield power.

Each Akan clan has a totem which is often depicted on top of its *abusua poma*, clan staff. The Fante have seven clans, viz. Nsona, Anona, Twidan, Aboradze, Ntwea, Konna, and Adwenadze, while the other Akans have eight. The eight clans and their totems are as follows:

Aduana	Dog
Agona	Parrot
Asakyiri	Vulture, Eagle
Asona	Crow
Asenee	Bat
Bretuo	Leopard
Ekoona	Buffalo
Oyoko	Hawk

Beyond the visual totems are their characteristics which they manifest, and each clan reflects the characteristics of its totem. Thus the Aduana are characterized by their adroitness and skill under pressing

conditions; the Bretuo, by their force and tenacity, *akyerebirim* (Antubam, 1963, p.149); the Agona, by their masterful and resistless eloquence; the Asenee, by their consummate diplomacy; the Asakyiri by their determined vigilance; the Asona by their weighty wisdom (the Asona say, "It is because of wisdom that the white cloth around the neck of the crow never gets dirty"); the Ekoona by their scrupulousness and conscientiousness and the Oyoko by their dogged patience.

Adinkra Symbols

Adinkra textile designs provide an important means of communication without words and are used to express proverbs, ideas, philosophy of life, values and beliefs. Examples of *adinkra* symbols are:

- *Owuo atwedee* – the ladder of death is not climbed by one person alone, all human beings will experience death at one time or another. And, in the face of this inevitability, we all need to support each other while we are alive, a reminder of the proverb, "When a thorn gets into the toe, the whole body bends to pull it out".
- *Ese ne tekrema* – the teeth and the tongue. The teeth, which are sharp, are able to live peacefully with the tongue, which is very soft. How often does a person bite his/her tongue? The symbol is a reminder of the need to learn to live with each other in society in spite of our differences (Opoku, 1997, p. 117).
- *Nyame bewu na mawu* – I will die only if God dies. This symbol represents the *okra*, the undying part of the human being and the part that links him/her directly with God, *Onyame*. The symbol reflects the immortality of the *okra* (Opoku, 1997, p. 116).
- *Obi nka obi* – one does not bite another. This symbol expresses the value of peaceful and harmonious living among people in society. It is sometimes made up of three fishes, each with the tail in the other's mouth, and it suggests that people in society are all intimately connected with each other and every person must be respected as an individual and protected from harm. Individual integrity, respect for the individual person and his/her limb are an important cornerstone for societal living and no one should

be used as a means for the satisfaction of the appetite of others (Opoku, 1997, p. 117).

- *Nkinkyimii* or *Nkyinkyim* – twistings. This contorted figure stands on four legs in spite of its shape and it symbolizes the strength and ability to stand erect and firm in spite of the twists and turns which life inflicts on us. The boldness, resilience and resourcefulness needed for a successful journey through life are represented by this symbol (Opoku, 1997, pp.120-121).

Kente Cloth:

The kente cloth, according to Ofori Ansah, is “...more than a cloth. It is a visual representation of history, social code of conduct, religious beliefs, political thought, aesthetic principles, proverbs, certain attributes of plant and animal life” (as quoted by K. Atta Fosu). The kente design, *Oyokoman*, whose full name is *Oyokoman, ogya da mu* – there is fire between the two factions of the Oyoko clan - refers to the civil war which broke out after the death of King Osei Tutu, between Opoku Ware of the Oyoko clan and the brothers of the Oyoko clan, the Dako (Rattray, 1927, p. 238). The exile of King Prempeh I in 1896 to the Seychelles Islands by the British, occasioned the creation of a special kente cloth, *Ohene aforo Hyen* – the king has boarded a ship.

An *Ohemaa*, Female Chief (I prefer this translation to Queenmother) of Bonwire, Nana Frempomaa, and who was the grandmother of Otaa Kraban, who with Koragu Ameyaw, was credited to have been the first weavers of kente, has a design named after her called *Frempomaa* (Rattray, 1927, p. 239). The kente design, *Akoabena*, bears the name of the mother of Ntim Gyakari, king of Denkyira, who was slain by King Osei Tutu (Rattray, 1927, p. 241), while the design, *Ohene akamfo* (at the King’s pleasure), also sometimes called, *Ohene nko nyon* or *Ohene nko mfura* – the king only may weave or the king only may wear, was said to have been personally designed by King Kwaku Dua, around 1838 (Rattray, 1927, p. 245).

Antoko (they did not meet the war or they missed the campaign), refers to an historical event in the reign of Bonsu Panyin (1807-1824), when Amankwatia, the Asante General, was sent to reinforce the army already in the field, but before he arrived, the campaign was over when (Rattray, 1927, p. 246). And an incident during the reign of King Kwaku Dua I, when that monarch ordered some Asante men to catch a leopard alive with their bare hands, resulted in the creation of a kente

design, *Kyeretwie* (catch the leopard), to commemorate the great feat (Rattray, 1927, p. 245). The historical allusions reflected in the names of kente designs mentioned above, durably preserve much of Asante history that otherwise would have been lost.

Kente is also a visual representation of proverbs. On the occasion of Ghana's admission into the membership of the United Nations in 1957, Ghana presented to the world body a kente cloth, *Ti koro nko agyina* – one head does not go into council, it takes more than one head to arrive at a decision that affects the welfare of the world community, a most fitting cultural contribution to the world body, urging it to strive towards the ideal of collective decision-making (Opoku, 1975, p.11). The idea that doing the good attracts the support of others, while doing the opposite leads to condemnation or reprimand, finds expression in the proverb, *Woforo dua pa a, na yepia wo*, you get a push when you climb a good tree, which is the name of a kente design.

Gold Weights:

The Akan, especially the Asante, used gold dust in the past as currency and weights, called *abrammoo*, were used in weighing the gold dust. Some of the weights were figurative and represented proverbs and wise sayings:

- A hunter being attacked by a leopard - *Se wobeto osebo tuo na wanwuo dee, fanyinam* – Better not to have fired at all than to have shot at a leopard and missed killing it (Kyerematen, 1964, p. 49). A proverbial warning not to bite more than one can chew.
- An elephant-tail whisk - *Esono dua ye tia, eno ara na ode pra ne ho* – the elephant is capable of whisking off flies with its tail, short as it is (Kyerematen, 1964, p. 48). Unavoidable handicaps should not be used as an excuse for inactivity or laziness.
- A shield – *Ekyem tete a, eka ne bremo* – when a shield wears out, the framework still remains. Men die, but their words and works may live forever (Kyerematen, 1964, p. 52).
- A chimpanzee – *Nsoroboa di m'aduane a, enye me ya se kontromfi a ne nsa hyia sekan* – It is painful to the farmer when a chimpanzee feeds on his crops, because it is capable of handling a cutlass; it has the features of a human being

and so can make a farm for itself. He does not, however, mind birds feeding on his crops (Kyerematen, 1964, p. 53). A needless beggar is an affront to the generous.

- A water-snail – *Abebee, gye se wotwa ne ti ne ne to ansa na woafe no* – To suck the meat out of a water-snail, you must cut off the top and the bottom (Kyerematen, 1964, p. 52). No good thing is gained without effort.
- A canoe – *Ehyen, yeka no afanu* – The canoe must be paddled on both sides (Kyerematen, 1964, p. 54). Unity is strength.
- A guinea fowl – *Akomfem di aponkyerene akyiri a, obedi ne kom* – if the guinea fowl goes after a dead frog, it is only going to intensify its hunger (Kyerematen 1964, p. 53). It is unwise to pursue a project which gives no prospects of results.

Geometric figures also provide a means of communication in Akan society and prominent among them is the circle, which is a symbol of the presence and power of God (Sarpong, 1974, p. 101). It also symbolizes eternity, continuity and security and the continuous flow of life, and Akan priests and priestesses, *akomfo*, create a circle with *hyire/hyirew* (white clay), and stand in the middle to perform their ritual, possession dances, *akom*. Temples of deities are circular, and in the past individual houses were also in circular form, reflecting the same ideals and values. The square or rectangle, according to Sarpong (1974, p. 101), is a sign of the sanctity in the male aspect of both God and man and also stands for the territorial power and extent of a male ruler, while the triangle is a female symbol as well as the symbol of the pride of state (Sarpong, 1974, p. 101).

Colors

Color is an important visual form of communication in Akan society and it helps to give expression to deep feelings of love, melancholy, victory, purity, anger or crisis. The color black does not communicate a fixed, unchanging, message of gloom and doom in Akan color symbolism. While the Akan use the color black to express deep feelings of melancholy, old age and death (Sarpong, 1974, p. 102), they at the same time use the color black to represent the highest political authority of the state, the sacred black stool, *akonnwa tuntum*. And, in this instance, the color black represents unutterable sacredness,

antiquity, history, age, wisdom, magisterial dignity and unbounded respect, without a suggestive hint of negativity.

Gold or yellow is the color of royalty and it also represents prosperity, glory, continuous life, warmth and maturity (Sarpong, 1974, p. 102). Green represents newness, fertility, sparkling vitality and primeness in growth, while white represents purity, virtue, virginity, joy, victory (Sarpong, 1974, p. 102). White is also used by the Akan to represent situations that may not be altogether happy or celebratory. The Akan ritual, *hyirewgu*, that is a stamp for divorce after the arbitration ceremony, involves a husband sprinkling white clay, *hyirel hyirew*, on the shoulders of the wife to proclaim her no longer his wife (Davis, 1986, p.40). People attending the funeral of an *otofo*, a suicide or a person who died through violent means, smear their arms and faces with white clay (Davis, 1986, p. 43).

Red is used on occasions of melancholy, death of a relative, wars, national anger or crisis, violence or sudden calamity (Sarpong, 1974, p. 102). In the medicinal use of color, Akan herbalists use the color red in the cure of bed-wetting and impotence. "In both cases", writes Davis, "the bodies of the individuals are dabbed with red clay. The paradigm of red is blood, which is associated with life, therefore with the organs of reproduction" (Davis, 1968, p. 59). And blue is the colour of love and female tenderness (Sarpong, 1974, p.102).

Communication by action

The human body is a veritable instrument of communication and its gestures can be used to praise, honor, insult, warn, show respect and sympathy, and express beliefs. The movement of the body during dance is not only meant to entertain, but also to communicate, as an African choreographer, the late Albert Mawere Opoku, pointed out with unquestionable clarity:

To us life with its rhythms and cycles is dance and dance is life. The dance is life expressed in dramatic terms. The most important events in the community have special dances to infuse fuller meaning into the significance of these events...The dance is to us what the conventional theatre is to other groups. The dance is a language, a mode of expression springing from the heart, using movements which have their counterparts in our everyday activities, to express special and real life experiences (as quoted in Nketia 1979, p.6).

The human body is a virtual instrument of communication and the movement of parts of the body speak a clear language. One shows respect to others by using the right hand to greet, give or receive things, while to use the left hand to greet, give or receive things from others or gesticulate, is to show an attitude of disrespect. But one can bring the right hand to support the left and use the left hand to give or receive something from the other person without being in breach of etiquette, if one's right hand is soiled with food or dirt. A person can open both palms of the hand and put the back of the right hand into the palm of the left hand, with the trunk of the body bent a little forward, to say, please, excuse me, I am sorry, forgive me, pardon me or to admit a mistake with sincere regret (Sarpong, 1974, p.114).

A person can express unmistakable astonishment, incredulous bewilderment or even unabashed admiration by clenching the right hand and putting it on an open mouth. And one can place one's index finger under the corresponding eye to say to another person, I told you so, or if only you had listened to me (Sarpong, 1974, p.114), while raising the index finger and middle finger in the form of a V, while people are dancing, is to offer congratulations to the dancer or dancers or to show respectful admiration for the aesthetic quality of the dance. The Akan say, *Wonkwati kokrobeti mmo pow* – literally, you cannot tie a knot without the thumb. And while the thumb is indispensable in the performance of many bodily functions, certain gestures of the thumb can also be used to insult others, to say that a person does not deserve respect, or worse, to make filthily obscene references to the mother of the person being insulted.

The expression on the face communicates one's feelings, be they anger, disgust or joy and felicitation and the proverb that says, "*Koma mu krataa, wokan wo onipa anim* - A letter from the heart is read in the face, correctly underscores this observation. And even the eye can become an instrument of abuse or insult when a person squints at another or looks askance at that person.

Conclusion:

Drums, horns, songs, body markings, symbols such as linguist and clan staffs, adinkra, kente, gold weights and geometric figures, as well as colors and actions are all instruments of communication. In addition to these, clothes, including women's headgear and ornaments, as well as sandals, stools, umbrella tops and rings also communicate messages without words. The enormous variety of the forms of nonverbal

communication in Akan society, which can also be found in other societies in Africa, point to the rich cultural heritage which is ours. And as we study modern forms of communications, we may do well not to ignore our own forms of communication, verbal and nonverbal, in order to increase our self-awareness, the inescapable foundation of our Pan-African identity.

African cultures are especially rich in nonverbal communication, and though the nonverbal signs may be different in each cultural context and often changing, a characteristic throughout Africa is the sensitivity to the nonverbal forms of communication. The nonverbal can be said to be a Pan-African characteristic of communication.

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KOFI ASARE OPUKA



Communication and the Pan-African dimension to Community

By Molefi Kete Asante

Abstract

It has become common to hear that in African the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of the individual life histories. Nevertheless from the accepted primacy of the reality of the community, one often says (i) that in the African view it is the community which defines the person as person, not some isolated static quality of rationality, will, or memory (ii) that the African view supports the notion of personhood as something acquired, and (iii) that it is possible for personhood to fail or rather that one cannot ever gain personhood. This paper argues that the layers of relationship in African communities add to the complexity of communication and that these complexities are not covered simply by the communal idea. Indeed, all personal communication announces the personhood of the communicators.

Key words: community, personhood, culture, values, communication, sebayet

Introduction:

All discussion of communication among African people traditionally begins with the statement of a common humanity. This is why among the Akan of Ghana when one says, "Oye onipa," *he or she is human*, is both a communication fact and a material fact. Thus, to say "She is human," or "He is human" is an initiation of human possibility. If we cannot understand this or if we do not start from this point in examining African communication it will be impossible to assess the Pan African system at work in most African communities. Among Africans in the Americas we have modified forms of this understanding largely because our narratives have been broken, often shattered, in regard to our traditional values.

Those who have little conception of the role humans play in the social reality of Africa may have distorted the entire issue of the African

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thinking. In fact, however, the notion that ontological primacy trumps community primacy is anathema to most of these thinkers. Actually to these thinkers this means that the reality of the person is secondary and derivative and the community is basic, original, and generative. This idea is often articulated by the proverb, "it takes a village to raise a child" as if the meaning of a person is derivative only from the community.

It has become common to hear that as far as Africans are concerned the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of the individual life histories, whatever these may be. Perhaps this understanding is traced back to the concept of the community as including the living, the dead, and the yet unborn as constituent parts of human reality. Nevertheless from the accepted primacy of the reality of the community, one often says (i) that in the African view it is the community which defines the person as person, not some isolated static quality of rationality, will, or memory (ii) that the African view supports the notion of personhood as something acquired, and (iii) that it is possible for personhood to fail or rather that one cannot ever gain personhood.

The philosopher Kwame Gyekye remains at the top of my list as an intellectual who understands both the traditions and the derivatives of tradition. In two important books, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought* (1995) and *Traditions and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (1996), Gyekye articulates perspectives that raise the notions of African personhood to new levels of clarity by expressing the view that the popular idea of African communalism confounds the issue of personhood. Contemporary philosophers and communicationists might be predisposed by education to assume that the entire Western corpus on communication theory can be applied to the African case. In some ways this work finds inspiration in Kofi Kissi Domperé's challenge to the idea of a universal logic based on Western ideas (2009).

I intend to show that the notion of African communication as derived only from within community is a fundamental mistake that has to be corrected in the literature of communication theory and analysis because it obliterates all of the normative cultural foundations present in Africa for communicators. I am certain that the communication complex of the West cannot be transferred entirely as one piece to African societies with any intelligence. Of course, there will always be occasions where Africans trained in the West will impose

their own wills on information, ideas, concepts, and communication frameworks. Mazama has advanced the idea that an Afrocentric paradigm is necessary for a functional appreciation of the role of African culture (Mazama, 2003). Such a paradigm elevates the African perspective on communication, philosophy, and rhetoric in ways that are not possible by relying simply on a Western imposed or accepted corpus. In other words, we are now able to consider the impossibility of the dichotomy of person or community and can now explore the *khepera* conception of becoming and transformation over time and space as valid in communication.

The Issue of Communalism and Communication

There is a popular view that the social conception of the African human order is communal through and through and therefore one must deny or minimize the notion of individuality in African thought. Historically this was the idea promoted by the philosopher-leaders Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Senghor, Julius Nyerere, three of the early political thinkers of independent Africa, who argued for a relationship between African socialism and African communalism in the spirit of the socialist moment of the Cold War (Burke, 1964). They claimed that socialism was natural to African people because of the communal nature of African society and it appeared that sage philosophy bore this out with numerous proverbs to bolster the idea of shared responsibility and collective work.

As the president of Ghana, which gained independence from Britain in 1957, Kwame Nkrumah sought to cast African ideas of communication, cooperation, and civility in the context of communalism. Thus, Nkrumah, in demonstrating his socialist credentials, observed that "if one seeks the socio-political ancestor of socialism, one must go to communalism. ... In socialism, the principles underlying communalism are given expression in modern circumstances" (Nkrumah, 1964, p. 73.) And Leopold Senghor, the poet and philosopher of *Négritude* who was president of Senegal, also said that "Negro-African society is collectivist or, more exactly, communal, because it is rather a communion of souls than an aggregate of individuals" (Senghor, 1964, p. 49). The ideas of Senghor and Nkrumah are at the base of a common belief throughout the world that the African social order is communal in the traditional context. Indeed, this meant, as the early political leaders believed, that the direct path to socialism was through African communalism. It is this Cold

War philosophy that I want to re-examine with the intellectual positions taken up by Kwame Gyekye.

In what Kwame Gyekye calls the “unrelenting pursuit of socialism” the status of the individual person in the eyes of the world was simply communal. In fact, perhaps only Senghor spoke a little about the individual in ways that differed from the general trend. He said the following: “The individual is, in Europe, the man who distinguishes himself from the others and claims his autonomy to affirm himself in his basic originality. The member of the *community society*, (by which Senghor means African) also claims his autonomy to affirm himself as a being. But he feels, he thinks that he can develop his potential, his originality, only in and by society, in union with all other men ...” (Senghor, 1964, p. 94). Nevertheless, the idea of the individual is not carried through in the writings of most early African intellectuals; they are captured by the communal ideology.

Thus many interpretations of the metaphysic of the person and the status of the individual person in the African social order grant primacy to the community vis-à-vis the individual person: metaphysically, the reality of the person is held as secondary to the reality of the community. Socially, in this African system the individual is held as less significant, or rather his status has been diminished, while that of the community augmented and made more prominent. One can see this in the various discourses on collectivity and cooperation in communication that appear in the discourse on African philosophy.

A Possible Corrective for Communication

This idea of communalism may be carried too far in relationship to the African idea of communication. Several categories of being and action are reviewed in this paper in order to make the point that each communicator is responsible for her own role in the process of maintaining community.

The Nature of the Human Being

We have learned enough from philosophers such as Maulana Karenga, Kofi Asare Opoku, Ama Mazama, Henry Odera Oruka, and others that the traditional African philosophers and thinkers often spoke in proverbs that we do not need to make an argument for that position here. One understands that the world of social, political, and ethical ideas is a world of folktales, proverbs, and wise sayings. It is

possible that the proverbs that come to us from the times of the ancestors might be used to understand how they understood human communication. I believe that one can reconstruct African thought by using proverbs or wisdom statements. I am appropriating and adapting the use of the African term *sebayet* as a substitution for proverbs because the idea of *sebayet* carries with it something more serious than the casual use of the word proverb in modern usage. *Sebayet* was the result of experience and reflection on the nature of human interaction in ancient Egypt and is best qualified as a term to suggest the universal African practice of bringing light to human communication.

Consider the *sebayet* "All persons are children of the divine; no one is a child of the earth" (*nnipa nyinaa ye Onyame mma; obiara nnya asase ba*) (Gyekye, 1992, p. 87). It can be inferred from this *sebayet* that a person is conceived in Akan thought in West Africa as a theomorphic being, having in his nature an aspect of divinity. This is what the Akan people call *okra*, soul, described as divine and as having an antemundane existence with divinity (Asante, 1998, p. 129). The *okra* is held as constituting the innermost self, the essence of the individual person. A human person is thus metaphysically conceived as more than just a material or physical object. As a child of divinity, a person must be held as intrinsically valuable. As an end in herself and therefore, as self-complete, it is odd for the Akan to speak of the community conferring personhood (or selfhood) on such a person.

The Uniqueness of Personhood

In Akan conceptions each person is unique, because each soul is unique, and marked by its own destiny. Ontologically, then, the individual person must be self-complete in terms of his essence, for it requires nothing but itself in order to exist (except the fact the essence was held to be created by divinity). If this is so, it cannot be the case that the reality of the person is derivative and posterior to that of the community. It would be incorrect to maintain that the community confers personhood and it would be incorrect to assert that the definition of personhood is a function of the community.

The pronoun "it" does not exist in the Akan language for animate things. One finds this convention in many African languages. Thus: "he is in the room" is translated in Akan as *owo dan no mu*; "she is in the room" as *owo dan no mu*; and "it (referring to a cat) is in the room" also as *owo dan no mu*. However, "it" exists for inanimate things. Thus, the answer to the question, "Where is the book?" will be, *ewo*

dan no mu, that is, "it is in the room." Since the Akan pronoun "o" can apply to all the three genders, it would follow. The answer to the question, "Where is the old man?" (if we want to use a pronoun) will be *owo dan no mu*, that is, "he/it is in the room." Clearly then the neuter pronoun in the Akan language for animate things makes no commitment to the ontological status of its *designatum*. A child or baby will be as much a person as an adult or an old man. The argument that "it", used for any child (in the English language), implies that they are not yet persons collapses, for the Akan "it" (=o), as demonstrated, is used also for adults and older people. In English, one could say of the baby, "it is a beautiful baby," but never of an older woman, "it is a beautiful woman." Are those older people persons or are they yet to acquire their personhood after the communal granting of such personhood?

Could it be that children who die get simpler funerals than adults because community confers personhood? However, it is not true that every older person who dies in an African community is given an elaborate burial. The type of burial and the nature and extent of grief expressed over the death of an older person depend on the community's assessment, not of her personhood as such, but of the dead person's achievements in life, her contribution to the welfare of the community, and the respect she commanded in the community. Older persons who may not satisfy such criteria may in fact be given simple and poor funerals and less generous grief expressions. As to the absence of ritualized grief on the death of a child, this has no connection whatsoever with the African view of personhood as such but stems rather from beliefs about the possible consequences for the mother of the dead child of showing excessive grief: one belief, among the Akan people, is that excessive demonstration of grief will make the mother infertile, as it will make her reach her menopause prematurely; another belief is that the excessive show of grief over the death of a child will drive the dead child too far away for it to reincarnate (see Asante and Mazama, 2009).

Communication and Character

A human person is a person whatever her age or social status. Personhood is thus neither acquired nor achieved as one goes along in society. What a person acquires are habits and character traits: he, qua person, thus becomes the subject of the acquisition, and is not fully defined by what he acquires. One is a person because of what he is, not

because of what he has done or acquired. We also know for a fact that children not only ought to have rights but that they do have rights in African society. Let us once again refer to the Akan *sebayet*: "All persons are children of divinity; no one is a child of the earth." Note that this statement makes no distinction between younger and older persons; it speaks of all persons; it does not suggest either that babies or younger people are not children of divinity. Secondly, this *sebayet*, like most, has ethical overtones, for there must be something intrinsically valuable in divinity for the insistent claim to be made that everyone is divinity's child. A person, inasmuch as he is a child of divinity, must also be thought of as of intrinsic worth and ought to be accorded dignity, respect and importance. From this it can be inferred that a person has moral rights which are anterior to the community, rights that are therefore not conferred by society, but are concomitant to the notion of personhood. Children have rights because, like adults, they are persons.

The Nature of Community

Let me turn to the nature of community. A human community is of course a community or a group of persons who are linked by interpersonal bonds, biological or cultural. This means that without persons and therefore interpersonal relationships and communication there will be no community, and this means in turn that it is the reality of the community that is dependent and derivative, the community not having a life of its own. As Gyekye understood, "This fact immediately takes away the right of the community to pontificate on the reality of the person and to define and confer personhood on the human being" (Gyekye, 1992, p. 93). Furthermore one cannot have a community without communication. It does not exist apart from human, that is, persons communicating.

Person in Community

I wish to emphasize, however, that the ontological completeness of the human person is not by any means to be regarded as paralleled by social completeness. In the social context the individual person is not complete. To say that the human individual is self-complete in its *being* does not in any way imply that he can be conceived as essentially without relations to other human individuals. This is where communication enters the picture more fully. Just as the community does not have a life of its own ontologically, so the individual person

does not have a life of her own socially. For, even though complete in her nature, the human person has needs, desires, ambitions, visions, and hopes which can be realized only within the community of other persons. Socially, then, she remains incomplete without community.

In Akan philosophy the human person is conceived as originally born into a human society, and therefore as a social being right from the outset. This conception is expressed in the *sebayet*, "When a person descends from heaven, he descends into a human society" (*onipa firi soro besi a obesi onipa kurom*). Humans were created in the sky, and therefore the reality of the person is prior to, not derive from, the community. However, the person who "descends" into a human community cannot live in isolation, for he is naturally oriented toward other persons, and must communicate with them to be in relation to them.

The Akan artistic symbol of the chain is a symbol of human relationship. It means that: we are linked together like a chain; we are linked in life, we are linked in death; persons who share a common blood relation never break away from one another. The symbol depicts unity and interdependence, the idea of each person as a unit in the chain. This symbol is thus intended to indicate the fundamentally relational character of the person and thus the interconnections of human individuals in matters of their basic needs and expectations.

In this line of thinking despite her ontological completeness, the individual person's capacities, talents and dispositions are not sufficient to meet her basic needs and requirements. The reason is formulated in the *sebayet*, "A person is not a palm tree that she should be self-sufficient" (*onipa nnye abe na ne ho ahyia ne ho*). Because the human individual is not self-sufficient, she would necessarily require the assistance, goodwill and the relationships of others. She must be a communicating human in order to fulfill his basic needs. Indeed, the community must be a reciprocating community in order to achieve fullness and satisfaction. It is not permissible within such a community for a person to "not communicate" and remain within the community. In fact, that is an example of individualism that might be classified as bizarre, odd, and would require the expertise of a physician. One must communicate in order to maintain humanness.

Another statement makes it pretty clear that "the well-being of man depends upon his fellow man" (*obi yiye firi obi*), a *sebayet* that is logically related to, or is the consequence of, others such as "One finger cannot lift a thing", "The left arm washes the right arm and the right

arm washes the left arm," and "If the lizard is a blacksmith, the monitor does not lack a cutlass." The reasons for the existence of the community are thus clear: the individual's capacity is finite, limited without the community. This fact diminishes the individual's self-sufficiency and enthrones the need to emphasize the value of collective action, mutual assistance and interdependence.

The communitarian life maintains that the good of all determines the good of each, or, put differently, that the welfare of each is dependent upon the welfare of all. It follows from this perspective that the success of the individual person's life is linked with his identifying himself with the community. What emerges then is an organic, symbiotic relation between the individual person and the group maintained by constant communication with all parts of the community. This organic relation has given rise to several questions, false impressions, invalid inferences, and outright condemnation of the communal system of social arrangement.

It must be noted, however, that having relations with other human persons does not diminish or subvert the ontological completeness of the individual person, neither does it rob him of his personal autonomy. The notion of relational character (in respect of persons) is not logically incompatible with the notion of personal autonomy in African thinking. Those who think differently about this topic suppose that there is an antithesis between the two - that is, the individual and society. Perhaps it is undeniable that the organic character of the community as held in African social thought and practice is more pronounced, the interpersonal bonds between persons much stronger. Consequently, community life is real, becoming the focus of the activities of the individual members. From this phenomenon, some scholars have concluded that the relational character of persons is so excessively stressed and its limits pushed to such extremes that the social role and status of the community in African social thought are augmented, resulting in the diminishing of the status of the individual person who, by consequence, is bereft of initiative, personality identity and originality. Individuality, it is erroneously supposed, is smothered by communality.

Conceptually, communality cannot be opposed to individuality, for, after all, the well-being and success of the African group depend on the unique qualities of its individual members - that is, on the intellectual abilities, talents of various kinds, characters, dispositions, share-able experiences, etc. of each individual person. If communalism

were to fail theoretically to provide free rein for the development, full realization and exercise of the individual's unique qualities, it would be an inconsistent social theory, for it would, as it were, be putting a hole in the bottom of the boat in which it was to sail. However, communalism, as conceived and understood in Akan or African social philosophy, is a consistent theory, one that is not opposed to the fundamental interests of the individual. To participate in communication activities that would enhance one's own good as well as the good of others is surely not to have one's identity and personality submerged or ignored by the group.

In the communal social order it is impossible for the individual to feel socially lost or insignificant; on the contrary, the individual feels socially worthy and important as his role and activity in the community are appreciated. The individual also benefits materially and psychologically from the goodwill of members of the group and this is expressed in the response to a person's eloquence, use of proverbs, and generosity of spirit.

Let us consider, to begin with, the ideas expressed in the following *sebayet*: "The family is like a cluster of trees which, when seen from afar, appears huddled together, but which could be seen to stand individually when closely approached." This *sebayet* can be explained in the following way: If one is far away from a cluster of trees, he sees all the trees as huddled or massed together. It is when he goes nearer that he recognizes that the trees in fact stand individually. The family is just like the cluster of trees. The *sebayet* may give the impression that the family is a mere abstraction, a mental construct, not a reality. This is not so, however, for the cluster of trees is real, implying that the community is a reality, even though this does not mean that its reality takes precedence of the reality of the individual. The *sebayet* makes it clear that individuality cannot be diminished or subverted by the reality of the community or the social group. The *sebayet* implies further that the individual has a separate identity, and that, like the tree, the individual is separately rooted, possessing autonomy and uniqueness. Just as the tree is not in any way invisible because of the cluster, even though some of its branches may touch those of other trees (thus the relational character of the individual trees), so the individual is not in any way absorbed by the cluster, that is, the community.

Individuality is well understood in Akan social thought as seen in the well-known Akan *sebayet*, "the family is merely a multitude"

(*abusua ye dom*). The *sebayet* does not reject the reality of the group as such; but it stresses the idea that the individual cannot always depend on the clan family or the group for everything, but should try to be independent and be responsible. The *sebayet* is thus intended to deepen the individual's sense of responsibility for oneself. Thus it repudiates social parasitism, which is rejected also in the popular Akan *sebayet*, "Life is as you make it" (*obra ne woara abo*). The "you" here is of course the singular pronoun. The *sebayet* communicates that it is not the group that will organize one's life for her despite the assistance that one may get from other members of the group. It is the individual who, in the final analysis, ought to strive for her interests, welfare and happiness.

The individual's sense of responsibility for oneself is in fact expressed explicitly in the *sebayet*, "it is by individual effort that we struggle for our heads", (*ti wopere no korokoro*). This teaching underlines the idea of individual effort as a necessary condition for struggling for our interests. To communicate with others is useful but to reflect and to form communication based on one's own efforts is the path to fulfillment.

Thus, Akan social thought, as examined in the works of Nkrumah, Gyekye, and others, holds that the human person is complete in his nature, and that he is a unique individual, with particular interests, wills and desires, capacity and dispositions for communication and self-expression, having an ability to think and communicate autonomously. Akan thought maintains also that this individual is by nature a social being, so that he has a natural proclivity to relate to other persons. Interpersonal relationships are thereby formed, and it is these interpersonal relationships and connections that constitute a community. Communication becomes the glue that holds all aspects of a community together. In its being, therefore, the community is secondary to the being of the persons. The being or reality of the individual person takes precedence over that of the community. However, in a social sense, the person is not a separate star to himself. Indeed, the Yoruba of Nigeria seem to agree with the Akan on this because it is written in the *Odu Ifa, Oyeku Okanran*, "On the day that Olodumare would think that a star was being arrogant, we would see the star suddenly fall and disappear into darkness" (Karenga, 1999, p. 202).

The popular assumption has been advanced for more than a half century that African society is communal and collectivist, almost

without regard to individuals who have the capacity to speak, express themselves in every way and to create community by virtue of their individuality. What I have tried to demonstrate by reference to African *sebayet* is that this assumption is not wholly correct because it ignores individualist elements in African social and communication thought. What I have advanced is the idea that African social thought must integrate individual desires and social ideals that can best be articulated in a communicative framework that privileges ethics. *Oye onipa paa* is one way to say that the good communicator is indeed a good person within the context of community.

Clearly African thought is much more complex than the simple idea that it is communal. As we have argued in this paper the idea of personhood is also a valuable characteristic of African philosophy and one cannot ignore this aspect of African communication and social systems.

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MOLEFI KETE ASANTE



Pan-Africanism...or globalizing capitalist modernity? The dilemma of African media in the 21st century.

By Muhammed Musa

Abstract

Although African nations have achieved the “flag” independence goal of Pan-Africanism and have established some regional and continental coordinating bodies such as the African Union, in fact, Africa countries are now increasingly integrated politically, economically and in communication linkages into a global capitalist modernity that is progressively further away from the ideals of Pan-Africanism envisaged by leaders such as Nkrumah. Internal trade is only 8.9% of the total foreign trade. Attempts such as PANA and URTNA to promote stronger communication linkages have faltered, and African media share little important news and other information. There is little information coming from the hinterlands of African countries, and African elites are increasingly linked in with global networks culturally and intellectually. This article calls for a re-conceptualization of Pan-Africanism as structural change in which the rural and urban poor have far more access to information and far more empowered participation in national life.

Key words: PANA, URTNA, NWICO, reconceptualizing Pan-Africanism, African integration into global capitalist modernity, neo-colonialism, globalism.

Introduction:

The philosophy of Pan-Africanism that was enunciated by Kwame Nkrumah in mid twentieth century found its first and early expression in the teaching and writing as well as ideas of Africans living in Europe and America in the beginning of the twentieth century. Such ideas and expressions were formed by, and predicated on “feelings of rejection and exile from ‘homeland’, Negro solidarity, pride in colour, a sense of a lost past, a belief in the existence of a distinct ‘African personality’ and

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a common destiny, and a belief in Africa for Africans", (Reference Division, Central Office of Information, 1962).

By the mid-twentieth century, movements propagating these ideals were transformed into political objectives that came to establish the bedrock of Pan-Africanism such as anti-colonialism and independence, a sense of continental solidarity and a desire for unity and cooperation. (Reference Division, Central Office of Information, 1962). Thus Pan-Africanist consciousness guided the struggle for self-determination in political, economic, information and cultural spheres that swept across the continent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the forms of a general struggle for independence and, later, more specifically, advocacy for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). By the end of the twentieth century the entire continent of Africa could be said to have achieved political or "flag" independence, but the decolonization of the economic and information spheres have remained a continuous struggle.

Indeed, the contemporary reality of the African landscape indicates that politically, economically as well as in the areas of information and communication Africa is becoming more integrated into a global capitalist modernity that is further away from the envisaged goals of Pan-Africanism advanced by its notable early African advocates such as Kwame Nkrumah. Even though Pan-Africanism invites African countries to look inwards and onto one another in charting a course for self-reliant development, contemporary evidence in most facets of social existence suggests a departure from that direction. For instance, the World Trade Organization (WTO) statistics indicate that intra-African trade amounted to only 8.9% of total export in 2006 compared to intra-Asian trade as 51% of total export and about 25% of intra-Latin American trade as 25% of total export in the same year. (Longo and Sekkat, 2001). Also, information and cultural flow between and among African countries deliberately facilitated by Pan-African regional institutions such as the Union of Radio and Television Networks in Africa (URDNA) and the Pan-African News Agency (PANA) is receding and now replaced by a massive unhindered but also hegemonic presence of global media as the major sources of information and cultural contents among most African countries.

Even though the arrival of computing and Internet technology has raised the volume of communication traffic among African countries, both low distribution and access to the facility as well as the format of

use have meant that its potential in enhancing the goals of Pan Africanism are not fully realized.

Consequently, even though Pan-Africanism sees cooperation as key to unlocking the vast human and material potential of the continent, the contemporary trend of neo-liberal globalization is prescribing a recipe for the integration of Africa into a global political economy conducive for capital investment and regeneration. This trend is easily noticeable as the global media presence in Africa through both advertising and the dissemination of shared meanings is playing a central role in both the propagation and consolidation of neo-liberalism and its core values in place of alternative arrangements such as the ones advanced and advocated by Pan-Africanism.

This paper will re-visit the notion of Pan-Africanism as well as assess contemporary developments in Africa in the light of the contradictions arising from the incorporation of the continent into the global neo-liberal market system. The factors contrary to Pan-African integration range from deepening cultural dependence, economic underdevelopment, and political crises to the increasing general dependency status of the continent within the globalization framework. This article would argue for a re-conceptualization rather than abandonment of the philosophy of Pan-Africanism as a way forward for Africa. Such a re-conceptualization would focus on an eclectic approach in the understanding of the place of African media and communication in the Pan-African project.

Africa and the independence struggle

The agitation and struggle for independence in both Africa and Asia in the nineteenth century was predicated on the desire for self-determination in all facets of social existence. In Africa, colonial domination by European imperial powers had left those colonies massively underdeveloped, and poverty became their main defining feature. The few Africans that acquired education found that they had no equal chance or opportunity in competition with Europeans with similar qualifications. Peasants and subsistence farmers were exploited, being unemployed or having the products of their labor poorly priced by European markets. The situation led to the emergence of an alliance between the African educated elite and the peasants that launched a struggle for decolonization that was seen as a key to self-determination and equity. At independence from mid to late twentieth century most African countries achieved a form of political independence that left

their economic and social umbilical cord tied to the imperial powers. Economically, African countries had inherited at independence an economic system packaged to serve the raw material needs of European imperial powers. (Onimode, 1982; Christopher, 2002).

While decolonization ushered in the project of modernity in Africa, in reality, that project was not coterminous with the goals and aspirations of independence. The new emergent nations inherited a development blue print from the West as well as economies that were externally oriented. Neither of these was a basis for independent development nor for strong national economies. No wonder, therefore, that the essence of independence was to be frequently undermined by demands and expectations of foreign aid. The contradictions insofar as the goals of independence were concerned were that aid exacerbated dependence on the West and perpetuated poverty and underdevelopment in Africa. Moreover, such aid that came to Africa was guided by shifting political and economic paradigms such as import substitution, population control and expansion of exports. Market reforms that ushered in neo-liberal globalization were the latest paradigm handed to Africa as a condition for aid that was clearly inimical to goals of independence.

Even though there could be some variations in the character of independence struggle among African countries, it is fair to claim generally that the fact of sharing a common history of European domination as well as colonial administration was central. Indeed, this sense of shared history of domination and struggle was to become an important factor in the emergence and cultivation of a unifying sense of nationhood in the newly emerging nations of Africa (Anderson, 1983). Thus, one of the consequences of the political legacy of colonialism was that development and the right to self-determination were still to be achieved after decolonization. Independence struggle and agitation for self determination took different forms in different parts of Africa, including violence and brutal repressive war. In Kenya the Mau Mau rebellion, the Algerian civil war, and in Nigeria the Aba women's riots made territorial colonization a totally unworkable project, as Ake has noted:

With few exceptions the gaining of independence was not a matter of the nationalists' marshalling forces to defeat colonial regimes. More often than not, it was a matter of the colonizers' accepting the inevitable and orchestrating a handover of government to their chosen African successors who could be trusted to share their values and be attentive to their interests (Ake, 1996, p. 3)

While Ake was right to assert that this approach did not succeed in all places especially where independence agitation was characterized by revolutionary struggle he summarized decolonization and its legacy as “de-radicalization by accommodation”. This observation is informed by the role of many emerging African elites and rulers who adopted many aspects of colonial blueprint including institutions and values in charting a cause for their countries’ development. The implications of this development for society and its institutions including the media are enormous, as we will show later. If the impression is created at this point that the contemporary state of underdevelopment and social crises in African societies are only traceable to colonialism this is not what is intended. For while colonization is certainly part of the explanation of Africa’s neo-colony it would be patronizing not to point to the role of African leaders as willing and patronizing agents in the project of neo-colony. And, as Apter points out, “Many were complicit with those powers and thereby bolstered their own positions and feathered their own nests” (Apter, 2002, p.15).

Nkrumah’s realization that African leaders were central in the neo-colonial project led him to attempt to chart a philosophical path that would re-direct energies to a more meaningful liberated future. His propagation of Pan-Africanism, even with its own limitations, could be interpreted as his posthumous contribution to Africa’s independence, liberation struggle, and consequently attempts at self-determining development.

Pan Africanism and the limits of independent development

The philosophy of Pan-Africanism is said to have grown out of a sense of racial exclusiveness in which people of African race have suffered a history of exploitation characterized by colonization, slave trade, state of neo-colony and general underdevelopment and backwardness. Pan-Africanism is thought of as a path to a better future that would usher in development and hope. As a political philosophy Pan-Africanism was more associated with Senghor and Nkrumah once both became leaders of their countries in Senegal and Ghana. But Pan-Africanism also had a literary and cultural arm that was very closely related to the political philosophy that is propagated in both literature and culture. As a political philosophy provoked by the experience of deprivation and underdevelopment, Pan-Africanism sought to use the mental scars of colonialism to fathom a future that would be predicated on unity rather than fragmentation, on self-

determination and equity rather than bondage and inequality. As a political philosophy that denounced colonialism and imperialism, Pan-Africanism carried Marxist elements, and, consequently, both Senghor and Nkrumah were seen as Marxists:

Marxist ideas contributed to the thinking of both the English-speaking and the French-speaking avant garde of Pan-Africanists. In Britain the sponsors of the sixth Pan-African congress in 1945 - leaders like Padmore, James, Abrahams, Makonnen, Nkrumah and Kenyatta - all had Marxist training. In the French African struggle many of the RDA leaders-like Sekou Toure and Modeibo Keita were Marxists. And in the negritude movement Aime Cesaire and Leopold Senghor (who is a Catholic at the same time) are but two of the many Marxists who helped to influence attitudes (Legum, 1962, p. 105)

At the time those pioneer African leaders did not see contradictions in being both Pan-Africanist and Marxist for as Sekou Toure declared:

The Marxism which served to mobilise the African populations, and in particular the working-class, and to lead that class to success, has been amputated of its characteristics which did not correspond to the African realities (Legum, 1962, p. 105)

Paris and London were both very important centres in the development of the Pan-African movement in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. While Paris coordinated the Pan African literary movement, London was the epicentre of Pan-Africanism, especially in its political ideology. The outcome of this was that the movement developed into Francophone and Anglophone lines. The ideas developed in Paris, which came to be known as the Negritude movement, had more influence on Francophone African leaders like Senghor, Toure, and Diop while political ideas emanating from London influenced Anglophone Africans like Nkrumah, Padmore, and Zik. The meeting between Negritude and Pan-Africanism produced a critique of the practice and assumptions of colonial rule that necessitated an alternative roadmap to Africa's future engagement with the world and its continuous unfolding processes.

The efficacy of the philosophy of Pan-Africanism, though, is not only related to its response to Africans realities in pre-independence and the period immediately after independence. It also carries the expectation that Africa leadership would provide a robust intellectual

and pragmatic response to the continent's engagement with the world in the period after independence.

A close look at Pan-Africanism shows that cultural nationalism is proposed as a central focus for engaging with itself and with the world. While some commentators such as Ekpo condemn that approach as reductionist, we would contend that it was useful up to a point and we stand the risk of throwing the baby out with the bath water if we are to dismiss Pan-Africanism on that basis. For, while Ekpo sees the tendency of racial pride conveyed by cultural nationalism to be excessive, we see it as an embodiment of a shared history of pain inflicted by colonialism, a pain that must not be forgotten but instead used to remind Africans of the dangers of any form of colonization. Secondly, remembering this experience is not to be incapacitated by it but to use it in navigating the future so that those past experiences will enrich Africa's interaction with modernity in a very pragmatic way.

While rejecting Ekpo's dismissal of cultural nationalism one would argue that his expression of regret over what he described as "premature decolonization" smacks of an extremism that is not supported by contemporary realities regarding the unequal development that characterizes both colonialism and neo-liberal globalization. Indeed, the contemporary experience of Africa is an invitation to not reject modernity but of traversing it in a way that would not make Africans oblivious of the very "cultural health" of the continent such as was found in the conception of inherent primitiveness of Africa reflected in Nietzsche. Ekpo has described Nietzsche's notion of cultural health as

...the innate capacity or plastic force of a people or culture not just to recover from wounds inflicted on it from the outside but to use such wounds as a stimulus for growth (Ekpo, 2010, p. 183).

Rather than seeing cultural nationalism as an incapacitating factor we see it as precisely the enabling consciousness required by Africans for engaging with modernity. Nkrumah's advocacy for Pan-Africanism should not be seen as a call for resistance to modernity but an invitation to conscious adoption in a way that would be cognizant of the experiences of Africa. These experiences also include the history of colonization. Legum observes that even Aime Cesaire is not opposed to this but is rather agreeable that cultural nationalism should be interpreted and practiced in its Hegelian sense.

When a society borrows it takes possession. It acts, it does not suffer action . . . For our part, and as regard our particular societies, we believe that in the African culture yet to be born, there will be many new elements, modern elements, elements, let us face it, borrowed from Europe. But we also believe that many traditional elements will persist in these cultures. We refuse to yield to the temptation of the tabula rasa. . . In the culture yet to be born, there will be without any doubt both old and new (Legum, 1962, p. 101 as cited in Ekpo, 2010, p. 178).

Like Senghor and Nkrumah, Cesaire recognized the need for collaboration rather than parochialism, for synthesis rather than antithesis. The proponents of Pan-Africanism pushed a consensus view of the concept and movement so that it is seen as a philosophy and, like all philosophies, subject to changes and adaptations. This imbues Pan-Africanism with a flexibility that would enable it to respond to the aspirations of Africans in the context of existing realities. What remains constant in the philosophy, though, are the shared history of colonialism and subjugation suffered by Africans as well as the desire to overcome underdevelopment. If the desire and quest for political independence and decolonization guided Pan-Africanism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it can no longer be the driving force for Africa today in the era of global interdependence. Such requirement for engagement and self-commitment therefore positions Pan-Africanism to function in a spirit of existentialism rather than autarky. The contemporary global landscape is replete with examples of the offshoot of existentialist tenets predicated on prevailing or newly emergent political and economic realities as seen in the emergence of the UN, the EU, NATO, and AU.

In post-independence Africa so many issues have come up and will continue to come up that would require a continental solidarity, addressing issues such as combating AIDS, ending civil wars, and advocating fair media representations. Goals such as creating common markets and bargaining for better deals for farm exports are all ingredients for organic as opposed to mechanical solidarity. Mezu observes that:

Reduced to concrete terms, Pan-Africanism is a continental manifestation of contemporary existential philosophy. In our generation, the philosophy of collective responsibility is

supplanting nationalism and isolationist theories (Mezu, 1965, p. 16).

Speaking along similar lines Onyewu observes that:

To the special circumstances of Africa which press toward special unity the contention has been made earlier that this is an era of interdependence in which particularist nationalisms have become anachronistic (Onyewu, 1965, p.24)

The spirit of engagement as opposed to isolation advocated by Pan-Africanism was aptly summarized by the Ghanaian poet, Dei-Aneng, who describes the symbiosis of elements of African culture and elements of modernity as neo-African culture.

African intelligence wants to integrate into modern life only what seems neither the traditional African nor the black European but the modern African. This means that a tradition seen nationally, whose values are made explicit and renewed, must assimilate those European elements which modern times demand; and in this process the European elements are so transformed and adapted that a modern, viable African culture arises out of the whole. It is a question, therefore, of a genuine Renaissance, which does not remain a merely formal renewal and imitation of the past, but permits something new to emerge - we call it neo-African culture (Dei-Aneng quoted in Legum, 1962)

While Ekpo calls it post-Africanism he argues that the cultural nationalism that is embodied in Pan-Africanism is not co-terminous with it. To the contrary we will argue that cultural nationalism is an enabling consciousness that would ginger Africa to embrace modernity in a way that allows Africans to be beings for themselves rather than for others. Moreover, the failure of modernization theory is due to its failure to recognize Africa as having a culture and history that are uniquely African. To advocate an "unflinching incorporation" of Africa into capitalist modernity is to submit Africa to yet another phase of unequal development that is a feature of that modernity.

Neo-colonialism and the media in Africa:

Independence in most African countries was accompanied by a wave of cultural nationalism. National institutions such as civil service, police, army media and transport systems such as airlines and, in some cases railways, emerged as icons of nationalistic establishments

operated by Africans. In Nigeria for instance such nationalistic establishments had "Nigeria" as a prefix or suffix as in "Nigerian Airways" or "Radio Nigeria" to indicate those sentiments.

Given that independence also ushered in party politics in the continent, African elites already equipped with experience of the use and role of the media in colonial times resorted to using the post-colonial media to advance regional and personal political goals. In Nigeria, for instance, the emerging national institutions and establishments were either patterned after British models or inherited from other departing European groups. Thus, newspapers and radio in most African countries bore the mark of their European colonizers with British values and orientations in Anglophone Africa and French cultural orientation in Francophone Africa. But if the philosophy of Pan-Africanism is about Africa's right to self determination and independence in charting a united path of development that is cognizant of the continent's shared history of colonization and a collective desire for self-reliant development, it begins to become clear that modern media in Africa, as far as the historical experience in Nigeria and Ghana are concerned, are an institution that arrived in the context of European expansion and territorial imperialism in Africa.

In his critique of the shortcomings of African journalism, Ugboajah lamented its failure to incorporate what he calls "ora-media" as an indigenous form of journalism that incorporates music, dance and folklore. Ugboajah was not alone in seeing the wholesale adoption of Western journalistic models as a challenge to media educators in Africa. Others, like Kasoma, Ansah and Domatob, also believed that modern journalism and the values guiding its practice were products of a set of ideologies or frames imported into the continent during a certain time and context that are oblivious of the peculiarities of Africa.

The development blueprint adopted by many African countries after independence did not prepare emerging institutions for any revolutionary or alternative role. Institutions such as the media, police, judiciary and even education in post-colonial Africa were detached from the very people they were meant to serve. The desire to be modern equated anything traditional with backwardness and underdevelopment. This perspective prescribed modernization as the only path to development according to the blueprint of the time outlined by Schramm (1964) and Rogers(1962). Thus the adoption of Western institutions and culture became the norm among the newly emerging nations of Africa.

The implications of this model of development for African media in terms of the circulation of symbolic goods and the concepts of social reality are enormous. In most of those countries the post-colonial media were urban-centered, focused largely on elite personalities and elite themes and using English or French as the major language of communication (Musa, 1997). African languages and other forms of communication known to Africa were jettisoned as primitive. Independence, therefore, failed to usher in a new path to the organization of social existence, as the media were not decolonized in values, orientation and direction. Ugboajah captures the situation in this way:

No attempt has been made to decolonise the Western model of communication or to integrate the traditional model. In other words, reconciling the Western model with the existing African model in both structure and content was completely over-sighted by ruling elites. What was apparent was a change of name and ownership in some cases. The post-colonial newspapers, radio, television still talk with a minority in the same format, the same style as in the colonial era. In general, the independence era mass media talk to, not with the mass heterophyllous traditional audience in the villages (Ugboajah, 1971, p. 84)

Ugboajah's disillusionment is with the failure of the media in post-colonial Africa to reincarnate the independence spirit that led to territorial decolonization. Since his call for what can be termed a Pan-African cultural perspective in shaping African media through what he called "oramedia", other African media scholars such as Obeng-Quaidoo, (1985, 1987) have acknowledged indigenous African media practices as an alternative to modern and imported journalistic values guiding the media in post-colonial Africa. Scholars have argued that there existed a unique African journalism before colonialism, a journalism predicated on oral or the griot tradition as well as dance and town crier phenomenon. They go further to assert its displacement by modern journalistic forms as the bane of African media and journalism.

While we do not deny the existence of those traditional forms of expression that entertained, informed and educated African audiences in pre-colonial and up to colonial times to an extent, we are not inclined to take the position that they could be a viable alternative to modern media forms and practices. Instead, we submit that the convergence of such traditional forms for instance the griot, with modern forms such as television on television, will communicate better with contemporary Africans. The village square can be transformed

into a modern town hall fully fitted with modern audio-visual facilities, coupled with their appropriation by post-colonial African elites have combined to imply a re-feudalization of the traditional forms so that they can no longer be viable alternatives to imported media forms, values and practices in Africa today. Moreover the ascendancy of neo-liberal market system as a global social order, as we shall show shortly, has meant among other things, the final stages of the incorporation of Africa into global capitalist modernity carried out by both colonialism and post-colonialism in earlier phases.

Mass media, Africa and the dilemma of dependence

There is wide agreement that the mass media in post-colonial Africa were patterned after their European predecessors and that this has bequeathed the former a legacy of looking up to the Western media as the right template (Bourgault, 1995). The outcomes are largely two and have serious implications for media audiences. First, European media ownership trends were replicated where broadcasting was largely government-owned and predicated on a Reithian public service ethos in Anglophone Africa. In Francophone Africa the centralized colonial broadcasting network predicated on the ethos of *la mission civilisatrice* took root as such networks served as relay system of French programs.

Given the cost of local production and dearth of manpower, African broadcasters in both radio and television have had to import programs from Europe to fill airtime. As the cost of maintaining correspondents abroad was prohibitive for the budgets of these fledgling media organizations, they relied on Western news agencies and organizations for foreign news. African newspapers did not rely on Western agencies and news organizations for only foreign news but also took news of local events and situations from foreign news agencies. All these combined to make the African audiences doubly alienated by both local and foreign media. As the dependence on foreign or Western media for foreign news continued, it meant that African countries heard of each other via the Western media, a situation that was inimical to a Pan-African ethos of self reliance and cooperation (Akinfeleye, Amobi, Okoye, Sunday, 2009). Moreover, the consequences of importation of programs to fill broadcasting airtime soon resulted in a storm of protest as African countries mounted a unified campaign against what they perceived as a threat to their cultural values. (Hamelink, 1983; Schiller, 1976).

Such concerns about the domination of Africa's information flow by Western media, first from Europe and later from the US, brought African countries to join the international coalition that demanded a restructuring of this asymmetrical relationship in a way that would reflect fairness by acknowledging the reality of the majority of world population and respecting their right to self determination. Such equity was formulated in the movement for a World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). Other allies in the NWICO coalition were largely countries of Eastern Europe but also Asia and the Caribbean. Thus, African, Asian, Caribbean and Latin American countries all joined the coalition in their protest against a communication structure coming from a shared colonial past and shared economic and cultural exploitation. The East European countries joined from a shared history of ideological solidarity. The solidarity among these disparate members of the coalition gained some traction so that at the 19th General Assembly of UNESCO held in Nairobi in 1976 a resolution was formally passed to adopt NWICO. A year later, the Thirty-First General Assembly of the United Nations also passed a resolution that adopted NWICO.

What emerged from these developments, therefore, is that even though the NWICO coalition was international in character and composition, its African partners found support and encouragement from an intellectual and philosophical legacy of Pan-Africanism that advocated cooperation and self-reliance among African countries. It is interesting, however, that the same theoretical shortcomings associated with Pan-Africanism also haunted NWICO and was to become one of its shortcomings. One of these is the tendency to overlook the role of the African elites in domesticating inequality. At this point though it is important to point out that the agitation for a restructuring of world communication and information flow, in spite of the shortcomings, raised awareness regarding the centrality of information and communication in the organization of social existence. Indeed, the McBride Commission set up by UNESCO to look into the grievances, confirmed the imbalance in global information flow and distribution of infrastructure. The commission also confirmed the dominance of Western news organizations in the distribution of foreign news and the scanty and negative representations of Africa and Third World countries generally (UNESCO, 1980; Musa 1997; Roach, 1997).

By prescribing aid from rich countries to poor countries, establishment of media infrastructure by developing countries, and

South-South cooperation as a panacea to global information imbalance, the McBride Commission failed to acknowledge the role of structural inequalities in the creation and sustenance of the global asymmetry in information and communication. Nevertheless, it could be said that its call for South-South cooperation spoke to the very principle advocated by Pan Africanism as a pathway to self-reliant development.

What emerged from the NWICO coalition are two key issues. First, that the agitation was caught up in the Cold War battle and associated with those opposing forces. Secondly, it is clear that most countries in Eastern Europe were strong allies in the NWICO coalition as are the majority of African countries. What this indicates to the detached observer of international political developments of the time is that there was an alliance between many Third World and African countries on one hand and the Communist world on the other. It could also be speculated that the Pan-African philosophy that conveyed some radical rhetoric at the time had some incorporation of radical Marxist ideas. Neither of these would make the Western alliance in the Cold War comfortable or amenable to NWICO agitations. The African response to the recommendations was to promote a Pan-African media infrastructure in the continent and, to gain more independence in news collection, national news agencies in many countries of Africa. The establishment of the Pan African News Agency (PANA) in 1983 and the Union of Radio and Television Organizations of Africa (URTNA) in 1978 were pragmatic attempts that tallied with the McBride recommendations that spoke to a long standing Pan-African philosophy.

URTNA's membership is made up of the broadcasting organizations of member states of the African Union. There are also associate members who are radio and television organizations from non-African countries. The set objectives of URTNA are the following:

- Promote and coordinate studies on all matters relating to radio and television;
- Sustain in every domain the interest of African radio and television organizations;
- Develop cooperation among its members and establish relations with other organizations or groups of organizations;
- Ensure that alliance members adhere to international and inter-African conventions and agreements on radio and television;
- Coordinate the coverage of major national and international sporting and cultural events;

- Represent its member organizations at world planning conferences on frequency utilization organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

From these, one could see that objectives Nos 3 and 4 have a Pan-African flavor of promoting cooperation among members as well as adherence to inter-African conventions and agreements on radio and television. Radio and television in Africa at the time URTNA was established were a state monopoly and charged with the responsibility of playing a role in national integration and nation building. URTNA's main activities centre around the exchange of broadcasting material among member states thus making it possible for African audiences to experience the culture of other African countries through such television or radio programmes. URTNA was also involved in providing training to broadcast staff from member countries.

The Pan-African News Agency (PANA) was established in 1983 by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) as an alternative window to Africa. With its headquarters in Dakar, Senegal, PANA, was born in the heat of the agitation for a New World Information and Communication Order. It received funding from the OAU member states, UNESCO and the IPDC. As well as being a news pool operation where member countries share news stories, PANA also operates as a full news agency with its own editorial staff. In terms of its news stories PANA is said to give "emphasis to stories which it judged would help reinforce 'African unity' and 'cooperation'" (Forbes, 1998, p. 156).

The picture that emerges is that both URTNA and PANA were conceived and operated within the realm of a Pan-African philosophy informed by cultural nationalism that sees African unity and cooperation as the nucleus for independence and genuine development. The affiliation of both URTNA and PANA to the OAU (now AU) that is an inter-state organization points to the appropriation of Pan-Africanism by African ruling elites. This situation has become one of the major blind spots of Pan-Africanism as a philosophy, promoted largely by intellectual elites nurtured by elite political philosophies. The socio-cultural and implicit political views of the masses were left out. These agencies are disseminating symbolic cultural resources that citizens require to make sense of situations around them, but distant from them as well. Thus, the agenda-setting capacity of the media was as important to NWICO advocates as it was for Pan-African ideal of African cooperation, self-reliance and development.

While there is no independent data to indicate the extent of usage of URTNA's material among African media organizations, the evidence shows that PANA stories were used sparingly by African media. In the early 1990s for instance, it was discovered that Reuters was the major source of foreign news to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN). By accounting for 32.2% of foreign news Reuters clearly set the foreign news agenda in Nigeria ahead of PANA who accounted for only 17.9%. (Musa, 1997). Recent studies show that in 2008 Nigerian media largely ignored the presidential elections in neighboring Ghana and opened the gates to international news agencies focusing on the American elections at the time (Akinfeleye, Amobi, Okoye, Sunday, 2009). Gatekeepers at NAN were and are more likely to trust Reuter's stories than those of PANA on sensitive African issues where PANA's sources may be national news agencies of those same African countries at the center of the story. Moreover PANA distributes news stories in both English and French, and where a story comes in one language such as French, anticipated delay in translation would make Reuters a better option.

In the distribution of main suppliers of NAN's foreign news bulletins it was interesting to discover Africa coming first with 31.3%, actors from the Third World region came second with 22.5% and those from the advanced industrialized world came third with 18.8%. Of these also, state and government officials accounted for the biggest group with 60% of the total. Ordinary African citizens accounted for a lowly 10% of the total. (Musa, 1997). What emerges from the data from the late 1990s is that African news agencies and African media tend to define Pan-Africanism as framing of news stories in terms of neo-patrimonial leaders so that the news that citizens get is largely about leaders, officials and other African elites most of the time. There is little or nothing about people's organizations and movements. African unity and cooperation in this regard is reduced to cooperation and interaction among and between leaders and government functionaries. What news agencies and media are promoting is global capitalist modernization, not the genuine African popular cultures that are the foundation of shared, Pan-African culture.

Neo-liberal globalization and the dilemma of African media

If the 1960s marked the period of independence for many African countries, the 1970s were largely a period of mixed fortunes. In that period some countries witnessed a relative economic boom because of increased exports, but it was accompanied by disappointment, as

independence did not eliminate poverty and underdevelopment. Most of these countries had embraced Western development models that prescribed modernization as the roadmap to prosperity.

Attempts to define development within modernization theories that preached the need to develop through the abandonment of traditional ways and their wholesale replacement with modern Western values and attitudes proved incapable of improving Africa's lot (Musa, 2009, p. 49)

What Africa has had instead is a kind of political independence but, at the same time, increased dependence economically and culturally thanks to the development model. Africa also suffered in that period from the Cold War antagonisms of the time so that the principal actors in the arms race turned the continent into a testing ground for their expansionist projects and models. Instead of Pan-African unity, Africa has been turned into a battle ground of ethnic, religious and social strife, most of it fomented by elite political leaders inciting the masses against each other to gain power for themselves.

The period from the mid-1980s to the present was a turning point in world history and not less so for Africa. The end of the Cold War saw the rise of the market system as the new global order in the organization of society. But the same period was characterized by increasing misery for Africa as both economy and society were in dire stress as was evident by the heightened neo-colonial dependence, the rise in kleptocratic accumulation by the elite, rise in mass poverty and general deprivation, the balance of payment crisis, increasing unemployment and, in general, greater structural inequalities. The prescription to African countries at the time was that they needed an investment flow that would bring in money without indebtedness. Thus the prescription from the international finance institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was for the continent to embrace reform through the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The adjustment programs recommended deregulation of the economy and state withdrawal from essential public sector activities.

In the 1970s and early 80s the focus and concern were with decolonizing both the economic and information sectors as was evidenced by the NWICO and NIEO agitations that came with recommendations for inter-African as well as South-South cooperation and trade. This recommendation was expected to increase the volume of both trade and information exchange among African countries and

among Third World countries especially those in the NWICO coalition. The structural adjustment programs brought to the media sector in Africa the wave of privatization and commercialization that implied government withdrawal from ownership of broadcasting and other media forms such as film and theatre as well as newspapers to a lesser extent. (Musa, 2009; Hall, 2009). Following this development there was the proliferation of private broadcasting channels and new publications all competing for advertising revenue. The search for revenue saw the commercialization of news departments in media organizations so that news ceased to be a social good and now turned into a commodity where only the highest bidder makes it into the news. The search for revenue also pushed broadcasting channels to fill airtime with cultural imports that are ideologically inimical to the Pan-African philosophy.

All this has created a dilemma for African media generally. Vast sectors in the lower-status urban and especially in the rural sector are without an adequate flow of information. Educational media are almost non-existent. Liquidity problems and general crises of under-development were said to have necessitated the integration of the African economy into global markets through SAP reforms, yet the same integration is compounding old problems even as it introduces new ones. For whereas gaps between rich and poor are exacerbated, other social inequalities also opened up and expanded. For instance, access to the media was now beyond the ordinary citizens because commercialization has meant they cannot afford airtime or newspaper space. From the neo-colonial era to the current era of market reforms called globalization what has unfolded is summed up well in the following:

Africa's share of the global social product declined radically in the 1970s and 1980s. Africa accounted for only 1.6 percent of international private capital flows by the first half of the 1990s. The total gross national product for sub-Saharan African countries is less than 10 percent of the GNP of the United States. Add broken-down road; rail; and communication facilities; heavy indebtedness; AIDS; and ethnic and religious conflicts, which range from civil unrest to genocidal violence and it is hardly surprising that African civil societies don't function and political institutions are inadequate (Apter, 2002, p. 15).

At a time when the media are becoming more central in the organization of social life through the dissemination of symbolic goods as raw material for meaning making, these media are part of the profit-

oriented market system that they helped to usher in and consolidate. Deregulation did not only imply opening up of the media sector to private investors, it also resulted in the emergence of a few powerful media corporations in the world who have now come to dominate the processing, dissemination and distribution of news and entertainment. Then inter-African media exchange as well as South-South interaction prescribed by NWICO as advocated by Pan-Africanism has given way to the unhindered domination by the global media giants. Africans today hear of Africa through the global media giants. The African television screen is dominated by more fictional content and sports entertainment imported from Western countries. But, in addition to this, is also the fact that deregulation has now enabled foreign television stations to send signals directly into African homes.

Whereas there is a growth of new fictional genre in the Nigerian movies known as Nollywood that are increasingly present on African televisions screen, the commercial trends in both the ownership and themes of this new genre hardly makes it a viable alternative to the global Hollywood giant. Even if the volume of exchanged content going through URTNA increases because of the Nollywood phenomenon the former would only become a conveyor belt for content that duplicate familiar rather than alternative themes. PANA is not faring any better although for different reasons. First, funding to the agency continues to dwindle, as member countries to the pool don't pay up regularly. Secondly, the availability of abundant foreign news sources on the Internet makes PANA a less important supplier and source of foreign news content for African media organizations. Thirdly, the ascendancy of neo-liberal globalization as a dominant global system has also meant a rising globalization of news values so that news coming from PANA may not be entirely different from that whose sources are the established global giants that could be readily and more efficiently accessed on the web.

Indeed, the technological developments of the twenty-first century also mean that African media and audiences who used to rely on PANA for foreign and African news can now access such news directly from Internet sites.

Conclusion:

The common experience of direct and indirect colonization bequeathed Africa a legacy of development crises. The philosophy of Pan-Africanism promoted by leaders like Senghor, Cesaire and

Nkrumah aimed at articulating the values of development and self-determination predicated on those common experiences. Pan-Africanism was an attempt at spelling Africa's terms of interaction with itself and engagement with the world and its unfolding dynamics. In a continent where the productive forces including the media were not well developed there was always the practical need to get these developed. The foreign domination of the information and communication sector in Africa by Western media is partly due to the underdeveloped nature of the African media.

The consequences of such domination was decried in the 1970s and led to the McBride recommendations that are to a large extent similar to the Pan-African philosophy of solidarity and self-reliance. However, the failure of these recommendations in both URTNA and PANA is not a repudiation of the issues raised by Pan-Africanism such as African solidarity and need for self-reliant development. Rather it is a challenge and invitation to re-conceptualize Pan-Africanism. Indeed, given the extent to which globalization has deepened structural inequalities within Africa and between Africa and the world through the incorporation of the continent into a global framework only as marginal participants is further testament to the need to reformulate Pan-Africanism in a way that will make it more robust in bearing the intellectual weight of a more fruitful post Pan-Africanist engagement of the continent with the unfolding global developments. Such re-conceptualization should take the mental scar left by colonialism as a useful starting point but not to be oblivious of the urgent need for Africa and its institutions including the media to be developed and people-centred rather than serving the interest of a few leaders.

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Journalism education, Pan-Africanism, and the quest for Africa's modernity

By Ayo Oyeleye

Abstract

The quest to align the socio-psychological and cultural elements of Africa's communication and journalism curriculum with the Pan-African core principles and aspirations require a critical engagement with questions about how we understand and envision Africa's place in a globalizing world of the twenty-first century. This article aims to explore the twin concepts of *Africanism* and *cultural relevance* through the wider philosophical debates about the ontology of African identity and how its acceptations and interpretations bear relevance for practical matters on how Africa should respond to the contemporary challenges that it faces in the quest to make Africa a better place to live in for Africans and all those who affiliate with Africa. The core question about the nature of an African postcolonial modernity, how the principles and aspirations of Pan-Africanism can best be re-articulated and sutured into a worldview that should drive Africa's modernization aspirations, and how together, these should inform thinking about the philosophical bases for media, communication, cultural studies, and journalism curricula in Africa constitute the substance of this article.

Key words: cultural revivalism; ethnophilosophy; Africanism; Négritude; Senghorism; Pan-Africanism; Post-Africanism;

Introduction: Key issues in African journalism education

There has been a long clamor to "Africanize" journalism education as a prerequisite for the Africanization of media and journalism practice throughout the continent. Although opinions can vary widely among commentators about the substance, shape, and methods that should be involved in this Africanizing process it is also possible to discern a proclivity towards the organizing notion of an essentialism about Africa

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and Africans that warrants an explicit communication philosophy, ethos, and practice that should underpin any curricula of media education and training on the continent. A trawl of some forty years of literature on this subject would suggest the following key issues as components of an Africanized journalism education:

- The necessity for journalists to develop a consciousness that privileges Africa, Africans, and those issues that are germane to the interests and everyday lived experience of Africans as the basis for developing an African news culture.
- A focus on Africa's histories, cultures, traditions, and heritages in order to revitalize a sense of an African identity, to instil a sense of pride in an African identity, and to project this onto the global stage as the equal of other cultural identities around the world.
- A recognition of the axial position of communication in Africa's transformational journey and the crucial role of journalism in an emergent democratic culture, both of which require the critical interrogation of existing theories, concepts, and models that have shaped extant communication and journalism education and praxis which have been largely derived from Europe and America; and the need to develop ones that are more suited to the African condition.
- To develop curricula of communication and journalism education that are based on African worldview(s) which could be the prism through which accounts of events and history is articulated to the world; and one that should promote Pan-African unity, be it in terms of continental union or of a global black cultural community.
- To develop original theories and models of journalism practices that are modelled on African philosophies, cultural and ethical values.

The foregoing is merely a shortlist synthesized from a disparate and wide ranging literature on the state of journalism education in African in which various pundits have taken issues and proffered suggestions on how the concerns might be addressed. The list is also in addition to the ones around skills and competencies, usually advanced with regards to concerns about attainment of professional standards in African journalism.

The need to retune or re-construct the curricula of journalism education in Africa in order to better prepare African Journalists for a professional career that is more in tune with the needs of the continent has long been recognized, and has been the focus of a long tradition of academic, public, and professional discussions (for instance, Ugboajah, 1972, 1985, 1987; Nwosu, 1987; Okigbo, 1987, 1997, 2004; Wasserman, 2006; Golding, 1977; Hachten, 1968, 1971; Murphy and Scotton, 1987, Musa, 2009). The key elements of this long-running aspiration for a re-constructed African journalism education as noted above pivots on the central desire to “Africanize” the mass media, cultural studies, communication and journalism curricula offered in Africa’s universities and other training outfits in order to make these subjects more relevant to the specific needs of Africa. A key part of the change that is sought for journalism training and education in particular, and one that I imagine takes precedence over all else amongst practitioners, is the issue of acquiring professional skills and technical competence to do the job. But even within this goal, and despite what might appear on the surface as a simple matter of practical skills acquisition, lie issues that pertain to professional values and ideology in the practice of journalism that are relevant to the debates around the notion of cultural relevance.

The overarching goal to “Africanize” journalism education in Africa through a change in curricula content and through an interrogation of Western models of professional practices seem very much in tune with the core ideals of Pan-Africanism – a movement which seeks to achieve continental union of all African countries, as well as a union of consciousness with all of its diasporas; a worldview and consciousness which aims to empower Africans and to put the continent and all its peoples and diasporas on an equal footing with the rest of the global community; a movement which attempts to re-articulate and elevate Africa’s cultural heritage, histories, values, and civilization from centuries of effacement and misrepresentation by the West; a movement which aims to forge a global African cultural community underpinned by an autochthonous worldview and philosophy that would challenge and offer alternative praxes in different spheres of lived experience to the existing dominant Occidental paradigm, and which seeks to galvanize a powerful cultural movement that would revitalize a sense of pride in African identity and give visibility to its essential qualities (Ajala, 1973; Langley, 1973; Legum, 1962).

The quest to “Africanize” journalism education in Africa as well as the key Pan-African objectives outlined above are also related to, and should become more meaningful within the context of, the overriding quest for Africa’s modernization and the underpinning philosophical debates about the ontology of an African modernity.

Africa’s communication media and, in particular, journalism’s central role in helping to achieve the Pan-African objectives has long been recognized and much talked about, although there is a tendency in Africa’s political establishment to give this a crude interpretation as a kind of unwritten compact for making journalists do what governments want, all in the name of the national interest, promoting Africa’s cultural values, promoting Pan-Africanism, and the like. But in the context of the ongoing discussions amongst media professionals and scholars about the need to reformulate Africa’s media and journalism practice, as well as its underlying education and curricula, the overriding objective must be for Africa’s communication and journalism education to serve as the prime expediter of Africa’s transition to modernity.

As such, the prime focus of a re-constructed media and journalism education in Africa must be on developing curricula that can facilitate this transition. In order for this to effectively happen, however, it is mandatory to re-examine many of the assumptions, values and beliefs that underpin the objectives and aspirations often trotted out by commentators with regards to the central idea of “Africanizing” Africa’s communication media and journalism, as well as those of the Pan-African movement outlined above. How this prime objective should align with the principles of Pan-Africanism should itself instigate a review of the principles and objectives of Pan-Africanism (Okhonmina, 2009).

Given the prevalence of the idea of cultural relevance in the reformulation of journalism education curricula amongst African communication scholars and its popular appeal as a goal to strive for it is necessary to interrogate this as a concept. The meaning of “cultural relevance” needs to be problematized in light of the many idealistic appurtenances that the concept often engenders in discussions on Pan-Africanism and on media and journalism education in Africa, and how these articulate or disarticulate with the overriding project of Africa’s modernization.

Postcolonial African philosophy and African modernity

The quest for an African communication philosophy (or more appropriately philosophies) can benefit from the wider terrain of post-colonial (I use the term here merely as a periodic marker rather than as an intellectual movement) African philosophical thoughts and their attempts to grapple with the fundamental concerns about Africa's contemporary condition, explanations for the causes of the continent's current predicament, visions of the continent's future, including trajectory forecasts based upon understandings of current course, and prescriptions either for how Africa might avoid an undesirable future or for attaining a desirable one.

Postcolonial African philosophy has sought to grapple with the sorts of questions that are equally pertinent for the development of an African communication philosophy, and for re-assessing key elements of Pan-Africanism. The questions which should be posed are the following:

- (1) Are indigenous African traditions still relevant to the challenges of life in modern day Africa?
- (2) Can traditional modes of thought and behavior serve as useful modernization? Or, are they impediments?
- (3) What do terms such as "development" and "modernization" actually mean in an African context?

Ciaffa (2008) has observed that the relationship between tradition and modernity has emerged as a central theme in the attempts by postcolonial African philosophers to grapple with these key questions.

Accordingly, and in this context, two positions can be discerned within postcolonial African philosophy. One is "cultural revivalism", so labelled by Kwame Gyekye (1997), and the other, following Denis Ekpo's (2010) use of the term, I identify as "Post-Africanism".

Cultural revivalists, in Gyekye's critique, tend to treat African cultural heritage with reverential devotion which accordingly engenders the view that such heritage is a treasure-trove of traditional African wisdom waiting to be mined by latter day cultural archaeologists for providing suitable solutions to many, if not all, of Africa's contemporary problems. Cultural revivalists locate Africa's current problems in the violent encounter with European imperialist misadventure on the continent and how this forced a European worldview and social organization upon Africans. Revivalists argue that the attainment of political independence should be followed-up with an even more decisive liberation that entails purging the African mind

of a colonial mindset. Ciaffa points that although revivalists are often sceptical of the clamor for development and modernization, given the highly contested nature of these as modes of social transformation, they do not necessarily position themselves as antimodern. Primarily, revivalists take the view that the only authentic modernization for Africa is the one that emerges through a revival and reinvigoration of Africa's cultural norms and heritage. What constitutes an authentic African modernization is thus an issue, and one with important implications for its realization in terms of policy and social praxes.

The Post-Africanism school, in contrast, takes a sceptical view on the value and potential of indigenous heritage for addressing Africa's contemporary challenges. Critics in this camp such as Hountondji (1996); Gyekye (1987,1997); Wiredu (1995, 1997), Eze (1997); and Ekpo (2010) view revivalists and their suggested path to Africa's modernization as illusory and incapable of providing the right answers to Africa's present predicament. Crucially, they see a potential danger in the revivalist project in the way that it could inadvertently lend a rationalizing support to political authoritarianism in Africa. The critics of cultural revivalism argue that it is a distraction away from pressing political concerns facing Africa and that it advocates forms of thought that are inimical to the crucial goals of scientific and technological advancement for Africa. Ciaffa points at an extreme strain of the Post-Africanism philosophy which seems to favor the idea of a "clean break" with the premodern past to forge a new path to Africa's future. The bottom line argument of Post-Africanism is that the process of modernization is best served by particular kinds of mindset and orientation that reside in the present rather than in some distant past.

These differing perspectives on the best approach to addressing the challenges of contemporary Africa and its future invariably revolve around contrasting interpretations of the central concepts of "modernity" and "modernization". These two terms are much contested and there is no space to delve into these contestations here. Following Ciaffa's approach, what is useful in the context of the core contestations within African philosophy are two key aspects of modernization and how the two African schools of thought under review here are positioned in relation to them. The first of these is the understanding about scientific and technological development, and the second is the domain of social and political organization. The aspect of

science and technology engenders questions about how modernist transformation enabled the development of technologies derived from the appliance of scientific knowledge that are then deployed to the service of improving the human condition.

The aspect of social and political organization in modernity concerns the development of political institutions that led the march away from authoritarian rule and that facilitated the codification of values and rights of liberty and welfare that became available to all citizens instead of a few. Ciaffa refers to this as the “modernity of democratization” (2008, p. 1). In exploring these two key aspects of modernity within the discourse of African philosophy protagonists tend to engage with them as normative rather than descriptive concepts. That is to say the concepts are used not merely to describe changes that have occurred or might occur, but as a way to envision changes that are desirable and should occur in an African modernity. Although recognizing that not all aspects of modernity has been positive or benign there seems a general premise that science-based technologies and democratic political systems are essential for Africa’s long-term prosperity and social order, and as such modernization is viewed as progressive, and as an ideal worth pursuing.

At the heart of the disputations between cultural revivalists and Post-Africanism critics is the central question of whether indigenous traditions have the potential to foster or hinder processes of scientific and political modernizations. Given that the quest for an African communication philosophy lies at the heart of much discussions within the African communication and journalism scholarship about how to transform media and journalism education, these wider philosophical debates about the nature and form that Africa’s modernization should take, and the appropriate route to realising this, are pertinent to the debates within African communication scholarship.

Cultural revivalism and imperialist subalternation

Cultural revivalism emerged as a reaction against a long tradition in the West to create essentialist racial hierarchies in which White Europeans are positioned as superior and as centred subjects whose features, norms, values and worldview become the golden standard against which other races are measured. An important psychological dimension of this worldview was the reification of racial difference and

hierarchy through a long tradition of enunciations of the central ideology about White superiority, and a corresponding derogation of the black race. Numerous accounts of how this mindset had been deployed in all manner of literature from the religious to the scientific have been provided by writers over many years. With regards to the current focus on how the colonial discourse prompted the emergence of cultural revivalism the writings of the French anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Brühl (1857 - 1939) represents an exemplar of this genre. Lévy-Brühl (1985), writing in a book titled *“How Natives Think”* originally published in 1910, enunciated a dualistic typology of mentalities which he identified as (1) the civilized European and (2) the primitive non-European. Accordingly the civilized mentality is governed by reason, and interacts with the world through carefully organized conceptual schemes. The primitive mentality, in contrast, is incapable of abstract thought and is driven by the impulse of myth and superstition. Ciaffa noted that the racism expressed in Lévy-Brühl’s work under the guise of scientific objectivity was widely shared not only in other European writings but also in the comments of esteemed philosophers, such as Hume, Kant, and Hegel. Whilst this perception and its discourse served a number of functions in the context of European culture its pertinence for our purpose here is the important role it played in providing pseudo-intellectual justification for European imperialism and colonialism. It helped sustain the view amongst Europeans that colonialism was a benevolent enterprise in which Europe was helping to civilize primitive peoples across the world.

In the context of European perception of Africa and its peoples a seminal intervention that was to have a significant impact on cultural revivalism as a strand of African philosophy emerged in the work of a Belgian missionary Placide Frans Tempels (1906 – 1977). Based on his experience amongst the Luo in the Congo in the 1940s Tempels published a book in 1945 titled *La philosophie bantoue* which was translated into English as *Bantu Philosophy* in 1959 (2010; 1995; see also Okafor, 1982) in which he challenged the prevailing European understanding of non-Western peoples through the dualist scheme of the civilized versus the primitive mind. Tempels argued that Bantu peoples did in fact possess an elaborate “philosophy of life” and an intricate system of concepts about the ontology of being and of the world, and that these governed their codes of conduct and social organisation. As Ciaffa noted, Tempels’s motives were not entirely

selfless, in that his primary objective was to understand the Bantu in order to be able to propagate Christianity and to convert them to the religion. Nonetheless, the general conclusion of his study was that although the Bantu's understanding of reality was different from that of Europeans this should not warrant treating this different worldview any less viable a philosophy than the European ones. Although Tempels's intervention was not well received by the European orthodoxy it gave a fillip to the intellectual challenge that had developed amongst black activists who were studying in Europe and especially in France at the time.

A key element in this cultural revivalism is the concept of Negritude as enunciated vigorously by Senghor in Africa (although, as argued later in this article, it is possible to re-interpret Senghorian thought and rescue it from the impasse of cultural nationalism and revivalism) (Araeen, 2010a, 2010b). Negritude emerged as both a literary and ideological movement amongst francophone black writers and intellectuals living and studying in France from about the 1930s. The movement primarily represented a renunciation of European colonization and imperialism and the role that these played in the dispersion of African people across the world. It took pride in being black and in traditional African values and culture; and is often underpinned by traits of Marxist, anti-imperialist ideals. Key founders of the Negritude Movement were Aimé Césaire (1913 – 2008), Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906 – 2001), and Léon-Gontran Damas (1912 – 1978), all of whom met in Paris in the early 1930s.

Césaire has been credited with coining the term "Negritude" in his book titled *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* [*Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*] published in 1939 (Arnold, A, 1998). The term defines an ontology of blackness, and in Césaire's own words it means "the simple recognition of the fact that one is Black, the acceptance of this fact and of our destiny as Blacks, of our history and culture." This core proposition defined the whole Negritude philosophy as an intellectual platform for resisting European self-proclaimed racial superiority and its attendant derogation and usurpation of Africa and the rest of the non-Western world.

With specific regards to how Senghor deployed the core principles of Negritude to forge an anti-colonial response to European domination in Africa he subscribed to the idea of essential differences between black Africans and white Europeans through an articulation of a typology of Black and White mentalities. In this regard Senghor

typified the Black African person as “a man of nature” that is more in tune with his ecological surrounding than his White counterpart. Whites, on the other hand, separate themselves from the natural world and see nature as something to be conquered. For Senghor, Africans are not devoid of reason, rather they simply possess a different form of reason, one that is more fundamental to understanding the world. In contrast, Senghor posits the objectifying and rationalistic tendencies of European civilization as inimical to the world and its natural properties. In setting up this binary schema for differentiating between black and white personalities Senghor not only challenged the European arrogation of superiority to the White man but sought to invert it by arguing that actually, it is the African mentality and grasp of the laws of nature that is superior and more harmonious than the White man’s.

Revivalists see the process of Africa’s modernization in an effort to go back to the roots of African culture for a careful analysis of the ways that the wisdom of the past can help tackle the challenges of the present. In respect of the role of science in this process revivalists challenge the notion of a lack of indigenous scientific knowledge that could pave the way for Africa’s own type of modernization. Owomoyela (1991, p. 173-75), for instance, cites examples such as the medicinal use of herbs, advanced agricultural techniques, and methods of food preservation as evidence of an indigenous scientific knowledge in Africa. Ciaffa also points to the presence of a growing literature on various scientific accomplishments of ancient Egyptian civilization which includes developed metallurgy, astronomy, and mathematics. On these bases, revivalists argue that Africans only have to rediscover these hidden treasures, rather than mimic European models of scientific development.

Similarly, with regards to the political aspect of modernization revivalists point to the presence of a humanistic ethics and a communalist polity that can be brought up to date to serve Africa’s contemporary needs and that can serve as a foil both for political authoritarianism on the continent and the creeping deleterious effect of Western individualism and consumerism. The core position of the revivalists thus, is, for Africa’s intellectual heritage, particularly in scientific knowledge and political organization, to be excavated, reclaimed, and deployed to its contemporary challenges. Clearly, the particular point in time when Negritude was developed and deployed against colonialism and the wider European hegemony that birthed this form of global subjugation go a long way in explaining

the racial essentialism that defined Negritude. It is the reason why one of the key European sympathisers with Negritude – the French writer and philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre in the *Black Orpheus* (1976) - described the movement as anti-racist racism. In other words, Negritude sought to challenge White racism against Black people but in the attempt to mount such opposition it had itself become a form of racism – Black racism. It must be said however that Sartre did not raise this as a criticism of Negritude. Rather, he saw Negritude as standing in opposition to colonial racism in a Hegelian dialectic that was a necessary condition for racial unity. Nevertheless, Sartre's impact on Negritude is controversial in that it was received in both positive and negative terms simultaneously (Jachec, 2010).

However, Wole Soyinka (1999) has critiqued the movement as belonging to a colonial ideology and "otherizing", and that in essentializing blackness and the African group, and counter-posing it against whiteness and Europeans it triggers a perpetual defensive situation in which Africans will always have to revalidate their identity in terms especially of their race. He underscores this point with the now famous quote that "A tiger does not proclaim its tigerness; it jumps on its prey." Similarly, South African poet and political activist Keorapetse William Kgositsile has criticized Negritude as being a narrow aesthetic conception of Black culture that operates within the paradigm of white aesthetic models of perception that he described as "fornicating with the white eye" (Kagositsile, 1983).

The Post-Africanism critique of tradition and cultural revivalism

A powerful critique of the central themes of cultural revivalism started to emerge in the 1960s in the works of a new generation of African intellectuals. Much of the works of these intellectuals and the core theses that they enunciated can be loosely identified as the Post-Africanism critique. A key figure in the early development of this school of thought is the African philosopher, Paulin Hountondji (1983, 1996). Over a series of articles and speeches, Hountondji amassed a powerful critique against the intellectual movement that he referred to as "ethnophilosophy." This was the idea that African philosophy exists first, in the singular, and second, in the guise of an overarching collective worldview which contemporary African intellectuals merely have to mine for the hidden treasures of wisdom that can be deployed to solve Africa's contemporary challenges. For Hountondji, this view of African philosophy is based on two fundamental errors - a set of flawed

assumptions about African peoples, and about the nature of philosophy. In terms of practical outcomes of philosophical thoughts, Hountondji argues that the project of ethnophilosophy (coterminous here with cultural revivalism) is more likely to hamper rather than facilitate Africa's modernization efforts.

Hountondji's first objection to the cultural revivalist thesis relates to the assumed singularity of worldview and consciousness amongst Africans and all Black persons in both synchronic and diachronic dimensions. For him, ideas around "Negritude", "timeless codes of behavior", or "the African worldview", help to sustain "the myth of primitive unanimity" (1996, p. 60) – the delusion that all Black persons primarily share a single consciousness, and are united in their understanding of the most important matters in life. Hountondji contends that notions of a global African mentality is reductive and does not do justice to the richness and cultural diversity of African peoples. Whereas cultural revivalists might see such a collective worldview as a basis for solidarity Hountondji and other modernist critics see this as an encumbrance that fail to see the real differences among Africans, such as gender, class, life-chances, ethnic and minority issues. Similarly, on the subject of unanimism Kwame Appiah (1992, p.26) pointed out that Africans face too many problems and projects for them to be side-tracked by notions of a fabricated solidarity. Further, Hountondji worries that cultural revivalism risk defaulting into an ideological support for the authoritarian state. In such political context, often marked by a lack of accountability to the public, and in which many pressing problems remain unsolved by the political rulers, cultural revivalist sloganeering about African authenticity, often accompanied by celebrations of African cultural traditions, function as a "powerful opiate," serving to perplex the masses and to inure them to the oppressive reality of their living conditions. Hountondji further contends that when African intellectuals see their role as merely to document traditional belief systems instead of asking tough questions about prevailing social and political conditions they become complicit in the very condition that they seek to supplant.

This last point relates to Hountondji's second major criticism of cultural revivalism – the nature and role of philosophy and its acceptance as evidenced in the pronouncements and writings of cultural revivalists. First, he challenges the revivalist assumption that African philosophy is to be thought of as an accumulation of ancestral wisdom held collectively as an unconscious worldview that is shared by

indigenous African people. Secondly, he criticizes the way that revivalists see the role of an African philosopher as one of merely recovering and advocating the key elements of this worldview. For Hountondji, this way of understanding philosophy confuses it with anthropology. Hountondji rejects this understanding of philosophy and points out that the value of philosophy lies not in the task of recovering popular thoughts and practical wisdom of a people but in interrogating such commonplace views and helping society to challenge its own assumptions about various aspects of life. In this regard, he points out that Greek philosophy, as an example, does not refer to the collective beliefs of ethnic Greeks about their pantheon, nature, society, and the like. Rather, the classification refers to the work of individual Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. As such, the revivalist understanding of philosophy is problematic because by seeing it as a collective worldview it obscures the proper meaning of the term as a critical activity rather than a passive holding of beliefs by individuals or social groups. Further, Ciaffa expresses concern in the suggestion emanating from the revivalist view on philosophy that Africa's finest minds should merely document and revere traditional beliefs contending that such preoccupation amounts to a dereliction of duty – an “evasion of the kind of critical thinking that is urgently needed to address the problems that exist within African societies” (Ciaffa, 2008, p.425).

Post-Africanism and African modernity

In a similar reaction to cultural revivalism explored above, Denis Ekpo (2002, 2010) offers a trenchant critique of cultural nationalism and its underlying revivalism via a different route. In a special edition of the *Third Text* journal aimed at revisiting the controversial concept and philosophy of Negritude, Ekpo offers a reconstructed analysis of the Negritude philosophy and in particular the writings of one of its founding intellectuals, Léopold Sédar Senghor. He makes a powerful case for a reinstatement of aspects of Senghorian thoughts on the African condition, and how this might be transcended. Ekpo identifies a lacuna in the anti-Negritude discourse in the way that Negritudism and Senghorism had been treated as a single, ideological monolith that has privileged a misrecognition of the value of Senghor's “signature sociopolitical, cross-cultural intuitions, and daring insights” (Ekpo, 2010, p. 177). He, however, concedes that Senghor's own complicated and somewhat contradictory intellectual thoughts and its realization as

political praxis had contributed to the popular misunderstanding of the salience of his works and to the eventual rustication of Negritude from the intellectual enterprise of finding viable answers to Africa's contemporary problems. Ekpo's attempt at excising Senghorism from the baggage of Negritudism involved a two-stage process of, first, unpacking Negritude into two separate, albeit, related doctrines, and second, reinvigorating Senghorism with a new concept that he calls Post-Africanism. Ekpo hoped that the new concept of Post-Africanism will prove sufficiently resilient enough to shoulder the intellectual weight of "a more fruitful post-Negritude engagement of Africa with the world process." (Ekpo, 2010, p. 178).

First, then, to the task of deconstructing Negritude in order to isolate the elements of Senghor's contribution to it, and to show how those ideas can be rehabilitated, Ekpo delineates "official or first Negritude" (i.e the collective ideas that became packaged and widely known as Negritude), and "second Negritude" or "Senghorism" (a synthesis of Senghor's ideas on politics, culture and modernity addressed to Africa's modernization, comprising a "self-reassuring re-description of Africa and Africans", as well as a conciliatory politics aimed at establishing friendship and collaboration with Europe). This particular point is crucial for Ekpo's attempt at resurrecting Senghorism and for aligning this philosophy with Post-Africanism for, contrary to popular acceptations of Senghor's work, he saw the benefit for Africa of entering into a collaboration with Europe in order to hasten Africa's transition to modernity and was not in favor of the cultural isolationist creed and separatism often associated with Negritude and cultural nationalism. Indeed, according to this account Senghor had no moral qualms about the strategic use of the resources of imperialism and neo-colonialism to expedite Africa's modernization. Ekpo contends that Senghorism cannot be ignored because the issues it engaged with still remain relevant for Africa and the world at large.

One of these key issues is the question posed as "what to do with an Africa suddenly brought by Europe to the gate of world history." In other words, what does Africa do about the evident fact of its encounter with Europe and its modernity? How might Africa respond to this historical conjuncture in order to find its own path to modernity in a world that is set on an irreversible course of globality? Ekpo contends that a critical re-reading of Senghor's thoughts on this axial question, one which delves beneath his alluring poetry about a verdant African past, will reveal that Senghor's most pressing concerns were

not about a return to a romanticized African heritage but about the urgent need to bring Africa into modernity. Ekpo surmises Senghor's position thus: "while still chanting songs of praise to the unsullied splendors of foregone tribal pasts he realized that for Africa to become modern, it had to become not what it had been but what it had never been" (Ekpo, 2010, p.179). Further on, he points that "once the maligned past has been aesthetically salvaged, Senghor had no difficulty in exhibiting it as a Negritude in a purely compensatory aesthetico-cultural museum, while he went on performatively to think and act beyond it, realizing that none of the skills, know-how and ethos required for the urgent task of getting Africa on stream for modernity could be found in the ancestral past" (Ekpo, 2010, p.179).

Importantly, then, one notable outcome of Ekpo's reconstructed reading of Senghor's performative political thought is that Negritude (at least the Senghorian strain) was actually not a chant for Africa's cultural isolation, but a strategy for engaging with Europe on terms that suited Africa in its march to modernity. With regards to the cultural nationalism component of Negritude, Ekpo argues that the received wisdom tending to associate Senghor with it amounts to an unfortunate misunderstanding of Senghorism.

The main thrust of Ekpo's argument here is that whilst cultural nationalism was marked by a retrogressive move to retrace an imagined glorious African past that could be recovered from antiquity to solve Africa's contemporary challenges, Senghorism was more pragmatic, strategic and forward-looking in seeking a strategy for utilizing the repository of modernization know-how available through Europe to address the challenges in ways that suited Africa's own contexts and requirements. In this regard, Ekpo laments the decimating effect of Afrocentricity's performative misadventures on Africa's political system, economic policies, and technological development plans that culminated in the 1980 document – *The African Path to Development* (a.k.a. the Lagos Plan), underpinned by the self-deluding doctrine of self-reliance. He argues that the ethos of Africanity was realized as an overarching politics of particularism whose practical outcome led to all manner of ill-conceived and unworkable social policies. In a trenchant rebuke of this thought process and its practical expressions Ekpo contends that:

The ethos of Africanity, having given rise to a meta-politics of cultural specificity, placed Africa on an unworkable path but, to be sure, an African path, gave it an unworkable democracy but an African

democracy, an unworkable socialism but an African socialism, etc. Thus, under the cover of a compulsory Africanity, some cultural nationalists went straight back to the archaic tribal past and misused it to furnish non-Eurocentric formulae for Africanizing modernity. Africanized modernity in the hands of psychotics like Mobutu Sésé Seko, Idi Amin, Jean-Bédél Bokassa, Gmassingbé Eyadéma to mention but the most colorful, became the abattoir for disposing of the last remnants of the heritage of modernity in Africa, including the state, the economy, reason and humanity. Many of the states formerly ruled by African cultural nationalists have never recovered from the consequences of these dangerous myths. Driven by a compulsive race hubris, aggravated by desire for impotent vengeance against Europe and an inflated idea of African dignity, cultural nationalist Africa locked itself in a auto-hypnotic rhetoric of self-reliance in finding the path to modernity and sleep-walked into one of the most disastrous human and development failures in modern history. Those decades of Afrocentric self-help are today still referred to as the “lost decades” (Ekpo, 2010, pp. 180-181).

In his further attempt to untangle Senghorism from cultural nationalism Ekpo observes that Senghor had apprehended in his writings the inherent dangers of “using incommensurable pasts and cultures to appropriate a modernity whose invention our ancestors had no part in” (Ekpo, 2010, p. 181), and that he had chosen instead a universalist path to wisdom. Senghor, unlike the cultural nationalists, realized the incompatibility of embracing the “secularizing, post-tribal learning processes” of modernization at the same time as “re-legitimizing the separatist atavistic cultural reflexes of the tribe” (Ekpo, 2010, p. 181) that are inimical to the modernization project. Concluding his attempt at rehabilitating Senghor’s intellectualism, Ekpo proclaims that Senghorism remains intellectually potent whilst Negritude, in the form of cultural nationalism deformed into a retro-traditionalist albatross that aborted Africa’s journey to modernity. Further, Ekpo articulates a philosophy of “Post-Africanism” as a necessary corollary of a redeemed Senghorism.

At bottom, Post-Africanism is about the effort to rescue Africa from the withering embrace of cultural revanchism and its inhibiting effect on Africa’s modernization. In the words of Ekpo, it is, “to redeem Africa from too much Africanism” (Ekpo, 2010, p.181).

On the issue of technological advancement and Africa’s response to the challenges of developing the necessary technologies that must drive

the continent's development Ekpo decried the Monrovia Declaration of the OAU in 1979 which, largely driven by Afrocentric sentiments, eschewed the policy of "technology transfer" ostensibly to protect African pride. Ekpo sees this move as irrational and retrogressive, calling for a return to Senghorian universal reason which embraces the idea of strategic use of foreign technology for Africa's development. Ekpo pitches Post-Africanism against what he sees as the self-reliance delusion. Post-Africanism, in this respect, preaches the value and necessity of learning from the best practices around the world and from the Senghorian school of stratagem in which "disadvantaged but self-confident learners are ready to brush aside race hubris...and master the skills necessary to develop their countries" (Ekpo, 2010, p.184).

On the subject of democracy and its role in Africa's road to modernization, Ekpo seems to concede somewhat to aspects of the cultural revivalism view on the potential of traditional political systems and ethos to provide valuable insights on alternative institutions and process of political organization in Africa. He expresses his suspicion of Western liberal democracy as the answer to Africa's political challenges, questioning the prevailing dogma widely held both in Africa and the West that democracy is a necessary condition for the transition of Africa to modernity. Ekpo did not expound on this subject as much as he should, but the two premises on which he seems to base his criticism of the near universal belief in the necessity of liberal democracy for national development are first, the argument that democracy cannot be forced. It is a process that must evolve rather than one that can come into being through an act of promulgation. Secondly, drawing on Francis Fukuyama's work, is the argument of "stateness first". This is the view that, contrary to the mantra that has long been proselytized in the West, emerging societies may be better served by developing a strong state with well-developed institutions of governance out of which will evolve democratic governance. Fukuyama (2005), following his study of a number of conflict-ridden states has contended that stateness is primary for the formation of democratic political institution. He demonstrated that world events, be they recent, current, or in the future, drive home the truth that the existence of a functioning state is a precondition for a democratic state. In a significantly prophetic tone Fukuyama points that the creation of workable states where they have been destroyed or have barely existed is second to none of the challenges of our time.

Ekpo contends that the model of Western democracy should not have to be the one that is pursued in Africa. Ekpo's stance on the subject of democracy is virtually an inversion of his position on the subject of how Africa should appropriate scientific and technological knowledge for its modernization. This, in a way, is an illustration of the necessary complexity of the Post-Africanism position, and one that hinges on the principle of strategic, as opposed to, mimetic borrowing of knowledge, ideas, models, methods, etc., from the West. He acknowledges this when he argues that "Post-Africanism does not mind Europhilia in the field of technological modernization, but some of the so-called globalized political or social modernities of the West must be regarded with a philosophy of robust suspicion" (Ekpo, 2010, p.185) .

In summary, these philosophical exchanges between the pro-tradition, cultural revivalism and the Europhilic Post-Africanism schools offer food for thought on many of the core issues that are relevant for the task of developing and updating the curricula of communication and journalism education in Africa, as well as for engaging with the questions about how Pan-Africanism's core ideals should be understood and articulated in ways that help to facilitate Africa's transition to modernity. It should be clear that neither of these positions should be given a reductive interpretation based on pre-existing orientation or ideological leaning as they each in their own way offer functional benefits. The centripetal, inward-leaning, orientation of cultural revivalism for instance can be seen, in context, as a justifiable response at a specific historical moment to years of imperialist onslaught against the very being of Black people which served to undermine and de-humanize what it means to be a Black person. Any attempts by Black persons to effectively resist such powerful instruments of oppression and subjugation, particularly the ones directed at the mind, such as education, culture, and religion, had to entail large doses of psychological reinforcement that involves reinstating belief in ones ancestry and heritage. In exploring the various ways that cultural revivalists (in particular the contemporary advocates of this orientation) have sought to construct an essentialist African identity and cosmogony that stand in opposition to the dominant European ones it would seem that the central problem lies in their inability to recognize the time-specific and context-governed value of this confidence boosting approach.

As such, rather than recognize an appropriate point when it was time to move on from this approach towards the ultimate objective of material emancipation, too many revivalists have sought to perpetuate this worldview as an all-time response to the condition of Africa and of Black people. This slippage into a performative orientation to moor Africa's present and future to its past has invoked the sorts of criticisms directed at cultural revivalism by its critics. In particular, there are serious flaws in the core idea within cultural revivalism that the solutions to solving Africa's contemporary problems lie in "going back to our roots".

For instance, many of the essentialist characterizations of Africa that cultural revivalists often describe as "African values", "African way of life", "African tradition", "African condition", and which they seek to reify through pronouncements, thoughts and actions that sustain them are often temporal practical adaptations by people to the realities of existential conditions rather than essentialisms and preferences deeply wired into the DNA of Africans. The inability to distinguish between expedient practices and modes of living that are necessitated by prevailing condition, and the human potential to transcend such modes of living, given the right conditions, is a fundamental weakness of some strands of cultural revivalism. This often amounts to peddling unhelpful propositions that naturalizes impoverishing and oppressive conditions that ought to be seen as transient, and in urgent need of transformation through the applications of enabling infrastructures. Such attempts, first, to wrongly identify transient characteristics, practices and mentalities as essential attributes of Africa and Africans and, secondly, to reify and naturalize them as immutable laws of nature or essential characteristics that will be sacrilegious to alter or tamper with; and thirdly, to seek to curate them by ossifying and preserving them in some kind of time capsule, all in the misguided notion of protecting an African way of life, culture or identity has been a terrible misadventure that has done so much disservice to Africa's progress.

Tradition and modernity in Africa's communication and journalism

The foregoing exploration of philosophical ideas and disputations on the core issues around Africa's quest to modernize, and what might be the best approach to achieving this fundamental goal is evidently pertinent to the debates about media and journalism education on the continent. Starting with the underlying ontological question about how

contemporary Africa needs to understand itself and its position in relation to the rest of the world, and the equally crucial question of how, in cognisance of the fact of the historical conjuncture that has brought Africa into an encounter with the West and the rest of the world, Africa should respond to this by creatively moving forward.

Similar to the core contentions within the broader terrain of African philosophical thoughts, efforts at reformulating and developing new curricula of communication and journalism education in Africa must engage with fundamental questions such as: do the solutions to Africa's contemporary communication challenges lie in the past, or in creative adaptations to the resources of our time? Or, perhaps, a mixture of both? It does seem to me that a large part of the interventions on this subject as gleaned from African communication scholarship fall within the cultural revivalism paradigm. It may be the case that aspects of traditional African communication practices can offer useful insights on the way that modern communication and journalism practice can be improved but the real value of setting this as a research priority is suspect, not least because of the often significant differences in the contexts, scale, mode of living, communication functions, and social conditions that mark traditional and contemporary societies.

One key reason often advanced by many commentators for suggestions to turn the focus of African communication research inward and backward is the observation that Africa remains largely a rural society and that most Africans live in the rural areas. In order to adequately serve this teeming rural population it may be necessary to return to the uses of "appropriate" traditional means, such as the griots, talking drums, the village crier, oral media, and the like.

For a start, there is a certain degree of patronizing assumption implicit in this line of thinking which suggests that Africa's rural population cannot handle modern means of communication. The widespread take-up of mobile telephony as soon as network coverage reaches rural communities gives a lie to this assumption.

Further, this particular mantra ignores the rapid ways in which modern telecommunication and new media technologies are forcing a rethink of the way we understand time, space and geography. Again, although the argument is often made, and rightly so, that many of these new technologies have still not been widely deployed in Africa, the fact is that the speed of their decentring from the advanced market economies where they are initially located, as well as from the wealthy and early adopters to the masses is growing at an exponential rate

compared with technologies of even twenty years ago. As such, modern communication technologies that reconfigure time and space and enable interaction and participation amongst widely dispersed people should be seen as a boon for addressing many of Africa's communication challenges. The focus of communication research in Africa should be on how to harness these new technologies in ways that will facilitate their rapid deployment.

The case of mobile telephony is instructive. Whilst African governments wrung their hands for many years over the provision of the infrastructure for widespread deployment of landline telephony the arrival of mobile telephony and its rapid take-up by Africans, especially in the rural areas, has been remarkable and pretty much took the matter of providing this vital resource away from the state and into the hands of private providers who were more willing to find the means to make the facility available to users.

A further challenge to the "rural Africa" chant is in the demographic fact that all over the world there is a recognition that the drift of rural-urban migration is on the rise. Using the database of the United Nations World Urbanization Prospects data for 2009 I have culled some figures to explore the demographic profile of selected African countries, between 1950 and projected to 2020. As the table below shows, sub-

Fig. 1 World Urbanization Prospects: The 2009 Revision Population Database

Country	1960			1980			2000			2010			2020		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Angola	4489	523	10.4	5946	1908	24.3	7284	6995	49.0	7881	11112	58.5	8323	16184	66.0
Botswana	508	16	3.1	823	162	16.5	806	917	53.2	769	1209	61.1	722	1506	67.6
Cameroon	4654	754	13.9	6181	2898	31.9	7955	7910	49.9	8303	11655	58.4	8408	15941	65.5
Chad	2768	199	6.7	3742	866	18.8	6438	1964	23.0	8328	3179	27.6	9843	5054	33.9
Egypt	17273	10525	37.9	24946	19487	43.9	40142	30032	42.8	47810	36664	43.04	53336	45301	45.9
Kenya	7508	597	7.4	13707	2555	15.7	25237	6204	19.7	31799	9064	22.2	38208	13826	26.6
Mauritius	441	219	33.2	557	409	42.4	685	510	42.7	754	542	41.8	777	595	43.4
Nigeria	37852	7296	16.2	53223	21300	28.6	71765	53078	42.5	79441	78818	49.8	83394	109859	56.8
South Africa	9286	8110	46.6	14995	14080	48.4	19344	25528	56.9	19338	31155	61.7	17611	35060	66.6

Source: Population Division, Department of Economic & Social Affairs, United Nations

Key:

- 1 – Rural population (thousands)
- 2 – Urban population (thousands)
- 3 – Percentage urban (%)

Saharan Africa's rural-urban migration has been on a steady climb from 11% in 1950 to 42% by 2020. That is, by 2020 there will be roughly an equal number of Africans living in urban centres as are living in the rural areas. For virtually every country in Africa, even when the rate of urbanization is not so dramatic there is still a steady pattern of a significant rise in urbanization. In Nigeria, there will be more people living in urban areas than those living in the rural areas by 2020, in South Africa, urban population has already outpaced the rural, and by 2020 there will be twice as many people living in urban areas as there are in rural areas!

These figures do not depict a static continent that is permanently stuck in rurality as commentators are given to claiming. They show a continent where beleaguered "ruralites" are upping their sticks and heading for the cities. Rural Africans want in on the act of urban living, and there is no stemming the tide. These forecasts are not for some distant future. Year 2020 is only nine years away. Significant social transformations such as this, and their implications for policy, can easily be missed when scholars fall into the mindset of perpetuating popular beliefs and overarching assumptions about the essentialities of Africa that are not supported by evidence. This is not to suggest that there should be no concern for the communication needs of rural dwellers but that this key characterization of Africa is a shifting, not static, condition that needs to be factored into communication research and policy.

Conclusion

There are important insights to be gained from the review (inevitably abridged) of key philosophical positions of African philosophical thoughts presented here for African communication and journalism scholarship, especially in terms of how it might inform research priorities and the focus of education curricula. These philosophical positions are based on fundamental questions about how Africa should deal with the simple fact that it had been dragged, kicking and panting, into an encounter with Western modernity; and how contemporary Africa should respond, and position itself in the global modernity of the twenty-first century. These core questions and the responses to them are coterminous with the principles of Pan-Africanism both in terms of its renewal and in terms of the realization of some, if not all, of its goals via a critical review of how these may hinder or facilitate Africa's material transformation.

There are plenty of valid and necessary reasons for media and journalism education and scholarship in Africa to review many of the existing models, theories and methodologies that are currently in use and in need of revision, ditching, or hybridizing. The process of undertaking such a task should not be driven, however, by an overarching cultural revanchist, antipodean, anti-Western, sentiment.

As the over-lapping fields of media, communication, cultural and journalism studies have matured to the point that there are now calls, even amongst Western scholars, to de-Westernize media studies (Curran & Park, 2000; Gunaratne, 2002; 2010) it is an opportune time for communication and journalism scholarship in Africa to take up this challenge in a way that addresses contemporary challenges and social conditions on the continent by using and testing many of the existing theories, models, and methodologies that are currently in use that can generate an alternative corpus of communication research for comparative analyses. This kind of active research practice is what will produce alternative models that are suitable for addressing Africa's contexts.

In many cases, of course, experience has already shown the unsuitability of specific Western communication theories, models and practices. In such instances the research focus can be directed at generating suitable alternatives. However, it is also the case that these theories, models and practices are never static even in the context of the societies they were developed to serve, and constant reviews do take place all the time that lead to a revision or a paradigm shift. Care must be taken that attempts at "de-Westernizing" Africa's media and journalism research, practice, and education do not default into hasty declarations of incompatibility of Western models, which may well be founded on specious evidence from perfunctory research endeavors. It should also not deform into the delusion that African scholars can extract themselves out of their historical materialism into a creative void from which they can abstract original ideas and models for Africa's communication.

The reason for suggesting the approach of a critical, creative engagement is manifold. First, utilizing existing theoretical models borrowed from outside the continent offers an immediate resource that can be put to use, and this should not have to entail the practice of uncritical, mimetic replication. It is all well and good to talk about developing original theoretical and practice models that are more suitable for Africa but in reality this is often a difficult task that involves

long-term research investment in time, funding, and other resources that are usually in short supply in many African universities. Instead of an approach which seeks to reinvent the wheel a more productive one would be to start with existing, available models, in order to generate research observations that would lead to a better understanding of how those existing models can be modified or replaced. Secondly, the search for alternative media education curricula that are based on new theoretical and practice models should be supported by empirical evidence that proves the unsuitability of existing models rather than ideological posturing, or some guilt-trip about “copying” foreign ideas.

Thirdly, the thrust of communication and journalism research that will feed into a re-constructed journalism education formula lies in the creative application of available theoretical and practice models to national media experiences in Africa which can begin to afford comparative analysis between African countries and between Africa and the wider world. This is likely to generate a corpus of Africa’s media scholarship that is derived from the continent’s own peculiarities. This is far more likely to produce alternative models that speak to specific African contexts than the enervating quests to developing “authentic” African models. Such works already exists, but we need to develop more of them, and move away from the distraction of searching for a cultural holy grail of authentic African communication models.

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Pan-Africanism and the effects of information and communication technologies

By Ndirangu Wachanga and Ali A. Mazrui

Abstract

Kwame Nkrumah saw himself as a Pan-Africanist and a socialist - committed to the solidarity of all people of African descent and to the workers of the world. In retrospect, Nkrumah is now a much bigger name in the history of Pan-Africanism than in the history of socialism. We are not sure his statement that socialism without science is void is really true. But his belief that Pan-Africanism without technology is still-born makes better sense, particularly with the emergence of engaging theorizations in the 21st century that are, predominantly, technologically based. These activities potentially serve as a prism through which Pan-Africanism and other Afrocentric initiatives may be perceived, simultaneously, as processes, states, and products. Whether this is indicative of a technological Pan-Africanism that is being tested, challenged, and often vindicated in new ways, forty years after the death of Nkrumah, is the subject of our discussion.

Key words: media, Pan-Africanism, diaspora, ICTs, Kwame Nkrumah

Introduction:

Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of post-colonial Ghana, saw himself both as a Pan-Africanist and a socialist. He was committed to the solidarity of all people of African descent and to the workers of the world. Partly because of the drama of decolonization in the 1950s and

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1960s, and partly because of Nkrumah's own personal charisma, he received more international press coverage than any other African statesman of his day with the possible exception of Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt.

Nkrumah invested in the media in pursuit of both Pan-Africanism and socialism. He encouraged the "emergence of a Marxist newspaper called *Spark*," which "proved to be more purist in its Marxism than Nkrumah himself" (Mazrui, 1966, p. 9). But Egypt's infrastructure of communication was much more developed in the 1950s than was Ghana's. Egypt had an extensive publishing industry, internationally influential newspapers, an impressive broadcasting system, and was already the leading film-making cinematic power on the African continent. And it is the Egypt of Hosni Mubarak, more than half a century later, which became the second African nation – after Tunisia – to succumb to pro-democracy uprisings, which were fueled by social and other emerging media.

Nkrumah made up for the weak communication infrastructure by a capacity to make news, and to attract attention. After leaving New York for London in 1945, he was behind the establishment of a nationalist newspaper, *The New Africa*, and one year later, he published a pamphlet titled *Towards Colonial Freedom*. What is more, Nkrumah believed in the power of science, arguing that socialism without science is void. In Ghana, he established the first experimental nuclear reactor in post-colonial Black Africa. He also initiated the first University of Technology in West Africa. His technological university in Kumasi, Ghana, is still thriving.

In retrospect, Nkrumah is now a much bigger name in the history of Pan-Africanism than in the history of socialism. We are not sure that his statement that socialism without science is void is really true. But his belief that Pan-Africanism without technology is still-born makes better sense. He was hoping that both the nuclear reactor and the technological university would serve not only Ghana but also the wider African world. Whether the changes in expressing the Pan-Africanism spirit have changed the spirit itself is an ongoing debate. But it is clear that information and communication technologies (ICTs) have provided new opportunities as well as challenges, and Pan-Africanism is, therefore, far from being either void or still-born, especially if we cast a retrospective and prospective look at its intersection with the media.

Media and Pan-Africanism: A cursory historical overview

Scholars from a wide range of disciplines – from economics to sociology, theology to philosophy, political science to social activism, literary to cultural criticism, popular art to poetry – have grappled with the notion of Pan-Africanism from an equally wide range of theoretical approaches, predominant among them being Marxism, Modernization and Capitalism. Although most of the newly independent African countries engaged these theoretical conceptualizations differently, paying attention to their ethnicized particularities, the architects and students of Pan-Africanism seemed united by a stronger transcendental motif of Africa as a home for the Blacks. In its unifying trait, this motif recognized the existence of multiple localized ethnic identities, geometric partitioning of nation-states, and a cornucopia of languages and dialects. It is a motif that has distressed and goaded the notion of Pan-Africanism since the last part of the twentieth century and continues to do so in the new digitized millennium, both in Africa and in the diaspora.

The twentieth century construction of Pan-Africanism was predicated on modernistic notions, which aimed at creating a politically conscious continent. It was hoped that the media would play a vital role in engendering and sustaining this political consciousness among Africans (Mazeyu and Mazrui, 1998). Placing heavy expectation on the media was not without precedence. The media had been used in the liberation struggle in several African countries, and most founding fathers – from Nnamdi Azikiwe to Kwame Nkrumah to Jomo Kenyatta – had used the media to agitate for freedom in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya respectively. But the vibrancy of media in Africa, especially among West African countries was hinged on the “repatriation of freed slaves to Liberia, among them well-educated people who embarked on journalism both as a business and as a means of advocacy” (Ibelema & Bosch, 2009, p. 294). The political and advocacy content of early publications served as an inspiration to freedom activists and nationalist leaders who used the media to agitate for political freedom, and who later rose to power.

There was, however, a different orientation both in media ownership and use among East Africans. While newspapers were crucial in voicing dissenting voices, one notes how the pioneer media in East Africa were used to inculcate cultural concepts of the rulers while disrupting the social fabric of the ruled. This was countered through other local media, with some written in local languages. But the overall impact of

the media in agitating for political freedom in Africa is reflected in the frustrations of the British Governor of colonial Nigeria, Fredrick Lugard, who referred to African journalists as “mission-educated young men who live in villages interferring with native councils, and writing as correspondents for mendacious native priests” (Azikiwe, 1964, p. 5).

As the Pan-Africanist movement was cultivating and strengthening its roots in the 1960s, insisting on the significance of the media in its continental unifying campaign, the UN General Assembly was appealing to its member governments to integrate mass media with other strategies of economic development. This modernization approach, which largely conceived of development in terms of borrowing technological, communication and political institutions and paradigms from the West, also highlighted media’s fundamental role in national and continental development. This modernization phase in Africa was characterized by an erroneous stipulation that political, developmental and democratic institutions would be practicable only if the society were modernized.

This paradigm held urbanization and literacy as accessories to democracy and participatory governance, themselves assumed to be resultant features of the modernization process. The media were supposed and expected to play an important role in facilitating urbanization as well as in promoting literacy - where literacy was based on the proficiency of the three Rs. Still, a meaningful mediascape, it was erroneously argued, would only emerge from that modernized Africa. But this newly independent Africa was fighting not just poverty, but also illiteracy. Cognizant of these challenges, some Pan-Africanists even considered cinema, a media form, to be more attractive because it exerted less decoding and literacy demands. As McCall (2007, p. 92) notes, “Cinema, an art form free of the demands of literacy, seemed an ideal medium to impart a Pan-African discourse that could engage the entire continent as well as the diaspora. The emergence of African film in 1960s, typified by the work of Sembene Ousemane, was positioned in terms of this ideological mission.” But there were several challenges, nonetheless, that faced the entire mediascape, cinema and film included, key among them being feeble economic support system and punitive governmental interference. Politically, even the leading and celebrated African leaders, some of whom had an admirable record of championing the media as veritably essential to the postcolonial venture of a new Africa, succumbed to the ignominy of censoring free expression. A case in point is the leading Negritudist, Leopold Senghor,

who banned most of Sembene Ousmane films in Senegal. The negative effects of such forms of political censorship and a restrictive information and economic environment were aggravated by a rising discontent with the pedestrian performance and unrealized promises of the modernization paradigm itself. This discontent countered the modernization reasoning, which had insensitively oversimplified African traditions and their interrelationship with the western modernity.

It is this lack of contentment that punctuated, in various ways, the content of most post-independence media in Africa. And, as each Africa country wrestled with its national struggles, a continental unity in the form of Pan-Africanism was being evoked from a shared colonial experience. The media presented the continent as united in a search of a cultural hegemonic order; a continent whose individual nations were emboldening their identity on emblems of national sovereignty such as the national flag and coat of arms (See also Musa, 2009). The media were essential in cultivated meanings for the emblematic expression of such symbols. Also, the media were constructed as part of the national institutions, and in most cases they were named after the country (e.g. Voice of Kenya). This was also the case with other cultural, economic and political establishments (e.g. Egyptian airlines). But as we discuss later, these signs and symbols are now being articulated virtually in the cyberspace. Could this be indicative of a technological Pan-Africanism that is being tested, challenged, and often vindicated in new ways, forty years after the death of Nkrumah?

ICTs and Pan-Africanism: A cursory overview of some recent trends

If Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism grappled with the effects of the media on Africa, the new millennium is asking what Africa is doing with and to the media. The unrelenting burgeoning of ICTs in Africa makes them increasingly important and relevant in the quest for a Pan-African solidarity, especially when these emerging technologies are unprecedentedly vital in re-articulating Africa as "a material and imagined place, a historical geography, the constellation of the places and people embedded in its cartographic and conceptual imagining... (as) an invention (with) a physical, political, paradigmatic, and psychic reality for the peoples who live within or who are from its cartographic, cultural, and cognitive boundaries, themselves subject to shifts" (Zezeza, 2009, p. 34). This is the Africa that is fast catching up with ICT

advancements while, at once, creatively supplementing and supplanting the existing forms of communication. This is the Africa whose ICTs landscape is progressively drawing from a spatial/temporal acknowledgement of societal changes that are resulting from changes in our communication behavior. These changes are concomitantly happening within Africa and in its multiple and complex interactions with the rest of the world. But ICTs per se are not changing Africa; rather, it is the change in Africans communication behavior - resulting from their acceptance and adoption of ICTs - that is transforming Africa. We are reminded by Shirky (2008) that change does not happen when we take up new technology; rather, it happens when we sanction and take up new behaviors. In comparing social media to a beehive, Shirky (2008, p. 17) notes:

When we change the way we communicate, we change society. The tools that a society uses to create and maintain itself are as central to human life as a hive is to bee life. Though the hive is not part of any individual bee, it is part of the colony, both shaped by and shaping the lives of its inhabitants. The hive is a social device, a piece of bee information technology that provides a platform, literally, for communication and coordination that keeps the colony viable. Individual bees can't be understood separately from the colony or from their shared, co-created environment.

We witnessed this in North Africa when it was turned by social media to a beehive of pro-democracy uprising in early 2011. While social media were crucial in mobilizing, organizing, and coordinating demonstrators, their use and the resulting protests, tested two Pan-African emotional responses:

- a) Solidarity - supporting or applauding what the neighbor is doing
- b) Empathy - identifying with and imitating the neighbors' behavior

In order to discuss these two emotional and continental responses meaningfully, we will present three levels of Pan-Africanism:

- a) Sub-Saharan - unity of Black Africa
- b) Trans-Saharan - unity of both Arab and Black Africa, and
- c) Northern Saharan Pan-Africanism - unity of Arab African countries among themselves in the north of the continent.

During the uprising, there was solidarity but not enough empathy to produce an imitative interchange between Arab Africa and Black Africa. But among Arab African countries themselves there was enough empathy to result in political contagion from Tunisia, to Egypt, to

Libya, to other parts of Arab Africa, and beyond. Social media played a major part in the domestic mobilization of protesters and in informing the rest of the world. The Mubarak and Gadhafi regimes did try to control both the social media and the mass media (radio, television and the print media). But shutting down the Internet in Mubarak's Egypt only resulted in enlarging the crowds, which turned up in person at the Tahrir (Liberation) Square. In Gadhafi's Libya roadblocks created by the regime between cities always included a search for cellular phones and portable computers among the transit passengers.

These were confiscated by Gadhafi's soldiers and sometimes destroyed on the spot. Yet, the effective use of social media as vital tools for sharing information among political protesters is not without precedent. When Filipinos converged on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue in 2001 to protest against the Philippine Congress's decision not to impeach President Joseph Estrada, they arranged these protests largely through forwarded cellular phone text messages, which read "Go 2 EDSA. Wear blk." When Iranians clogged the streets of Tehran in 2009, protesting what they believed to be a defective election, they used what was to become a vital tool of political mobilization: cellular phone. During the Iranian protest, the government restricted access to the Internet but "communications via text messaging and social networks like Facebook and Twitter became a crucial tool for information sharing between the protesters and the outside world, and even a source for the news media. So critical was this source of information that the U.S. State Department asked Twitter to delay a scheduled network upgrade that would have shut down the site for some hours on June 15 and 16" (Coyle & Meier, 2009, p. 3).

In 2011, Arab and African regimes under siege suffered from technophobia, fear of communication technology. Protesters in the Arab streets, on the other hand, were stimulated into technophilia, enthusiasm for the new technology of communication. Ease of communication between neighboring Arab countries resulted in empathetic behavior across the national lines. But popular uprisings in Arabophone Africa started in Sudan in 1964 rather than Tunisia in 2011. The Sudanese intelligentsia (lawyers, academics, judges, students and others) rose up against the dictatorship of General Ibrahim Abboud in 1964 in Khartoum. The uprising succeeded in ousting Abboud, but not in triggering similar uprisings in neighboring countries. This was before the era of facebook and cellular pictures.

In 1985 the Sudanese did it again in a popular uprising against the military government of General Jaafar Nimeiri. Again the popular eruption succeeded in ousting General Nimeiri but not in triggering imitative behavior next door – in spite of the fact that Sudan in 1985 shared borders with nine other countries. The social media had not yet matured enough to result in cross-border empathetic mobilization. But by the time Tunisians were ready to rise against President Zein al-Abideen Bin Ali in January 2011, the social media had both developed and spread widely enough to ignite empathetic imitation in one neighboring Arab country after another. But in Black Africa there was at best solidarity with the democratic protesters in Egypt and Tunisia - applauding the uprising - but not enough empathy-identification and imitation - to trigger similar uprisings south of the Sahara.

To complicate matters, Gadhafi had created the equivalent of the old French Foreign Legion. But Gadhafi's legion consisted of Black Soldiers recruited from Chad and Niger, who were described as "mercenaries" in the Western Press. Trans-Sahara Pan-Africanism was caught in conflicting emotions, and was affected by the contradictions of the new technologies of communication. Yet, these multiple transformations informing the technological terrain since the burgeoning of the Internet and the digital communication media are extraordinarily altering, not only the way contemporary Pan-African spirit is conceived, but also how it restructures transnational and intra and intercontinental networks.

ICTs and digital Pan-Africanism

The last part of the 20th century and the first part of the 21st century have witnessed engaging theorizations that are predominantly predicated on technologically-based activities, and may serve as a prism through which Pan-Africanism and other Afrocentric initiatives can be perceived, at once, as processes, states, and products. Although a lot of research needs to be done in the area examining the intersection of ICTs and Pan-Africanism, there are vibrant dialogues and extensive studies of communication technologies in Africa; partly revolving around afro-pessimism and partly around afro-optimism. There are scholars who have focused on ICTs and development, arguing for the need to examine the efficacy of these tools in assisting Africa to realize its development plans (See for instance Wachanga, 2011; Wachanga, 2010; Nyamnjoh, 2009; Mudhai, Tettey & Banda, 2009; Alemneh & Hastings, 2006). Such initiatives, it is argued, must generate policies

that are geared toward reducing the intensification of existing economic and technological disparity between the poor and the rich. Still, Africa must protect itself from becoming a dumping ground of poor quality and poorly recycled hardware, especially when most countries have no mechanism to dispose these materials in a way that is not injurious to the environment. A case in point is the use of cellular phone across Africa. It is impressive how subscription to cellular phones grew at a rate of 550 percent between 2003 and 2008, becoming accessible to and used by more than 350 million people across the continent. Their use has continued to rise, and their services indigenized to meet local needs such as money transfer services. In almost all African countries, cellular phone kiosks are highly conspicuous in big cities, suburbia, and villages. So affordable have cellular phones become that it is now more cost effective to buy a new phone than repair a faulty one. The problem is that cellular phones and other mobile devices often contain toxic chemicals, which if not well disposed, are harmful to human and animal health. So far there is no African government with a disposal policy of the hazardous substances – bioaccumulative, and toxic chemicals (PBTs) - contained in cellular phones and their accessories, which have been known to cause cancer and adversely affect both the nervous and reproductive systems.

On the Internet front, it is important to recognize that despite Africa's humbling Internet penetration rate (10.9%), its Internet access and penetration growth is the highest globally. The leading region is North America with a rate of 77.4% followed by Oceania/Australia with a penetration rate of 61.3 %. Rates in other regions are as follow: Europe (58.4%), Latin America/ Caribbean (34.5%), Middle East (29.8%), and Asia (21.5%).

While only 4.5 million people in Africa accessed the Internet in 2000, more than 100 million people in Africa had access by June 2010, which is approximately 15% of the entire African population. (www.internetworldstats.com). With the amplification of fiber optic networks, increased access to mobile and wireless technology, and the spreading acceptance and adoption of ICTs among all ages, one can only hope that this number will continue to rise. Nyamnjoh (2009) has singled out creativity among the youth as an edifying factor in confronting technological hardships in Africa. Also, the rising rate of human mobility within and outside Africa has catalyzed the search for ways to keep in touch with adventurous relatives and friends. According to Nyamnjoh (2009):

Throughout Africa, young people are amongst the greatest internet enthusiasts. These youths are not only keen to stay in touch with family and friends, but also to enhance their knowledge of international affairs and to take advantage of new opportunities by becoming involved with people of other countries with different realities... African creativity and conviviality are already helping to combat the technological difficulties (Nyamnjoh, 2009, p. 69).

What ICTs have done, therefore, is to create communicative spaces while problematizing existing ones, just as they (ICTs) have challenged earlier notions of Pan-Africanism while cultivating new ones. As a result, we find emerging Pan-Africanism constructs which are being disseminated through various media, including a proliferating blogosphere, a mediascape punctuated with the use of Twitter, Short Messaging Services (SMS), Yahoo-operated Flickr to upload pictures; cellular phones with capabilities to record videos and upload to YouTube (Wall.2009). Still, this Pan-Africanism is defined through online narratives, digitized travelogues, cyber dialogues and chat room messages, video sharing, and chronicling of current events through live blogging 2.0.

These emerging technological-based theorizations have challenged the notion of Pan-Africanism as originally espoused by Nkrumah and other major architects, particularly when novel notions of Pan-Africanism are articulated and communicated using mobile and personal devices as well as in virtual and digital spaces. In these digital spaces, for example, there is a conspicuous presence of cultural signs and symbols - photoshopped African-mapped screen savers, simulated pyramid-shaped webpage borders, websites whose navigation buttons borrow from Maasai artifacts, and blog sites whose audio background reverberate with the beat of African drums - serving as markers of a Pan-African spirit that is alive and well, even on the cyberspace. These signs and symbolic expressions, which can be combined and separated, compounded and transposed at will, are subject to change as technology transforms.

A quick search on YouTube, using "mama Africa" as search terms, for example, generates more than 12,000 videos whose content ranges from songs in praise of African icons such as Nelson Mandela to calls for unification (for example in the song titled *Mama Africa: A time for re-awakening*), from glamorized photographs of African cities to an equally grandiosely exoticized landscape; part of the content is

amateurishly presented while the other has professional videography. The novel articulation of this Pan-Africanism is well aware of the exotic representations and broad-brushed categorizations of Africa by Westerners. It is cognizant of the multiple narratives that have constructed Africa's *contrelittératures*¹. Yet, this new articulation of Pan-Africanism is not responding to an "Empire" of dominant narratives and constructions; rather, it is a Pan-Africanism talking to and representing itself. This is made possible, partly, because in Africa, like in other parts of the world, communication technologies are becoming not just complex, but they are now easier to use.

If our communication landscape is becoming intricate, it is also becoming accessible and participatory friendly. In the end, there is an expanded public digital sphere. And because neither participating in these activities nor one's membership in this public digital sphere requires physical presence in the continent, Pan-Africanism in a digital millennium is appreciative of a problematized Africa – both as a physical and a virtual construct. Africa, as an element of space, is geometric, a point on a lattice that can be defined using degrees of latitude and longitude.

Africa, like any other place, is "an extended locale of human activity imbued with the heritage, identity, and commitment of people and institutions... the meaning of place is subject to transformation through social and technological innovation, and through various levels and means of association and experience" (Janelle & Hodge, 2002, p. 3 as quoted in Zook, p.56). Africa - as an element of space - is now compressed through the use of ICTs, which redefines its cartographic and cultural construction(s). Such is the new ICTs-based background that is necessary in engaging Pan-Africanism in the 21st century, by placing it within a context that is cognizant of global changes that the Nkrumahs of the 20th century did not grapple with as they imagined, constructed, and campaigned for this movement. Our new context is in consonance with the convergence of Thomas Friedman's ten factors that have facilitated global compression of space and time, as detailed in his book *The World is Flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century* (Friedman, 2005).

Friedman identifies "ten flatteners"² that have helped in shrinking the world, noting how the rise and acceptance of digital, mobile, personal, and virtual technologies have globally altered communication patterns in the 21st century. Since the convergence of Friedman's ten flatteners, "None of us has rested... or maybe ever will again"

(Friedman, 2005, p. 48). This flat world, in which Africa is part, has allowed for unparalleled movement of people, distribution of media images, exchange of information and commodities, sharing of technological inventions, and circulation of capital. And Africans have been moving within and outside the continent. While most studies have focused on politically oppressive and economically restrictive conditions behind most of these movements, it is also clear that ICTs have allowed for an increase in human mobility. As Alonso and Oiarzabal (2010, p. 7) note, “Technological advancement of communication and transportation systems and infrastructures has facilitated both population movements and the formation of diasporas”.

Appadurai (1990) refers to this movement of persons and their forming of communities across the globe while maintaining connection with their home countries as *ethnoscape*. While we do not imply that the architect of Pan-Africanism were blind to national, continental, and global changes, we are insisting how ICTs advancement has problematized paradigms that depend heavily on cartographic viewpoint in the construction, conceptualization and discussion of Africa. As Zeleza (2009, p. 33/34) notes:

Africa is as much a reality as it is a construct whose boundaries – geographical, historical, and cultural – have shifted according to the prevailing conceptions and configurations of global racial identities and power as well as African nationalism, including Pan-Africanism. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the maps and meaning of “Africa” and “Africanness” are being reconfigured by both the processes of contemporary globalization and the project of African integration.

It is in the spirit of nurturing such a Pan-African spirit that the African Union (AU) tasked a group of experts in 2005 to come up with a definition of diaspora that would provide an administrative link between diasporic Africans and those residing in Africa. The AU was later to conclude that “ The African diaspora consists of peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union” (African Union Report, 2005). With the rising number of Africans residing outside Africa, and with immigration to other parts of the world continue to rise, should the twenty-first century Pan-Africanism

recognize (digital) African diaspora as African's sixth region?³ While we acknowledge the existence of immigration within Africa countries, our focus in the last part of this discussion will briefly examine the intersection between ICTs and Africans in the diaspora.

ICTS, diaspora and Pan-Africanism

The availability and accessibility of information and communication technologies has permitted and facilitated multifarious Pan-African discourses in the cyberspace among African diaspora communities. These discourses possess the potential to shape and alter diasporas' perception of Africa and of their host nations, resulting in a complex imaginary global relation to an imaginary global reality that is far more multifaceted than the imagined communities envisaged by Benedict Anderson's print capitalism (Anderson, 1991). Whether the affordability and accessibility of ICTs contest the assertion that immigrants, as a subaltern group, is devoid of neither "the epistemic capital nor the political position to have a voice because both the capital and power have remained in the hands of the dominant" is another question altogether (Mitra, 2001, p. 31, see also Spivak, 1988).

We do not wish, in this discussion, to delve into an elaborate discussion regarding the formation of multilayered African diasporas, but it is instructive to note how voluntary immigration to the Western world skyrocketed almost at the same time when most African countries were becoming independent in the 1960s. In the United States, for instance, the 1960 repeal of policies discriminating against non-Caucasian immigrants potentially allowed more Africans to immigrate to North America. If we examine the repeal of such policies, the U.S rising and alluring capitalistic economy, and a lifestyle packaged and exported to be admired against Africa's increased political turmoil, disrupted social fabric, economic difficulties, we are not surprised that the number of African-born immigrants in the US and other developed countries has continued to rise. Between 1980 and 2000, for example, African-born immigrants in the US rose increased from 199, 723 to 881,000.

The 2000 U.S. census recorded 1.8 million African-born immigrants in the United States (US Census, 2006). There was an annual flow of 84,226 Africans to Europe and 35,404 to the United States between 1995 and 2000. A 2006 UNESCO Institute of Statistics Report indicates that tertiary students from sub-Saharan Africa are the most mobile in the world, with one out of every 16 – or 5.6 percent - studying abroad.

This report adds that students from sub-Saharan Africa are the most mobile in the world. Note that these figures only reflect official immigration patterns. But we must also add that despite these figures, not all African immigrants become diasporans, as pointed out by Zeleza (2009, p. 41):

Given the rapidity of transnational movements today, the compression of time and space spawned by the information and communication technologies of contemporary globalization, the unprecedented possibilities of traversing and maintaining links across national and regional boundaries, at what point and in what ways do African's recent emigrants become newdiasporas?... A precondition for the transition from a migrant into a diasporan is *prolonged* settlement, followed by *permanent* resettlement in a new host country. Neither condition need be planned... At issue, then, is not *intention*, but the *duration* of stay, the separation of the there of the home country and the here of the host country.

But despite the duration of stay, being away from home and negotiating the dynamics of a host country is characterized by a sense of unsettlement – a state of never arriving and a possibility of never returning. Such is the state where the intersection of ICTs, diaspora, and Pan-Africanism is illustrative of complex formation of multiple digitized links between home countries and the host ones, creating expressive forums where the nature of these links can be rearranged, amalgamated and computed in many ways (See for example Mitra, 2001; Appadurai, 1990). Using social media Pan-Africanism is legitimized by the fact that the dominant narratives have for centuries conveyed an exotic, monolithic and stereotypical image of Africa. Previously, challenging these narratives was difficult, especially when traditional media – newspapers, radio, and television – operated from the model of one-to-many, rarely allowing feedback. As Mitra (2001, p. 31) notes “The barrier placed by lack of ‘air time’ in traditional media is replaced by nearly infinite air time in cyberspace. In virtual place the voices are uttered at any time and can be heard simultaneously. In cyberspace, the speakers do not have to wait for their turn to speak but can release a web page or post a message on a message board at any time they please and anyone can read the message as soon as it is released.”

ICTs facilitate a relatively open and unrestrictive mode of expression, allowing multiple voices by many individual Africans to flourish. Even more, they serve as conduits with a potential of carrying

African voices beyond online sites whose dialogues address issues of individual African countries.

Conclusion

In this digital millennium, scholars are challenged to address the degree to which Pan-Africanism, whose construction must recognize ideas generated even by virtual African communities, can be conceived in terms of a documentary process - a kind of documentation in which global flows of dynamic traces are inscribed upon the global Africa. With the explosion of new communication technologies, Pan-Africanism has become a matter of grafting – even virtually - a set of concepts relating to trace, inscription, memory, stories, and folklore, upon a new conceptual territory (Appiah, 1997; Appiah, 2006).

Sometimes, this is expressed literally, as in the case of musical recordings, evident perhaps in the music of Femi and Fela Kuti, and sometimes not so literally, as in the expressions of cuisine, fashion, or styles of personal interaction, modulations of gesture, and tone of voice. This is also creating a virtual community. Likewise, we find this in the writings and recordings of mediated traces produced through the expressions of Africans in the diaspora, in the image of a street vendor, blazoning a T-Shirt declaring “Obama for President” while selling pirated DVDs announcing that Obama is an African Son (Wasserman, 2011).

With the new communication technologies, a Pan-Africanism tone adopted by Kwame Nkrumah in a radio broadcast in 1960 Ghana can now reverberate in the 21st century from, say, a Miss Africa USA website, where one is greeted, from the background, by the melody of Angelique Kidjo’s song: *Mama Africa*. The changes in ICTs and their resulting impact in the expression of the Pan-Africanism spirit have not changed the Pan-African spirit itself. Instead, these new technologies, favoring instant communication, have opened new Pan-Africanism opportunities, making it far from being either void or still-born.

(Footnotes)

¹ See Bernard Muralis (1975). *Les Contre-Litteratures*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France

² The ten flatteners identified by Friedman are: the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the public use of Netscape in 1995, work flow software, open-sourcing, out-sourcing, off-shoring, supply-chaining, in-forming, and the steroids- digital, mobile, personal and virtual technology.

³ Other five regions being North, South, East, West, and Central Africa

⁴ We acknowledge that there are sites serving ethno-specific and nation/state-specific needs as well.

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