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Prince. Prof Mesembe Ita Edet (1965-2023)
He served as the Scribe of the CSP for several years until his passing. He will forever be remembered for his immense contributions to the movement.

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A cold wind from the north and the making of Lembede's Afrikanism: Notes on the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition and the Philosophy of Garveyism in South Africa

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Abstract

Literature on the radical indigenous resistance tradition, which predated the emergence of Garveyism as a form of Afrikan philosophy of liberation is scarce in South African politics and history. Robert Edgar and Robert Vinson have contributed to the literature on the influence of Garveyism in South Africa in the 1920s. However, their scholarship does not delve into the emergence of the radical indigenous resistance tradition which was a reaction to conquest since 1652 in wars of colonization in South Africa. This paper seeks to remedy this gap by discussing this radical indigenous resistance tradition which we designate as the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition. This paper will utilize the historical analytical framework to provide a brief outline of the cause and elements of this tradition. We will rely on historical research design to discuss how, upon its arrival in the 1920s, Garveyism regaled this radical indigenous resistance tradition. The first objective of the paper is to foreground the convergence of the intellectual and political endeavours of people of Afrikan descent (continent and diaspora) in their struggle against global white supremacy. The second objective is to contribute to the eventual hegemony of the combined radicalism of the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition and Garveyism which is a marginalized issue in the literature on Afrikan nationalism and the Black Radical Tradition in South Africa. This paper will provide a brief intellectual portrait of Lembede to argue that through his political philosophy of Afrikanism he encapsulated the convergence of the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition and Garveyism. This is in order to lay the foundation for the foregrounding of Lembede's idea of Afrika for the Afrikans as an alternative paradigm regarding the national question in South Africa.

Keywords: Lembede, Afrikanism, Marcus, Garvey, Garveyism, South Africa.

Introduction

There is a dialectical relation between the catastrophic coming of foreigners to Afrika, and the emergence of the tradition of resistance. We are not in this paper following orthodox Marxism (as formulated by the likes of Karl Kausty and Lenin relying on the writings of Karl Marx after his death) and its formulation of dialectical materialism and historical materialism which sees resistance as the struggle between antagonistic material classes (CASTORIADIS 1979, FROMM 1967). Rather, our approach is fully grounded in the Afrikan-centred paradigm (ANI 1994). This paradigm comprises of thought and scholarship which are premised on the Afrikan worldview and culture as formulated by the likes of

Marimba Ani (1994) and Vulindlela Wobogo (2011). Following the historical path blazed by Diop (1967), we posit that to have a solid comprehension of the emergence of the tradition of resistance on the continent and the diaspora, Kemet must be foregrounded (Kemet is the ancient Afrikan name for what is currently called Egypt). By foregrounding Kemet we imply according historical and methodological priority to the ancient highest expression of Afrikan civilization. This is because the first invasion laid the foundation for the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition on the continent, which we will discuss later, and Garveyism in the diaspora took place in Kemet around 1630 BC. By Garveyism, we imply a race-first ideology and grassroots (ROLINSON 2012) black mass movement (WEST 2002), which are attributed to Marcus Garvey as a Black Nationalist (MARTIN 1986).

This paper will not conduct a genealogical analysis of the relation between the idea of Kemet as the land of black people and the Black Radical Tradition, especially as formulated by Cedric Robinson (2000). According to Robinson, the Black Radical Tradition is a mass resistance tradition of struggle which traces its emergence to the enslaved Afrikans in the diaspora who resisted their enslavement and wanted to create a world premised on Afrikan ontology and epistemology (ROBINSON 2000). We will, however, rely on two conceptualizations of the Black Radical Tradition as formulated by Anthony Bougues (2015), which within the Caribbean context is the home of Garveyism; and Cedric Robinson (2000), within a location in which the Garvey movement reached its apex as it was spreading to South Africa in the 1920s. The overarching postulation of this paper is that when Garveyism arrived in South Africa around the 1920s as the highest expression of the Black Radical Tradition of resistance against white supremacy from the diaspora, it infused itself into an already existing tradition of resistance, which we designate the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition.

In this sense, we proceed from the fundamental premise that every thought emanates from experience, which informs it. The Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition, which emerged in South Africa as early as 1510 with the Battle of Salt River was a continuation of a long resistance tradition indigenous to Afrika since the first invasion of Kemet by the Hyksos around 1630 BC (CARRUTHERS 1999, WOBOGO 2011). Anton Lembede will be utilized in this paper as an example of an Afrikan nationalist who encapsulated the convergence of the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition and Garveyism in the 1940s when he formulated the political philosophy of Afrikanism. By proclaiming that Afrikans are native to Afrika as their motherland and that they cannot be put on an equal footing with non-Afrikans, he was formulating the elements of what we designate the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition and combing it with Garveyism's battle-cry of "Africa for the Africans, those at home and abroad" (EWING 2014). This tradition was reinvigorated by Garveyism in the 1920s, which Lembede embraced in the 1940s to formulate his political philosophy of Afrikanism. It is in this sense that we posit that Lembede's Afrikanism comprises the elements of the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition and Garveyism.

The point is to demonstrate that Lembede was a diligent student of Afrikan history and thought as opposed to the caricatured portrait of him as a hopeless student of European Romantic thought, and South African white settler right-wing thought with its racism and fascism (KA MSUMZA AND EDGAR 2018, SOSKE 2017, GERHART 1978). By positing that Lembede's Afrikanism is a composite philosophy comprising of indigenous roots of resistance through the oral history and the infusion of the resistance tradition from the diaspora stemming from Garveyism, this paper seeks to eschew the treatment of Afrika/South Africa as an intellectual and political *tabula rasa*. The over-glorification of the coming of the Negroes to South Africa as role models and liberators (MASILELA 2013, VINSON 2006) tends to deprive the Indigenous people of their intellectual and political agency. Methodologically it foregrounds the diaspora at the expense of the continent (VINSON 2009).

This paper will strike a balance between the continent and diaspora (intellectually and politically). This implies that we want to formulate the idea of an intellectual interchange/dialogue between people of Afrikan descent who are victims of European domination due to the system of global white supremacy (MILLS 1997, WELSING 1991) and the global colour line (VINSON 2006). An intellectual and political interchange can only occur in a situation where two participants are sharing ideas. Afrikans on the continent did not wait for Afrikans from the diaspora to engage in a resistance tradition and formulate ideas about it. As much as Afrikans from the continent admired Afrikans from the diaspora, they exercised their own intellectual and political agency.

It is in this sense that we posit that it is not a contradiction in terms of arguing that Garveyism regalanised radicalism among Afrikans in South Africa rather than creating one *ex nihilo*. The seeds of a resistance tradition were already sown by the time Garveyism arrived in the 1920s in South Africa. These seeds were sown by conquest since 1652 by European conquerors in wars of colonialism (RAMOSE 2018), which accounts for the emergence of the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition which predated Garveyism in South Africa. This paper is divided into four sections. We now turn to the first section.

Garvey and the Garvey movement

Anthony Bogues (2015) has, within the context of the Caribbean intellectual tradition, divided the Black Radical Tradition into the heretics and the prophets. The heretics are Afrikan thinkers who went through the process of Western education but rejected the orthodox Enlightenment traditions' racism and white supremacy. Many of these heretics were intellectuals and activists such as C L R James and George Padmore. Marcus Garvey is a figure of the Black Radical Tradition who combined both intellectual production and activism just like James and Padmore. For the purposes of Garvey's short portrait, we will rely on a book by Rupert Lewis called *Marcus Garvey(2018)*. Marcus Garvey was born on 17 August 1887 and died on 10 June 1940. According to Rupert Lewis (2018,1), Garvey's father was an avid reader who also collected many books. This led Garvey to inherit a love for reading and collecting his own books. Garvey began his activism in labour agitation and journalism. He furthered his education in England at Birkbeck College (RUPERT 2018).

The emergence of Garveyism and the Garvey movement can be traced to Garvey's extensive travelling and his experience of racism. As Rupert (2018,13) states it "Wherever he had travelled he encountered the predatory consequences of European capitalism and its global expansion, which had devastating consequences for Africa. He realized that the struggle was a global one and he elaborated a strategy to match the scale of the challenge". This strategy entailed the formation of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and its paper the *Negro World* which spread around the globe to challenge global white supremacy. Garvey was a black nationalist who emphasized the standpoint of race rather than class (RUPERT 2018). Garvey foregrounded several ideas that Lembede inherited. This is how Rupert (2018,14) captures Garvey's philosophy of race "there was some difference I humanity, and that there were different races, each having its own separate and distinct social life". Garvey further argued that "Africa is still your only hope, that without an independent Africa- without a powerful Africa you are lost" (RUPERT 2018,37). "The Garvey movement was an historical praxis of anti-imperialist struggle geared towards the freedom of race" (RUPERT 2018,93) This is, in essence, the core of Garveyism which arrived in South Africa in the 1920s and was embraced by many Afrikans such as Anton Lembede in the 1940s in the form of "Africa for the Africans". We now turn to Lembede to discuss how he embraced Garveyism to formulate his political philosophy of Afrikanism.

Lembede and Afrika for the Afrikans in our lifetime

In this section, we want to utilize Lembede as an example of an Afrikan nationalist who encapsulated the convergence of the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition and Garveyism. His political philosophy of Afrikanism embodies this convergence. The point of this section of the paper is to demonstrate the influence of Garveyism on Lembede. We will focus on ideas and evidence by other thinkers to argue that Lembede was influenced by Garveyism and the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition. For this purpose, we will rely on a book called *Freedom in Our Lifetime (2015)* a collection of Lembede's writings as edited by Robert Edgar and Luyanda Ka Msumza.

Anton Lembede was born on 21 January 1914 on a farm in Eston and died on 29 July 1947, an untimely and devastating death, especially regarding the direction of Afrikan nationalism and liberation in South Africa. He studied for a BA, an LLB and an MA in philosophy. This was regarded as an intellectual feat by his generation such as his close friend A P Mda. Lembede proudly proclaimed that "I am proud of my peasant background. I am one with Mother Africa's dark soil" (KA MSUMZA AND EDGAR 2018,13). This is an early indication of his Afrikan nationalism which he called Afrikanism. The idea of the dark soil prefigures a race pride which was fundamental to Garveyism. Being one with Mother Afrika and dark soil is the prefiguration of his love for Afrika, which is also foundational to Garveyism. This was expressed very well by Garvey in an essay called *African fundamentalism* which Lembede would come across later while reading *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*.

Lembede became one of the leading intellectuals to draft the Youth League policy of the African National Congress in the 1940s. In line with racial nationalism of Garveyism, this policy which bore his influence stated that “the conflict in South Africa...was fundamentally a racial one between whites and blacks. Because whites had defined their domination in terms of race, this led blacks to view his problems and those of his country through the perspective of race” (KA MSUMZA AND EDGAR 2018,34). By this time Lembede was reading widely and would have come across the literature on Garveyism, which arrived in the 1920s. This formulation of the conflict in South Africa in terms of race rather than class is a manifestation of the anti-communism and race-first ideology (MARTIN 1986) in which the Garvey movement was embedded, and which Lembede embraced.

We know that Lembede regarded communism as a foreign ideology and saw adherence to it as a symptom of a pathological state on the part of Afrikans (KA MSUMZA AND EDGAR 2018). “There is ample oral evidence that Lembede was familiar with Garvey, and he frequently peppered his speeches with quotations from The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey” (KA MSUMZA AND EDGAR 2018, 41). It is a well-known fact that Garvey was influenced by the father of Pan-Africanism, namely Edward Wilmot Blyden. One of the ideas Garvey got from Blyden is race pride. “Lembede’s ideas, for instance echo those of Edward Wilmot Blyden, the West Indian educator who wrote on the creative and distinctive genius of the Negro race and the necessity for Africans to express racial pride (KA MSUMZA AND EDGAR 2018, 41). Thus, Lembede’s Afrikanism not only emphasizes race pride just like the Garvey movement but accentuated the uniqueness of the African spirit, thus formulating racial nationalism which excludes all non-Afrikans such as whites, Indians and some Coloureds who reject their Afrikan heritage.

Commenting on Lembede’s idea of *uncompromising* Afrika for the Afrikans Edgar and Ka Msumza (2018,57) state that “His (Lembede’s) advocacy of an exclusive African nationalism that Africans had to emancipate themselves psychologically and rely on their own leadership in order to challenge white domination...” This exclusive Afrikan nationalism, which was exemplified by the slogan of the Garvey movement in the form of “Africa for the Africans those at home and abroad” was the core of Lembede’s Afrikanism. Lembede encapsulated Garvey’s battle cry of Afrika for the Afrikans by stating that “Africa is a Blackman’s country. Africans are the natives of Africa and they have inhabited Africa, their Motherland, from time immemorial. African belongs to them” (LEMBEDE 2015,139). When Africans in the 1920s in South Africa envisioned the arrival of Garvey so that whites can be cleared out of Afrika (EWING 2014, VINSON 2009), they were expressing what Lembede will incorporate in his political philosophy of Afrikanism in the 1940s.

The Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition which we will discuss in detail in the next section, was spearheaded by *amaqaba* as Afrikans in South Africa who rejected whites and white culture as imposed by white settlers since conquest in

1652. These Afrikans who were mainly peasants held on to the idea that *abelumbi/abelungu* or whites are not *Abantu* or Afrikans/natives. For them, whites as *abelumbi/abelungu* were sorcerers and witches who deserved to be hurled back into the sea as their presence desecrated the land of the Afrikans. They emphasized the antagonism between *Abantu* and *abelumbi/abelungu* and called for whites to be hurled into the sea where they came from. Lembede "...mentioned men like Hintsana and Ntsikana who had tried for years fighting against superior weapons, to hurl the White man into the sea" (Lembede 2015: 128). It is in these words that Lembede captured the second element of the tradition which is the idea of "*bulala abathakathi*"/kill the wizards/witches (MPHAHLELE 2002). Lembede(2015,181) captured the first element of the tradition which is the antagonism between *Abantu*/Afrikans and *abelumbi/abelungu*/whites by arguing that "Africans are natives of Africa, they and Africa are one, their relation to Africa is superior to the relations of other sections of the populations...*it is evidently wrong to place Africans on a footing of equality with other racial groups at present residing in Africa*" (our italics). Lembede (2015,137) further argued that "Now from time immemorial Africa has developed her own peculiar plants, animals and man-the African Native or Aborigine...*This African spirit can realize itself through, and can be interpreted by, Africans only. Foreigners of whatever brand and hue can never properly and correctly interpret this spirit owing to its uniqueness, peculiarity and particularity*"(our italics). We now turn to the next section to discuss the cause and elements of the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition as embraced by Lembede.

Azania and the catastrophic coming of European strangers

A race of invaders that arrived as "a cold wind from the north" (WOBOGO 2011) inaugurated Afrika's time of trouble by conquering Kemet in 1630 BC. The Hyksos who commenced the conquest of Afrika began in North Afrika which is still dominated by their successors-in-title, namely the Arabs. Southern Afrika on the other hand is currently dominated by another race, the Europeans, who became white settlers and have stayed through land dispossession since 1652. What these forces share is that they were invaders conquering black people who inhabited lands they named after their colour and race, which is black. According to Diop (1973), Kemet, which is in North Afrika designates the land of the blacks, or the land of black people. Motsoko Pheko (1984) posits that Azania, which was renamed South Africa by white settlers implies the land of black people (CHAMI 2021). While in this paper we are concerned with the conquest of Azania by these white strangers (KUNENE 2017) we contextualize this conquest in terms of *longue-durée* historical analytical framework. This is because the conquest of Kemet was not just an event but a structure (WOLFE 2006) of domination which persisted as each member of the strange race from the north took turns to dominate Afrika since the pioneering Hyksos laid the fundament with their conquest of Kemet.

The Portuguese attempted to enhance the structure of domination in 1510 when they embarked on a race war of land dispossession against the Indigenous people of Azania. The Battle of Salt River in 1510 marks the recommencement of race wars of colonialism by European conquerors as a strange race emerging from the sea who deserve to be returned to it through a liberation war. It is in this sense that Afrikans must turn the logic of elimination of settler colonialism (WOLFE 2006) against whites and other non-Afrikans. In line with the doctrine of Discovery which began with the issuing of the papal bull *Romanus Pontifex* in 1455, the white strangers embarked on a conquest of the land of the Indigenous people (RAMOSE 2018). This doctrine of Discovery contained conquest as one of its elements (MILLER 2011). Ironically, this doctrine also contained christianity as another element which was inverted by the religious faction of Garveyism in the form of the Israelites under Enoch Mgijima (EDGAR 1977, 1982).

In other words, we are aware that the Black Radical Tradition commenced in South Africa in the 1890s with Ethiopianism as a form of religious Afrikan nationalism, but due to the brevity of this paper we will confine ourselves to the arrival of Garveyism in the 1920s and its impact until the 1960s after the untimely and devastating death of Lembede in 1947. This is mainly because we are concerned with the secular dimension of Garveyism. But this does not imply that the religious dimension of the Black Radical Tradition can be divorced from its secular dimension as formulated through the political philosophy of Afrikanism by Lembede. We are aware that Lembede himself just like Garvey was a christian. This is one of the unfortunate limitations of the radicalism of Lembede and Garvey. This is because being grounded in the christian tradition as an element of the doctrine of Discovery, Lembede was not fully grounded in the Afrikan worldview and culture (ANI 1994) as fully expressed by *amaqaba* (*Amaqaba* are Afrikans who rejected whites and their culture which came with conquest) he was familiar with due to his peasant upbringing.

Lembede was not firmly grounded in what Kunene calls “African Cosmology” (Masilela 2013). But we believe that just like many thinkers had Lembede lived long enough, he was going to outgrow christianity. This is because he had already rejected communism as a foreign ideology (LEMBEDE 2015). We will not delve into a detailed analysis of conquest and the series of wars of reconquest of the land by the Indigenous conquered people conquered in wars of colonialism since 1652 (RAMOSE 2007). This is not to suggest that we prioritize structure at the expense of agency. While land dispossession as a form of material conquest is foundational to all effects of conquest, we will focus more on the epistemic ramifications of conquest.

This paper's fundamental point of departure is that conquest as a structure and not merely an event of the past took two forms, namely land dispossession and epistemicide (RAMOSE 2005). For the purposes of wars of resistance, it is important to note that there was a long series of wars of resistance for over “three hundred years” (JAFFE 1967). These wars of reconquest began as early as 1510 and continued until the 1890s when Ethiopianism began with its slogan of Afrika for the Afrikans. The last kingdoms which represented centres of Afrikan power

and indigenous resistance were demolished in the 1890s (MAGUBANE 1979, 1996) by the whites in wars of colonization (RAMOSE 2007). As Mazisi Kunene (2017, 216) states it “Have you judged correctly these bloodthirsty foreigners? Such people dig deep into a nation’s life. They strip the wealth and power that once was its greatness”.

By absurdly hoarding land dispossessed from the Indigenous people they made Afrikans to pose the ethical question “How can one man possess land as though it was life itself? Is land not the vast endlessness where man lives?” (KUNENE 2017, 215). The possession of land as though it was life itself was a manifestation of the culture of scarcity, which characterizes the “northern cradle” (DIOP 1973) and the “icemen inheritance” (BRADLEY 1991). It was also a manifestation of racial capitalism (ROBINSON 2000) which laid the foundation for the white settler “political economy of race and class” (MAGUBANE 1979).

By conquering the last kingdoms of the Indigenous people, the white strangers were violently introducing the former to a strange economic system built on racism and an irrational pursuit of profit. The destruction of the kingdoms in the 1890s represented the epitome of the attempted killing of *Sechaba/Isizwe* of *Batho/Abantu* by *abelungu*. The latter were regarded as *abelumbi* which implies the wizards or witches. This was because of the powerful and disastrous way these white strangers attempted to mercilessly destroy Afrika and the Afrikans. Thus, when *Batho/Abantu* were retaliating they were informed by the idea of “*bulala abathakathi*”/kill the wizards/witches (MPHAHLELE 2002) which we posit is at the core of the native sphere as opposed to the white settler sphere. The native sphere comprises mainly of the culture and ideas of Afrikan fundamentalists such as *amaqaba* while the white settler sphere is premised on European culture and ideas embraced by *amakholwa* led by their white masters. This idea of “*bulala abathakathi*” is the element of the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition which was transformed into the battle cry of Afrika for the Afrikans (EWING 2014) with the arrival of Garveyism and both this tradition just like the Garvey movement pursued the *en masse* expulsion of all white strangers as opposed to co-existing with them as equals.

This is how Kunene (2017, 2016) captures the core of this tradition: “It was Mgobhozi the great hero who stood up and said...I feel it wiser to kill at once the fearful vermin (white strangers). Destroying it now before it devastates our lands and race”. The second element of this tradition was the antagonism between *Batho/Abantu* and *abelumbi/abelungu*. So, when Garveyism arrived in the 1920s this antagonism between *Abantu* and *abelumbi/abelungu* (i.e., *abelumbi/abelungu* are wizards and witches and are not *Abantu* and will never be *Abantu*) and the above-mentioned idea of “*bulala abathakathi*”/kill the witches/whites were the two dominant elements which were the core of the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition. It is in this sense that we posit that Garveyism did not create radicalism in South Africa upon its arrival in the 1920s. It merely regalanised a radical resistance tradition with indigenous roots and based on indigenous experience of conquest and white supremacy since 1652. We now turn to discuss the arrival of Garveyism in South Africa in the 1920s and its impact on South African politics and Afrikans.

***Abantu/Batho* and the New Negroes: Notes on the ties that bind**

Scholarship on people of African descent tends to emphasize either the continent or the diaspora (VINSON 2019, HARTMAN 2004, MAFEJE 2009) . There is a need therefore to endeavour to strike a balance between Afrika and the diaspora. Most African-American scholars who write about people of Afrikan descent tend to marginalize Afrika in their analysis. On the other hand, Afrikans on the continent tend to marginalize the diaspora unless they are discussing the condition of people of Afrikan descent through the lens of Pan-Africanism. Because of the orthodox genealogy of Pan-Africanism as originating in the diaspora, Afrikans on the continent are compelled to foreground the diaspora. A current exception to this African American methodological flaw is Robert Trent Vinson. Vinson has conducted an extensive study on the relation between African Americans and Afrikans especially in South Africa. His extensive study is epitomized by his book *The Americans are Coming* (2019). In this book Vinson provides an extensive analysis of the immense influence African Americans had on Afrikans in South Africa since the 1780s with Jubilee Singers' arrival in South Africa. This is way before the emergence of Ethiopianism in the 1890s through African American priests such as Henry McNeal Turner.

The ties that bind people of Afrikan descent such as race and global white supremacy are endowed with an extensive history. This paper will draw from Vinson's scholarship. The point is not to register a critical review of his scholarship but to build critically on his foundation. Suffice it to say that because of his lack of a nuanced comprehension of South African politics and history he could not make the significant distinction between several liberation traditions and their political visions. This fundamental flaw conduces Vinson to valorize the Congress tradition of Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo and to foreground it as part of the Black Radical Tradition in South Africa along the lines of Lembede, Robert Sobukwe and Steve Biko. We will correct this flaw by foregrounding Lembede within the Black Radical Tradition in South Africa (his Afrikanist stream as opposed to the Azanian stream of Sobukwe and Biko) outside of the Congress tradition thus correcting the conflation fallacy by Vinson. The Black Radical Tradition in South Africa as represented by Lembede is premised on several ideas.

These ideas include the foregrounding of the nationhood and sovereignty of Afrikans. Lembede foregrounds this by arguing that Afrika is the motherland of Afrikans as the natives and that Afrikans are one (LEMBEDE 2015). Sobukwe and Biko continued this thought by using the metaphor of the African tree and table, respectively (DLADLA 2018,2021). The emphasis on the majority status of the Afrikans and their right to determine the direction of power and societal organization is another idea that characterizes the Black Radical Tradition in South Africa (both the Afrikanist and Azanian streams). Lembede, Sobukwe and Biko are all clear about this majority position and its power. The fundamental disparity among these figures of the Black Radical Tradition in South Africa is their political visions (the Afrikanist vision and Azanian vision).

Lembede on the premise of the battle cry of Afrika for the Afrikans (EWING 2014), by extension Europe for the Europeans envisioned a “New Africa” (LEMBEDE 2015) without Europeans/white settlers and Asians/Indians as non-Afrikans (i.e., The *en masse* expulsion thesis of non-Afrikans). This was his *uncompromising* idea of Afrika for the Afrikans/Natives only, which was informed by the antagonism between *Batho/Abantu* and *abelumbi/abelungu* and “*bulala abathakathi*” as central to the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition. This is because Lembede was familiar with the above-mentioned ideas through the oral tradition of Afrikan history as mastered by the likes of Mazisi Kunene. We know that Lembede was proud not only of Africa but his peasant background (LEMBEDE 2015, KA MSUMZA AND EDGAR 2018), which would have exposed him to oral history.

Sobukwe and Biko, on the other hand, envisioned post-white supremacy Azania with whites who would be disrobed of their whiteness and their “settleness” by returning the land and pledging allegiance to Afrika and accepting Afrikan power (DLADLA 2021). These white strangers will cease to be strangers and become *Batho/Abantu/Africans* (i.e., the conversion thesis of non-Afrikans on Afrikan terms). They will no longer be the witches and wizards that they have been since time immemorial in terms of *amaqaba* and the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition. This naïve and dangerous fantasy of the Azanian stream is called liberatory nonracialism (DLADLA 2018) as opposed to the hegemonic liberal nonracialism of the Congress tradition *ala* the rainbow nation fiction as epitomized by figures such as Albert Luthuli and Nelson Mandela. We will not waste our time on these two figures of the Black Liberal Tradition (pioneered by white settlers but led by *amakholwa* stemming from the white settler sphere) dominant in the so-called post-apartheid South Africa to the immense detriment of the Indigenous people.

It is the lack of this knowledge which makes Vinson’s scholarship on Garveyism and South African politics both useful and problematic. The arrival of the Garveyism in South Africa can be traced to black sailors who arrived in South African in cities such as Cape Town in the 1920s (VINSON 2019). This is how Vinson (2009,134) states it: “ a combination of black sailors, ships, and newspapers—the era’s most effective means of pan-African communication—transmitted Garveyism into South Africa.” These black sailors from the diaspora were the conveyor-belt of Garveyite literature as epitomized by the *Negro World*. So *Abantu/Batho* in South Africa met the ideas of Negroes through the Universal Negro Improvement Association’s newspaper. This newspaper, called the *Negro World* exposed *Abantu/Batho* to the tribulations of the Negroes in the diaspora. It did not take long before *Abantu/Batho* realized the common suffering they shared with the Negroes. Central to the ties that bind them (MAGUBANE 1987) is the global colour line (VINSON 2006) which was drawn by the system of racism/white supremacy (WELSING 1991).

This system of global white supremacy is premised on a racist social ontology which deprived both *Abantu/Batho* and the Negroes of personhood and humanity (MILLS 1997, WILDERSON 2020). Whites (the Pumpkin Race) arrogated to themselves personhood and denied it to the people of Afrikan descent (the Palm Race)(KUNENE 2017). The United States of America and South Africa are both white settler colonies which are premised on the “organizing grammar of race” and “logic of elimination” (WOLFE 2016). The Negroes were viewed by *Abantu/Batho* as both role models of modernity and liberators from white supremacy in South Africa (VINSON 2013). According to Vinson (2019), Garvey was aware of the condition of *Abantu/Batho* in South Africa. Apparently, Garvey even thought that segregation in South Africa was worse than other forms of racism in the world.

Garveyism, as diffused by West Indians and black sailors, was premised on the idea of Afrika for the Afrikans (EWING 2014). It is this battle cry that informed the sentiment of the Americans arriving and helping *Abantu/Batho* clear whites from South Africa (VINSON 2019). *Abantu/Batho* who admired the Negroes they called Americans believed that through Garvey they will have enough ammunition to kill whites in South Africa (VINSON 2006) and redeem Afrika for people of Afrikan descent. This is in line with the UNIA slogan which epitomizes race-first Black nationalism of Garveyism, namely “Africa for the Africans those at home and abroad” (MARTIN 1986).

The militancy of Garveyism embodied by the sentiment of ridding Afrika and South Africa in particular at the time of all whites is what regaled the idea of “*bulala abathakathi*” and the antagonism between *Abantu/Batho* and *abelumbi/abelungu*, which reached its apex with Poqo’s one settler, one bullet battle cry in the 1960s. This is how Vinson (2009,135) states it: “Garveyism spread quickly in South Africa. In the port city of East London, there were persistent rumors that the “Americans” would arrive in ships with weapons to help Africans kill whites”. Vinson (2009,135) further states that “Garvey had predicted that the “bloodiest of all wars is about to arrive” and that the UNIA would soon force European colonizers to leave Africa.” Therein lies the substance and influence of Garveyism on Afrikans such as Lembede in South Africa. The radicalization and the endowment of *Abantu/Batho* with militancy exemplified the influence of Garveyism on Afrikans in South Africa from the 1920s.

Garveyism spread across South Africa since the first UNIA chapters were established in Cape Town (VINSON 2019). As many as 24 chapters were established in South Africa from the 1920s (VINSON 2019). While it commenced in Cape Town, Garveyism spread to the rural areas of Transkei and to cities such as Kimberly. We agree with Vinson (2006) that indeed due to its diffusion and Afrikan agency, *Abantu/Batho* were able to indigenize Garveyism. According to some scholars (EDGAR 1976) there was an infusion of millennialism into Garveyism in South Africa. The Wellington movement and the Israelites are an examples of how Garveyism regaled and was indigenized by *Abantu/Batho* to confront white supremacy in South Africa. The Wellington movement, which

Afrikan women embraced rebuffed colonial authority by creating independent institutions such as schools and churches (VINSON 2019) in preparation of the elimination of all whites in South Africa. The Israelites attempted to restore land but were massacred by the Smuts government during the 1921 Bulhoek Massacre (EDGAR 1983).

Garveyism spread through local newspapers such as *Abantu/Batho*, *African world* and *Workers Herald*. Garveyism spread across South Africa and was premised on the idea “to regain their lost independence in a modern, regenerated continent of “Africa for Africans” (VINSON 2009,133). Through the help of the Negroes, *Abantu/Batho* will destroy white supremacy in South Africa and “A modern black state would replace the segregationist regime, ushering in a new dispensation: “You are not going to pay taxes nor dip cattle. . . Forces are coming, armies coming from America to drive the white people from Africa, to go to their own country” (VINSON 2009,142). We now turn to the last section to discuss briefly the unfortunate decline of this radicalism and militancy in “post-Apartheid South Africa”.

The death of Lembede and the decline of the radicalism of the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition and Garveyism in South Africa

The unfortunate and untimely death of Lembede on 29 July 1947 marked the decline of the combined radicalism of the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition and Garveyism in South Africa. The ideological influence of Lembede in the ANC Youth League was suppressed by his close friend and ideological rival, A P Mda. The uncompromising Afrikanism of Lembede, which was premised on the antagonism between *Abantu/Afrikans* and *abelumbi/abelungu/whites* (Afrika for the Afrikans/ the fallacy of non-European unity) and the hurling of the whites into the sea (*bulala abathakathi*)/ “white are not here to stay” was replaced with christian liberal humanism of Mda in the form of “broad nationalism” (KA MSUMZA AND EDGAR 2018). At the core of this broad nationalism as the antithesis of Lembede’s Afrikanism is the universal brotherhood of christianity and humanism, thus the idea that “white are here to stay” in South Africa.

“Mda inserted a section, “Two Streams of African nationalism”, in which he rejected the one variant of African nationalism identified with Marcus Garvey’s slogan- “Africa for the Africans”. It is based on the “Quit Africa” slogan and on the cry “Hurl the Whiteman into the sea”. This brand of African nationalism is extreme and ultra-revolutionary. Because Lembede often referred to Garvey in his speeches, this was a subtle way for Mda to signal a departure from some of Lembede’s positions” (KA MSUMZA AND EDGAR 2018, 53). The dangerous ramification of this naive ideological mess and unforgivable betrayal of Lembede by Mda was the sowing of the seed of radical liberalism which diverged from Garveyism and the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition. Mda’s broad nationalism, which welcomed whites in South Africa, provided the seed for Robert Sobukwe’s African tree and Steve Biko’s Afrikan table metaphors (DLADLA 2021, MODIRI 2021). These two metaphors which embody radical liberalism are

a detrimental departure from Lembede's uncompromising Afrikanism. In this sense, unlike Lembede, Sobukwe and Biko were not Garveyites. These christian and humanistic metaphors are premised on the acceptance of whites provided, they pledge allegiance to Afrika and they accept Afrikan majority power and democracy. Instead of hurling the whites into the sea (*bulala abathakathi*) these metaphors register a naïve desire to accommodate whites on Afrikan terms. The Azanian critical tradition (a philosophical refinement of the Azanian political tradition of Sobukwe and Biko who adopted the name Azania in 1965 and rejected South Africa) as *forged* by Ndumiso Dladla (2021) and Joel Modiri (2021) encapsulates this dangerous betrayal of the combined radicalism of the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition and Garveyism as embodied by Lembede.

This Azanian tradition whose seed was sown by Mda with broad nationalism is currently in ideological contestation with the Congress tradition (based on the Congress Alliance which adopted the Freedom Charter in 1955 and fights for a non-racial democratic South Africa *ala* "rainbow nation") regarding the resolution of the national question in South Africa. With the exception of POQO's battle-cry of "one settler ,one bullet" and Josias Madzunya who continued the tradition of Garveyism in the PAC but lost to Sobukwe's influence, Lembede's Afrikanism is marginalized. This paper hopes to resuscitate this Afrikan political philosophy of liberation as the final solution to the national question in South Africa. The fundamental objective is to revive the uncompromising sentiment and desire for the *en masse* expulsion of all non-Afrikans (such as whites, Indians and some Coloureds who reject their Afrikan heritage) in a *chimurenga*/ liberation war to restore a post-conquest Azania for the natives only.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has discussed the catastrophic coming of *abelumbi/abelungu*/whites from the sea as marking the origin of the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition. This tradition of resistance has indigenous roots and is based on the experience of conquest by the Indigenous people. The paper also argued that Garveyism which arrived in the 1920s merely regalanised this tradition rather than creating radicalism and militancy in South African among Afrikans of the 1920s. Finally, this paper briefly analysed how Garveyism influenced Afrikans and reintroduced the Black Radical Tradition among Afrikans from the 1920s. The paper used the example of Lembede to show that Garveyism influenced him in the 1940s to formulate his political philosophy of Afrikanism. It is in this sense that the paper posits the thesis that Lembede's Afrikanism is a combination of the Indigenous Fundamentalist Tradition and Garveyism and that his uncompromising Afrikanism must attain hegemony as the final solution to the national question in South Africa.

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Populism: A Threat to Democracy and Minority Rights in Nigeria
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Abstract

The stability of any nation depends on the harmonious integration of all its citizens. Constitutional democracy, through the rule of law, aspires to inclusive government. But populism emphasizes the sovereignty of the people, places it above the rule of law and equates the people with the majority, excluding the minority. This exposes the nation to majority tyranny, abuse of power and exclusion of some segments of the populace in governance, thereby, raising issues of legitimacy, the polarization of the population and hostilities inimical to nationhood. This paper uses historical hermeneutic analysis to examine the impact of populism on the nation-building of emerging democratic nations like Nigeria. It argues that populism is a threat to the stability of emerging plural democracies and that the rule of law based on a negotiated constitutional democracy is a better option than populism.

Keywords: Democracy, Populism, Minority right, Majority rule, Nation building

Introduction

Democracy is popularly accepted as the normative system of good governance that legitimizes a regime for providing active participation of the people in their governance. Operationally, democracy adopts majority opinion in resolving conflicting interests, which creates a threat of majority tyranny and violation of minority rights. Constitutional democracy adopts some legal frameworks that moderate majority rule to protect the rights of individuals and the inclusion of minorities in governance. However, populism advances democracy as people's rule where the populace should take control of their governance. The majority is seen as the people and consequently, the sovereign that rules. Hence, the populists attack any opposition against the majority, be it legal, institutional or groups of people, as opposing evil. This populist conception of democracy breeds intolerance to criticism, censorship, opposition and the minority rights to self-assertion.

Many politicians of a dominant group, especially in Africa, adopt the populist conception of democracy as an arbitrary rule of the majority and stratify the society into antagonistic in-group and out-group, winners and losers, and suppression of the opposing minority interests. Many developing democracies are in crisis due to grievances arising from real or perceived injustices occasioned by such stratification of society. The stratification in Africa mostly runs along ethnic and religious lines. We need only recall the political instability of such African nations as Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the split of Southern Sudan, Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe, and the perennial political tensions in Nigeria.

This paper examines the challenges of populism in nation-building in Africa and Nigeria in particular. The discussion of the paper is built on the principle that a state is an integrated organic body of people established for the common good of all. It adopts the contractarian principle of human interaction for nation-building based on individual equality and the right to self-determination for the harmonious co-existence of free people. The individuals have the right to participate and determine how they are governed and conflicts in governance should be resolved through negotiations. This requires tolerance and synergy of diverse orientations towards an equilibrium founded on justice, fairness and respect for the dignity of individual persons. It considers populist political mobilization of people against a segment of the populace as negative based on the belief that suppression and exclusion of any section of the polity in governance are unjust and create resistance, tensions, and hostilities that are inimical to a nation's harmony and stability.

The populists present the elites and their establishment as corrupt and responsible for the exploitation of the people and the failures in society. They advocate for the sovereignty of the people as represented by the majority. The populist conception of the majority as the people constitutes a problem. It ignores and excludes the minority, violates their right to self-determination and exposes the system to majority tyranny, which raises the question of justice and government's legitimacy. The exclusion tendency of populism in a plural society like Nigeria leads to divisions, polarization and violence that are inimical to nation-building. From our analysis of the impact of populism in Nigeria, we suggest that an effective rule of law based on a well-negotiated inclusive constitutional democracy will address the elite corruption, protect the interest of the people (inclusive of the minority) and enhance nation-building of plural society better than populism.

The paper adopts historical and hermeneutic analytic methods in appraising the subject matter. It is divided into five sections. Section one articulates the organic nature of a state. Section two examines the concepts of democracy and populism. Section three articulates the emergence of populism. Section four takes a look at populism and its challenge to nationhood, while section five scrutinizes populism and the challenge of nation-building in Nigeria. This is followed by a conclusion.

The Organic Nature of a State

There have been controversies on the nature of a state as either an aggregate of people with individual interests or an organic body with a general interest that integrates the interests of the members. The earlier group conceives a state as just a human creation to hold an aggregate of individualistic people together in peace by enforcing mutually entered contracts among them (see LOCKE, 1823; NOZICK, 1974). This view perceives individuals as independent entities that relate to each other on the principle of their freely entered contracts. Beyond the contracts, there are no other responsibilities of the individual to the other. The individual is in the state to protect his interest and the state exists to ensure that contracts are respected to maintain harmony. Beyond these roles, the state has no other reason to be. It has no life of its own distinct from the collective agreement of the people as contained in the constitution. John Locke's (1823) social contract theory of the emergence of society and Robert Nozick's (1974) doctrine of a minimal state present this concept of a state.

On the other side, the organic conception of society entails that the state is greater than the aggregate of its members (ROUSSEAU, 1761). It is an organic whole with the individuals organically integrated like different parts of a living organism in which the meaning and significance of the individual parts are dependent on their roles in the sustenance of the organism. The parts contribute to the definition of the organism, and the organism as a whole defines the essence of the parts. In the like manner, the individuals through their activities define the state and the state defines the individuals by providing meaning and relevance to their activities. As an organism transcends the simple aggregate of its constituent parts and moulds the parts in line with its essence, so does the state transcend the aggregate of its constituent members and mold their personality. The individuals are not isolated independent entities from the state because their existence is intertwined with the reality of the state. The state subsists in and at the same time transcends a simple collection of individual citizens. Its roles go beyond creating peace and protecting the lives and properties of its citizens to moulding their personalities for an integrated society. W.H. Manwaring (1938) has it that the organic conception of the state perceives social planning as a biological problem that requires creative intelligence or evolutionary wisdom identical to biological complex and not just mechanical engineering efficiency.

The state cannot be just an aggregate of people. A state has a life of its own with the individuals organically integrated into one reality. There is a shared consciousness of unity among the citizens of a state. There is a synergy, a moral bond that transcends contract obligations that bind a state together. Each individual's life is interwoven with every other member of the state. To be is to be in relation with others (see HEIDEGGER, 1927; EKEI, 2001; ASOUZU 2004; NWALA, 2010). Whatever one is in a state is occasioned by the existence of others. One needs the cooperation of others to actualize his aspirations. Though individuals may have their aspirations, their aspirations should be integrated into the general aspirations of the state. It is the state that coordinates the activity of society and society moderates and gives meaning (value) to individual interests. The meaning and value of an individual in a society are dependent on the society's acceptance of the activities of the individual. The common good of society incorporates the good of the individual. The optimal realization of an individual's interest can only be achieved when integrated into the general interest. Society should take care of the individual even if he is in a disadvantaged position. Hence, the state should not be run by just the arbitrary interest of the majority but by the integrated general interest of all - the interest of the minority inclusive. It is a social responsibility that everyone should moderate his interests to accommodate others to have a harmonious society where everybody's interest is protected in collectivity. An individual's personality is a product of a network of interpersonal relationships and challenges of the state.

John Rawls (1999) addresses the problem of social harmony and calls for the social responsibility of individuals in ensuring social justice and equity in the state. He argues for the organic conception of the state with his doctrine of a veil of ignorance, where people should establish a social system that protects the interest of all irrespective of individual positions. He advocates that the state should protect the interest of all with special attention given to the weak to augment their disadvantages and to ensure fairness. He is opposed to a liberalist presentation of individuals as independent entities without collective moral responsibility to others.

Democracy and Populism

Democracy generally means rule by the people. It depicts the freedom of the people to determine their governance. Abraham Lincoln in his 1863 Gettysburg Address projected democratic ideas in his assertion of the “... government of the people, by the people, for the people...” (1863). Democracy empowers people to control their governance through their elected leaders. Britannica defines democracy as “a form of government in which people choose leaders by voting.” It also describes democracy as “a situation in which everyone is treated equally and has equal rights” (DEMOCRACY, BRITANNICA ND). There are different versions of democracy but its central feature is the promotion of the dignity and equality of human persons and the right to self-determination expressed by people’s freedom of active participation in their governance. Democracy may operate by direct participation of people in decision-making as direct democracy or by elected representatives known as representative democracy. In a democracy, conflicting interests are resolved through negotiations and the majority opinion is taken when consensus cannot be achieved.

Deliberation on issues among an unpolarised people may generate differences, but the majority of enlightened opinions will reflect the people’s general will. John Stuart Mill (2001) argues that when people freely deliberate on issues for the common good of all, the majority of opinion will reflect the general will and interest of the people. Errors in the judgment of some individuals will be cancelled out. In this situation, there cannot be a permanent minority and such minorities quickly dissolve after a decision is reached as everyone is concerned with the general good of all.

This is not the situation in a polarised society where conflicting groups struggle to dominate and manipulate issues for their self-interests. The argument that when different interests converge, they will cancel themselves out does not stand, as what happens in such a situation is that the interest of the dominant group prevails. The dominant group maximally pursues its interest disregarding the rights of the minority. Democracy, here, cannot ensure the accommodation of the interests of all. It will become a tool for the dominant group to legitimize their dominance, leading to majority tyranny. To have a just and inclusive democracy that protects individual rights, some institutional legal frameworks are established to moderate majority rule in the form of constitutional democracy.

Constitutional frameworks are established to “effectively control(s) the exercise of political powers” (BRITANNICA, ND). Constitutional democracy establishes some legal structures that checkmate the arbitrariness of majority rule and protect the general interest of all the people, both the majority and minority. However, the populist aversion of the elites and the institutional structures that sustain them led to the enthronement of popular opinion as the sovereign determinant of governance. The majority is symbolized as the people with the sovereign power to determine the affairs of the state (MUELLER 2019, 1040). They are the winners and should govern, while the minorities are losers and anti-people, and should be barred from interfering in governance. The equation of the majority with the people is an erroneous redefinition of the population. It splits the populace and stratifies some sections, the minorities. The exclusion of minorities raises the issue of the legitimacy of a democracy, and might even signal the emergence of populism as minorities are denied the right to participate in their governance. The issue becomes more pronounced under representative democracy where the representatives are elected with a simple majority. A good percentage of the populace could be excluded from governance. Popular liberal democracy differs from populism by providing some legal frameworks to protect minorities.

Emergence of Populism

There are different conceptualizations of populism. Some see populism as a popular engagement of the people in decision-making. Ernesto Laclau (2005) perceives populism as a way of constructing a political entity for its emancipation from oppressive political structure. He maintains that political entities are not natural but social constructs and all political interventions are populist. Hence, populism is a process by which an undetermined and unrepresented mass of people constitutes itself as a people, thereby, forming a unit in contrast to the other outside itself. It galvanizes people to promote their interest in society. Some economists conceive populism as a concentration of public spending on the people's welfare against the strengthening of establishments. Some political analysts describe populism as an opportunistic political manoeuvring for relevance that exploits the momentary emotional disposition of a people by offering shallow simplistic solutions to deep complex problems. These conceptions highlight populism as giving preference to a people's interest in juxtaposition to other interests.

Populism has been an old challenge in the operation of democracy. In short, it is often regarded as a popular democracy that champions the voice of the common people who are marginalized by the structures of governance. Populism is a movement for the emancipation of the people from the exploitation of the elites and their establishment; and for the people to take control of their governance. It mobilizes against perceived corrupt institutions, the elites and any system or groups opposed to its agenda (see LACLAU, 2005; HANNES SWOBODA and JAN MARINUS WIERSMA, 2008; MUDDE and KALTWASSER, 2017; RODRIK, 2018). It has the positive value of sensitizing and galvanizing people to address their negative conditions. It exposes the ills of society and makes the government responsive to the plights of the people. Its negative features come from its abhorrence of criticism, censorship and the exclusionary definition of people. It splits society into opposing camps, the 'we', (pure and just people), and the 'others', (conspirators, and corrupt people) (RESNICK, 2010; MUDDE 2018). Donald Trump's administration as the President of the USA is referred to as populist because his policies tend towards white supremacy, presenting the white's interest as the national interest above that of other racial groups in America. He castigates the political class as corrupt and getting away with wrongs through carrying files, opposes the resolution of problems through political means of tolerance and returns the USA to the good old days of unadulterated American values. He taunts to deport immigrants, kill terrorists, improve the economy by restricting welfarist policies and review foreign policies to favor the white American capitalist interest based on his charisma.

The populist aspires for its group to attain the majority position, symbolizing it as the people with the sovereign power (MUELLER 2019, 1040). They are the winners and should govern, while the minorities are losers and anti-people, and should be barred from interfering in governance. The equation of the majority with the people is an erroneous redefinition of the population as it stratifies some segments of the population. The populist's lines of division of the people vary. It could be by ideology, class, ethnicity, nationality or religion. The exclusion of some segments of the population in governance raises the issue of the legitimacy of a populist democracy.

Scholars like Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser (2017), argue that populism is enhanced by corruption, economic inequality, and unemployment. Bad governance and socioeconomic hardship trigger agitations and blame games against the elites and opposing groups. Similarly, Mueller claims that "massive global and domestic inequality and injustice work in favour of populist platforms and their mobilization technique to portray themselves as alternatives to business as usual. Populist platforms more often than not look more like a cynical means of exchanging elites rather than abolishing elitist inequality" (1030).

It may be true that hardship and corruption of the elites may trigger populist agitation but populism, more often, lacks the capacity to solve the problems. Populist regimes create their elites who tend to be more corrupt because of their authoritarian disposition and suppression of criticism and opposition. Many populist regimes fail to deliver their campaign promises and plunge the state into deeper crisis like the government of Gotabaya Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka which was driven out of office by protest.

Further, Jean-Michel De Waele (2008) presents populism as an attitude and not a political program. For him, it is a way of talking or a kind of rhetoric characterized by the denunciation of corrupt elites and their structures; the defence of an imaginary people believed to be marginalized by the political structures; and providing facial solutions to deep socioeconomic problems. According to Jan-Werner Muller (2016), the populists advance that the "real people", they represent are prevented from impacting the policy of the state by the conspiracy of the elites. The shallowness of populist solutions to existential challenges shows the lack of commitment of the populist to provide an enduring solution. They play to the gallery and fantasy of the moment and evade the central issues. When their weak solution fails they look for a scapegoat to blame.

Some scholars also argue that populists cash in on the challenges and diversity of society to get a winning majority. For example, Anton Pelinka states that:

...it is not the existing diversity that creates "the other", but the need of a particular in-group to create an outsider as a scapegoat. This need is strongly correlated with social security, with social status: the less secure a person feels, the more he/she is inclined to construct such an otherness. Contemporary populism uses this inclination. Contemporary populism is - to a significant extent - the product of the decline of security of status. (2008, 44)

From Pelinka's view, we can say that populism is a tool for opportunistic political maneuvering to be relevant. Its negative presentation of the critical elites and the regulating institutions as corrupt and against the people in its emancipatory role appears as a ploy to create new elites that are above criticisms and censorship. Many populist leaders emasculate opposition, and mass media on which they climbed to relevance. Adam Oshimole was a vibrant charismatic labour leader who aggressively confronted the government on behalf of the workers but turned to oppress the workers when he became the governor of Edo state.

According to Swoboda and Wiersma (2008, 11), three main factors promote populism, namely: (1) the integrity and impact of governance on the people, (2) political party populist mobilization, and (3) media sensitization. Developing countries are more susceptible to populism due to weak nationalism, poverty, and low levels of education. The military coups that swept across developing democracies in the second half of the twentieth century (especially in Africa) adopted populist strategies promising to solve all the problems of the nations in swift action. They suspend political institutions and accuse political elites of corruption and exploitation of the people. Often, the ignorant masses fall for those gimmicks and accept the coups without questioning how the coup plotters will achieve their promises. The political class does not fare better. Most of the political parties in the developing world do not espouse any ideology. They take the philanthropic approach promising goodies without stating the mechanism of achieving them. The consequence is that most populists fail to actualize their promises.

Despite the negative features of populism, it can be seen as a democratic response to the crisis of representation and governance, to restore the link between the people and their rulers and make politics responsive and accountable to the people. Some scholars have the view that populism arises when the people have been severally betrayed and there is mistrust and gulf between the people and their rules. It works as an instrument for sensitizing the populace to be conscious of their manipulation and exploitation; and for mobilizing them to take control of their governance. Hence, it can stimulate political activism in a docile populace to checkmate the excesses of the elites and political leaders.

Populism and the Challenge of Nationhood

Populism weakens the harmony and unity of a state by splitting the society into antagonistic opposing factions of “the us” (the good people) and “the others” (the evil people) to exclude “the others” from governance. It may bring the elites and the state’s institutional frameworks for social freedom, justice, equity, and harmony to disrepute by presenting them as corrupt and needing to be overridden to achieve a better society. This affects the very fabric of the state’s stability, especially in Africa where people see their states as a foreign imposition. The resilience, tolerance, accommodation, patriotism, and sacrifices necessary for the systematic handling of issues of democracy may be lost to the divisive propaganda slogans of populism.

The antagonistic divisive propaganda of populism grooms self-indulging and intolerant citizens who are dictatorial and unaccommodating to divergent opinions. Hence, a populist dominant group will be intolerant of the plight of the minority in the pursuit of its interest and ignore the social responsibility of the state to protect and accommodate the interests of all. It will override constitutional provisions and arbitrarily impose its will on others. This constitutes a problem in many plural developing democracies. There are always cries of domination and marginalization of minorities in these democracies even as there are constitutional provisions to protect them.

Populism communicates half-truths to the people. Information to the people is not balanced. The populist’s aspiration to have a majority leads to his appeal to the emotions of the moment and manipulate the challenges of the state to soothe the emotional wishes of the populace without considering the prolonged consequences on the state. Their propaganda is packaged to elicit reactionary behaviour to carve out a majority. The ignorant and the self-seekers are always in the majority in any society and they easily fall for the manipulations of the populist. This impedes rationality and balanced consideration of issues. For instance, a populist will oppose austerity policies that will curb government expenses to stabilize the economy even when it is obvious that the economy is going to rock. He evades the kernel issues and addresses peripherals, blames “the other” for all the evils, and incites people against them.

Populism negates the basic goal of democracy, which it claims to project. The Democratic aim to establish equity, liberty, and harmonious co-existence in line with the general will of the people is confounded by populist majoritarianism. Swoboda and Wiersima (2008) argue that the problem of populism is that it understands democracy simply as an arbitrary majority rule. The minority’s liberty, rights, and privileges are at the mercy of the majority. Equity and harmonious co-existence are sacrificed on the altar of the majority. Alexis de Tocqueville (2010) has warned that the majority can be as tyrannical as any despot. The threat to the minority’s rights creates tension and instability. It raises the question of the legitimacy of the state that could not ensure equity and security for all its citizens. To substantiate the preceding, Jibrin Ibrahim argues that:

The legitimacy of the state is linked to its capacity to present itself as a provider of necessary public goods and more important, a neutral arbiter that guarantees the security of all sections of society. When the state is generally perceived as serving the particularistic interests of one group, it starts losing its legitimacy, and indeed, its authority. As state capacity declines, fear of ‘the other’ rises and inhabitants of the state resort to other levels of solidarity such as the religious, ethnic and regional forms in search of security. (2002, N.P.)

The divisive and polarizing nature of populism weakens the stability of a nation. Populist government can easily degenerate into authoritarianism, violate individual rights, ignite distrust and antagonistic relationships and radicalize the populace, thereby becoming inimical to harmonious coexistence and nationhood. The populist attack against institutional censorship and criticisms exposes the nation to mediocrity and inefficiency as national issues are not robustly analyzed.

Populism and Nation-Building in Nigeria: Consolidating Democratic Values

Nigeria is a plural society based on religious and ethnic solidarities. From the days of her formation, as a state, she has been battling to contend with her people's cultural and religious diversity. The nation is divided into three main religious orientations: traditional African religions, Islam, and Christianity. Traditional African religions, which are indigenous in all parts of the nation, are under threat by the two later religions of Islam and Christianity, which are more sophisticated and organized. The proselyte nature of the two later religions leads to continual conflicts between the religions as they compete for adherents and domination of the state. There are spiral suspicions, distrusting, hostilities and accusations of conspiracies between the two religions that continually threaten the stability of the state. Government policies are assessed as to how they affect the perceived promotion of one religion over the other. The Nigerian government had been pushed to the precipice of collapse on contentious religious issues like Nigeria joining the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the introduction of Sharia as a penal code, and the consideration of Nigeria as a secular state.

Culturally, two trends of civilization pitched their tents at the two ends of the state. Arab Islamic civilization pitched her tent in the north, while the European Christian civilization pitched hers in the south. These two civilizations and religions have polarised the state into a north and south cultural divide. The depth of this divide is perceived when any socioeconomic or political issues are discussed. Some political analysts have opined that the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Niger Protectorates by the colonial administration was a mistake that has held the nation down.

Besides this cultural divide, Nigeria is home to many ethnic groups and over 400 different languages. The people's loyalty is first to their ethnic groups. National patriotism is very low and the government is doing very little to promote national patriotism above ethnic loyalty. The insistence on relating with people based on their genealogy (place of origin) rather than where they live and what they do promotes ethnic consciousness and weakens integration and national cohesion.

From the early time of the nationalist struggle for independence, populism has been present in Nigerian politics. Most politicians in Nigeria adopt a populist strategy to be relevant to the detriment of nation-building. They stir sectional consciousness that split society between the in-group and out-group and attribute the ills of the society to the out-group. They carve out areas where their in-group will be dominant and use the majority rule doctrine to suppress minorities therein. This is part of the reasons for the continuous agitations for the political partitioning of the nation into unviable federating states. The nation started with three regions as the federating units at the time of her independence in 1960, which has now been divided into thirty-six states as federating units and Abuja as the capital. There are still agitations for the creation of more states when many of the created states cannot live up to their responsibility, especially regarding the funding of their administration without depending on the central government.

The populist mobilization deepens the line of the plurality of the society and promotes the interests of the dominant sectional groups above the common interest of the state as dominant sectional groups insist on having their way irrespective of how parochial their interest may be. The refined civil manners that are essential for socializing the people for liberal democratic values of justice, equity, tolerance and respect for people's rights and freedom are eroded. The political class insensitivity to the rights of minorities in Nigeria is epitomized in the arbitrary introduction and implementation of Sharia law as a penal code in nine Moslem-dominated states in 2000 without regard to the sensitivity and resistance of Christians and adherents of other religions. The implementation of Sharia law as a penal code implies the adoption of Islam as the state religion, which is contrary to the provisions of the Nigerian 1999 constitution that no state should adopt any religion as the state religion. The Sharia law has been an instrument of struggle for relevance and getting majority votes in elections among northern politicians and many of the politicians ascribe to it to please the dominant group and ignore the right of the minority non-Moslems.

In response to the threat of the majority excluding the minorities in governance, the 1999 Nigeria Constitution stipulates that the election of the governor of the states and the president of the nation should be based on winning 25% of votes spread across two-thirds of their constituency and implementation of the federal character principle in the recruitment of officials.

The populist's intolerance of opposition often deteriorates into a dictatorship. President Muhammadu Buhari became Nigeria's president in 2015 with a populist campaign strategy to fight corruption, boost the economy, and enhance the security of the nation against the threat of Boko Haram terrorism. He discredited the elites and state institutions as corrupt and blamed them for the evils in society. The administration used the Department of State Security (DSS) and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) to intimidate the opposition and other arms of government like the illegal siege of the National Assembly by members of DSS on August 7, 2018 (OGBONNA 2016. N.P), and the violation of the privacy of judges by the DSS' night raiding of their residence under the pretence of fighting corruption. Any law that did not favor the administration was ignored. Oppositions were not tolerated and dismissed as evil conspirators with the expression, "Corruption is fighting back". Even criticisms from international organizations were termed the handiwork of corrupt elites.

The Buhari administration leveraged propaganda, fed the nation with half-truths, and suppressed opposing views. DAAR Communication PLC with its broadcasting media, African Independent Television (AIT) and Raypower Radio were persecuted because of the Buhari administration's perception that the communication media were not favourable to it. The administration sent the EFCC against the founder of DAAR Communications PLC, Raymond Dokpesi for the money paid by the People's Democratic Party (PDP) (the ruling party during the 2015 general election) to the company for media services and barred the media from covering the activities of the government on many occasions. The AIT, Channels and Arise Televisions were heavily fined and threatened to be shut down for their open and unedited coverage of the EndSARS protest against the government in October 2020. Omoyele Sowore, a Nigerian human rights activist and politician, was arrested, detained, and accused of treason by DSS for calling for a public demonstration against the poor governance of the nation by the administration. DSS refused to release him even after the court granted him bail. The administration blamed the failure to deliver its campaign promises on past administrations' failures and activities.

The Buhari administration identified with the dominant ethnic group, the Hausa-Fulani and championed the interest of the ethnic group above that of the other ethnic groups. The appointments into government positions and policy implementation were skewed to favour Fulani Moslems. His administration excluded the southeast region, a significant part of the nation, from governance because of the low votes he got from the region. The head of most of the security agencies, the Police, Army, DSS, Immigration, Customs and Civil Defence, in the country were manned by the Fulani Moslems. The automatic-rifle-armed Fulani Herdsmen pillaging Benue State, Plateau State, and many other parts of the country were condoned while the unarmed flag-bearing agitators for self-determination of the southeastern part of the country as Biafra were declared terrorists by the government because of the ethnic bias.

During the eight years of his administration, the insecurity in the nation worsened with Boko Haram sustaining its terrorism, and other criminal groups like the Fulani herdsmen, bandits, and kidnapers were emboldened and terrorized the nation. The economy collapsed and the currency grossly devalued with the exchange rate of Naira to the USA dollar dropping from 160:1 when he took office in 2015 to 780:1 when he left in 2023. His administration so divided the nation and deepened sectional cleavages and antagonism than ever before, that those outside his in-group (four out of the nation's six geo-political zones) were agitating for restructuring or total disintegration.

Government officials' penchant for placing the interest of their sectional in-group above that of the nation, as epitomized in the Buhari administration, threatens national stability. They personalize the state's resources and apportion them discriminately to sustain their in-group. This engenders spiral populist movements geared towards the solidification of sectional in-group consciousness. Any opposition to such movements within the in-group is treated as sabotage that must be crushed.

Despite the negative impact of populism on nationhood, it is still attractive to political activists for the mobilization of people. Nigerian populace is very docile and the elites have been exploiting the docility to accumulate and personalize national resources in neglect of the plight of the people. Privileged dominant groups also marginalize others from partaking in the national resources. There is a need for the people to rise to demand their rights and checkmate the excesses of the elites and the privileged. Through populism, the people can be conscientized and mobilized to fight for their rights and checkmate their marginalization. Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), use populism to sensitize the people of Southeastern Nigeria to their marginalization in national affairs.

Populism can mitigate the evils of bureaucracy. Bureaucracy tends to alienate the people from the government. Leaders occasionally need a populist approach to take the government to the people and have undiluted feelings and knowledge of the challenges of the people. The government's practice of town hall meetings abridged the elites from interfering with the people's interaction with the leaders. Peter Obi in some of his speeches extolled the success of his direct dealings with the people in the execution of projects during his tenure as the governor of Anambra State.

Considering the plurality of Nigerian society and its challenges in nation-building, we advocate for the rule of law based on a negotiated constitution anchored on the democratic values of respect for the dignity and equality of the human person and the right to self-determination. The plural nature of Nigeria should be acknowledged and addressed in a way that will elicit trust, inclusiveness and enterprise.

Nigeria embarked on the negotiation of the conditions of her nationhood through a series of constitutional conferences during the struggle for national independence. However, the euphoria of independence led to the hasty adoption of a British-influenced agreement as the constitution. The trial and adjustment of the constitution to suit the existential realities of the nation were truncated by the military dictators who hijacked the nation and continued issuing out their interest as the constitution instead of the negotiated agreement of the people. Even the 1999 constitution, being operated today, is still a military dictator's opinion of how they want the nation to run for their interest. The current movement of the legislators to amend the constitution to reflect the general will of the people is bedevilled by the fact that the legislators and those in government are beneficiaries of the system and want the status quo to remain as long as they are in office. The political class lacks principle and integrity in taking stands on national issues. Their stands on any national issue are dependent on their proximity to power and what they stand to gain. It is ridiculous that state governors that agitate for true federalism and devolution of more powers to the states, at the same time, oppose the autonomy of the local governments (another tier of government). There is a need for national dialogue in the form of a sovereign national conference, constituted of the different sectional interests, to articulate the general will that will determine the nature and operation of the nation.

Conclusion

This paper sets out to examine the impact of populism on minority rights in democratic nation-building with particular reference to Nigeria. To accomplish this task, the paper has highlighted a state as an organic integrated social entity built on the respect and cooperation of all. It took a look at the conception of both democracy and populism and presented democracy as the best pragmatic system of governance available, as it promotes people's participation, social justice, respect for human dignity, political enlightenment, tolerance, accommodation, and cooperation; while it criticizes populism as a democracy for being divisive, majoritarian and exclusionary to minorities. Populism is presented as a challenge to stable nation-building in Nigeria. The paper holds that the stability of any state requires the willing cooperation and integration of all her citizens as one body, but populism threatens this unity by splitting the state into opposing hostile in-groups and out-groups, which leads to antagonistic dominant and minority relationships. Populism is a challenge to the legitimacy of democracy by reducing it to majoritocracy and negating its inclusive values of respect for minority rights. It leaves the state in the vagrancy of power politics and weakens socio-political institutions that moderate governance for all. Finally, the illiberal and non-inclusion nature of populism leads to intolerance, social injustice, agitations, socio-political tensions, and instability and can easily degenerate into dictatorship and fascism.

There is a need to address the challenges of populism to achieve virile democracy, especially in the developing countries of Africa. The threat of populism can be checkmated through political education and the strengthening of the rule of law and state institutions. Political activism should be distinguished from populism. States should develop a people's negotiated constitution that respects the rights and aspirations of all as free citizens. Such a constitution should be supreme and guide the affairs of the state. Our arguments here are not to be taken as final words but as bases for other scholars to join the debate on the presence of populism in Nigeria and its effects.

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A response to Innocent Enweh on Interpretative Rehabilitation of Afro-communalism

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Abstract

In a 2020 article published in volume 9, number 1 of [Filosofia Theoretica], Martin F. Asiegbu and Anthony Chinaemerem Ajah questioned the continued relevance of Afro-communalism. They argued that nothing about communalism makes it African. They also demonstrated how the brand of communalism presented as ‘African’, is too reductive, emphasizes conformism and therefore is against the individual and counter-productive for entire societies in Africa. For the above reasons, they summed that communalism with ‘Afro-’ is irrelevant and needs to end. In a 2021 article published in the same journal in response to the initial submission by Asiegbu and Ajah, Enweh held that their take on Afro-communalism was too harsh. He marshalled out five “issues and difficulties” regarding their critique of the concept. Although Enweh’s critique is a worthwhile invitation to a conversation, which clarifies and complements, his proposal for an interpretative rehabilitation of Afro-communalism in the 21st century is surely wrongheaded. To respond to Enweh, a review of his critique of Asiegbu and Ajah will foreground the attempt to clarify some parts of Asiegbu and Ajah’s initial position. We will assess Enweh’s arguments in terms of the relevance of the rehabilitation he suggested and question the meaning of what Enweh termed the “amity of ethnic nationalities.” We will argue that Enweh was unable to provide sufficient grounds to show that Asiegbu and Ajah’s critique of Afro-communalism was “uninformed... [and] harsh.” We will also demonstrate that his critique of their views was indefensible just as he was unable to explain what he meant by the alternative model he claimed to introduce in the discussion.

Keywords: Afro-communalism, Solipsistic individualism and anarchy, Amity-of-ethnic nationalities, Egalitarian society, Eristic denial of facts.

Introduction

In a 2020 article published in volume 9, number 1 of [Filosofia Theoretica], Martin F. Asiegbu and Anthony Chinaemerem Ajah questioned the continued relevance of Afro-communalism. They strongly argued that nothing about communalism makes it African. They also demonstrated how the brand of communalism presented as ‘African’, is too reductive, emphasizes conformism and therefore is against the individual and counter-productive for entire societies in Africa. For the above reasons, they argued that communalism with ‘Afro-’ is irrelevant and needs to end. From a developmental perspective, Asiegbu and Ajah noted that communities in the 21st century global society thrive largely as due to the non-conformist, creative strivings of their individual members. They then wondered why proponents of Afro-communalism are insisting on an idea that is counter-productive (p. 31) to the African continent.

Despite these and other points, Enweh in his 2021 article in the same journal, accused Asiegbu and Ajah’s contribution of “extolling solipsistic individualism which makes the individual an anarchic unit” (p. 103). The purpose of his response to their contribution was “to show that an interpretative rehabilitation of Afro-communalism is opportune for elaborating a form of egalitarian society that would be responsive to the exigencies of African social-economic condition in a globalized world” (p. 103). Another reason was to use the response “as the corner stone of defence of continuous research on Afro-communalism” (p. 104). To achieve these, he marshalled five of what he termed “issues and difficulties” in Asiegbu and Ajah’s contribution. These are: (a) “solipsistic individualism and anarchism”(p. 106), (b) “eristic denial of facts” (p. 107), (c) “the problem of conceptual clarity” (p. 110), (d) “uncritical assumption” (p. 110), and (e) “anachronism” (p. 111). He summed that their objections to Afro-communalism were “uninformed... [and] harsh”, and that their contention has already been overtaken. It is anachronistic and falls short of relevance. Enweh concluded that both in its philosophical and ideological forms, Afro-communalism has some contributions in Africa; individualism is alien to Africa, and thus, there is need to continue reflections on Afro-communalism by rehabilitating it and re-grounding it in what he termed “amity”.

In this contribution to the conversation, we defend the core of Asiegbu and Ajah’s initial position. We assess Enweh’s arguments in terms of the relevance of the rehabilitation he appealed for. We also question what he termed ‘amity of ethnic nationalities.’ We do not aim here to engage in the wider discussion on Afro-communalism, nor in what is presented as its variant, namely, Afro-communitarianism (CHIMAKONAM and NWEKE 2018, pp. 78-99). Doing this may lead to digressions that may leave the main issues in this conversation unattended to. Our intention is also not to project any special way of engaging in a discussion on issues relating to Africa. Instead, we limit our contribution to a direct and relatively brief response to the specific contents of Enweh’s response to Asiegbu and Ajah’s critique of Afro-communalism. To achieve this aim, we divided this paper into two. In the first section, we will highlight the main arguments that Enweh marshalled out against the submissions of Asiegbu and Ajah. We will respond to each based on our reading of the latter’s submissions. In

the second section, we will explore the relevance of a project of rehabilitating Afro-communalism as Enweh suggested. So, let us respond to the issues he raised.

Clarifying the issues, and easing the difficulties

Before joining issues with Enweh, we deem it necessary to correct his mistaken representation of our topic. Else thinkers will misunderstand the subject of the paper as “communism,” instead of Afro-communalism (p. 31), just as some thinkers will object to Chimakonam’s work, [Ezumezu: A system of Logic for African Philosophy and Studies] being published in 2018 (p. 112) and also in 2019 (p. 115).

In this section, we will clarify what Enweh described as five issues, and will ease what he described as difficulties, in the initial contribution by Asiegbu and Ajah. We will do this in the order in which he presented them.

(a) Solipsistic individualism and anarchism

Enweh’s position, in this regard, started with an appropriate reference to Aristotle’s (non-African) ethics. He cited Aristotle in these words “the virtuous man’s conduct is often guided by the interests of his friends and of his country, and that he will, if necessary, lay down his life in their behalf” (see p. 106). Enweh held that Asiegbu and Ajah commended self-love “for the sake of “expanding one’s positive possibilities””. He further held that these authors endorsed individualism that is devoid of egalitarian principle whereas this form of individualism is solipsistic, disregards norms of social relations, and leads to anarchy. Individualism would be anarchic if it is fundamentally based on ethical egoism. This obtains where people are completely looking out for their own interest, without any sense of enlightened personal interest. This is because, sometimes, one does community work, not because of one’s love for the community but because one is, thereby, protecting one’s personal interest in which there are no ties to the community. No one, certainly, defends such a type of individualism, much less in this work.

Let us clarify this and ease the difficulties here. First, Asiegbu and Ajah had noted that “[W]e use the term ‘individualism’ as a belief that individuals should be free to prioritise their interests, be free to be independent, but remain accountable to society.” (p. 32) These words remain enough to indicate that their conception of individualism is nowhere close to the descriptions and negative impositions from Enweh. Merriam-Websters Dictionary (2022, online) defines solipsism as a theory holding that the self can know nothing but its own modifications, and that the self is the only existent thing. The qualifier ‘solipsistic’ means “of, relating to, or characterized by extreme egocentricity.” It is strange to hold that Asiegbu and Ajah’s call for free and accountable interest and independence of the individual from the burdens of community belonging, imply any of these connotations that solipsism imply. Their argument that individuals seek their personal freedom and independence does not imply solipsism nor anarchy, as Enweh misrepresented their position. Really, Enweh may, after all, be wholly focused on the enrichment of Afro-communalism – a wholesome engagement. For this reason, he is arguing for rehabilitating Afro-communalism. However, a careful reading of those authors shows that what they sought to do was to explore the gains in being deviant; the gains of imagining in such a manner that

transcends what is taken for granted in the type of communalist societies that Afro-communalists described (see MENKITI 1984; GYEKYE 1992) – and being non-conformists while remaining accountable to their society.

What is clear is that either Enweh was too zealous in his defence of a brand of engagement in African studies to the detriment of a careful understanding and acceptance of the definition provided by the authors, or he intentionally decided to misconstrue their basic concepts to justify his critique of their position. Either way, weakens rather than strengthens his defense of Afro-communalism. Enweh appealed to non-Africans to buttress an idea he claimed is uniquely/authentically African and worthy of continuous engagement. So, if Afro-communalism is authentically African, it remains to be explained why Enweh needed Aristotle's description of 'the virtuous man' as conducting his affairs with interest of his friends and country at heart. This description of the virtuous man was from Aristotle who is reductively grouped under the same so-called Western ethics that is too individualistic, whereas the authentic African ethics is communalistic.

Enweh wrote that Western individualism "does not have to be made to replace authentic African cultural attitude, insofar as the latter is anchored on a viable ontological foundation and a universally acceptable ethical principle" (p.104). When Afrocentrists like Enweh write in words such as 'universally acceptable... principle', they try to show signs of openness to broad engagement. However, they do rather weaken the validity of their claim to a unique, authentic, 'Afro-' version of what they are advancing. It is a strategy common with Afrocentrists. While we recognize what is ill-considered here, we shall not pursue the issue further. And so, let us cede the point to Enweh.

(b) Eristic denial of facts

Next, Enweh accused Asiegbu and Ajah of engaging in denial of facts. To do this, he referred again to two non-Africans, Hoffman and Graham, to hint how human nature is both absolute and relative. Regarding the aspect of relativity of human nature, Enweh referred to studies that showed how Western Europe, the US, Canada and Australia, are identified as culturally individualistic, while China and Japan are collectivist. He admitted some variations in conclusions about whether Japan is dominantly collectivist or individualistic. Based on his reference to some studies, Enweh worried that Asiegbu and Ajah made "no reference to any scientific study to back up our basic claims", but that they "appear to argue against facts for argument's sake" (p.108). In his view, these authors were silent on the role of egalitarian principle as a foundation of Afro-communalism. This silence, in his view, accounts for their critique of the tension between rights and duties in Afro-communalist contexts (CHIMAKONAM and NWEKE 2018). After appealing to the views of other Afro-communalists, he summed that "communalism could be said to be a universal human experience because man [sic] is a social animal. But by prefixing "communalism" with... "Afro," one means by that a distinct form or type of communalism/collectivism; communalism that is characteristically African." To further buttress his points about how Asiegbu and Ajah denied facts, Enweh noted that "Afro-communalism in its ideological form contributed to decolonization of Africa. Besides scoring a political point, intellectually, it has

been the source of important literary productions... A survey of the impact of extended family, clan, tribal and ethnic relations in rural and urban life would surprise one who disparages it... Afro-communalism takes various dimensions that are currently impactful and cannot be denied just for the sake of argument” (p.109). He acknowledged that it is not all success regarding Afro-communalism. Taiwo (2016, 81-100) enumerated a number of false and inappropriate types of Afro-communalism. So, Enweh admitted that “reformulating the basis of Afro-communalism could help in eradicating its important failures.” What are these important failures? One would not expect Enweh and others like him to explore these. We shall take that up later as a validation of our reading of the argument Asiegbu and Ajah defended in their initial contribution as well as ours here.

(c) Problem of conceptual clarity

The third difficulty in Asiegbu and Ajah’s contribution, according to Enweh, is lack of conceptual clarity. Specifically, he argued that their total renunciation of Afro-communalism suggests that they are not quite clear on the nature of the reality and the levels of articulation of Afro-communalism. He added that they misconstrued individualism in their presentation. According to him, Asiegbu and Ajah’s inclusion of accountability as a feature of [the individualism they highlighted] is wrong: “The individualist emphasizes individual rights, not responsibility” (p.110). By taking this position, he meant to show that they also misconstrued the concept of individualism.

These positions of Enweh are rather worrisome. Let us begin with his comments on these authors’ articulation of individualism. It seems clear that Enweh just made this up to add to his list of “issues and difficulties” (p. 106). Asiegbu and Ajah started their use of the concept individualism by explaining how they were using it. And to ensure the defensibility of their position, they clarified the place of responsibility within the framework of their conception of the individual. Enweh preferred to assess their position based on his misgivings about individualism rather than what these authors presented in the text he tried to engage with. By taking this approach, he shifted his focus from the authors’ submissions in the text under assessment, to his presuppositions and unclarified rejection of individualism for the sake of doing so. Thus, we submit that Asiegbu and Ajah are not the ones whose lack of clarity regarding concepts constituted a problem in their contribution. It is Enweh.

(d) Uncritical assumption

Enweh assessed Asiegbu and Ajah as not submitting some of their assumptions to appropriate criticism. This, in his view, is the fourth difficulty in the authors’ text. According to him, their assumption that non-conformism is valuable and transformative was not properly assessed. He referred to a 1969 study which submitted that non-conformists in the study focus were more of dropouts than successful. Enweh also added to Asiegbu and Ajah’s list of uncritical assumptions, their emphasis on the rights of individuals. He held that while these authors insisted on the rights, they didn’t carefully examine “the nature and kinds of rights to which the individual could lay claim to”. Because they didn’t do this, they were, in Enweh’s view, “headed to a contradiction” (p.110). By suggesting the value of

non-conformism, he held that these authors erroneously identified individualism with anarchism. According to him, they were unable “to gain insight into the possible ideological and utopian role of Afro-communalism as philosophy” (p.111). Enweh held that “It is... to say the least,” unfair on the part of the authors he was responding to, “to dismiss Afro-communalism in its entirety as irrelevant” (p.111).

Enweh’s reference to Wittaker and Watts’ 1969 study of “membership of a particular subculture of non-conformist youth” (p110), as a basis for countering Asiegbu and Ajah’s submission that non-conformism can be transformative and deserves to be explored, is weak and inconsequential to their submission. First, it is based on a very old study that predates massive developments in brain studies, personal growth, entrepreneurship, and development of business ideas. Second, it failed to take into crucial consideration several non-conformists that transformed means of human interactions, idea of work, ICT, how to understand human life and cure human diseases, and so on. Within these realms, we find names such as Bill Gates, Elon Musk, Steve Jobs, who have done things in manners completely different from the generally accepted ways of doing things during their time. Many of the results of their engagements are obvious, monumental, and exceptionally life-enhancing. The innovations that their names represent confirm the possible values of non-conformist dispositions that Asiegbu and Ajah espoused in their first contribution. Enweh will be unable to defensibly argue that these nonconformists were unsuccessful. Again, let us clarify. Our reading of Asiegbu and Ajah shows that by non-conformism these authors did not mean morally weak and unprincipled deviation from moral and social norms which will definitely harm others. Rather, they mean a consistent readiness by individuals to explore their creative imagination of good alternatives that can improve what is widely accepted, without upturning social balance – or even upturning such balance without lingering destructive consequences.

(e) Problem of anachronism

The last problem Enweh highlighted in respect to Asiegbu and Ajah’s contribution was that of anachronism. To explain what he meant, Enweh dragged in Innocent Asouzu as one who had explored the type of thing Afro-communalism represents. According to Enweh, Chimakonam has also moved the discussion on Afro-communalism “a step further”. Based on his references to Asouzu (2007), Matolino (2018), and Chimakonam (2018), Enweh submitted that “[I]t is therefore surprising that after this progress in the re-articulation of Afro-communalism, Asiegbu and Ajah would return to a problem that has already been overtaken. Their contention is anachronistic and falls short of relevance” (p.112).

Let us clarify terms again. The MiriamWebsters Dictionary (2022, online) defined anachronism as an error in chronology; something, especially one from a former age that is incongruous in the present. Based on this clarification, it strange how Asiegbu and Ajah’s questioning of the relevance of Afro-communalism is anachronistic. By pondering on some ideas, especially contrary ones, philosophers rethink and shatter old beliefs and policies informed by anachronistic and wrongheaded traditions. In this regard, Asiegbu and Ajah consider Afro-communalism strictly anachronistic in the sense that it is no longer a viable system

of philosophy that should regulate human actions in the contemporary world. This idea of anachronism is in tandem with the definition of the term by Wiredu (1980). The perception of Afro-communalism does not entail that it was never useful. Rather, we uphold the view that Afro-communalism is no longer useful. In addition to the previous proposition, it is plausible to posit that the anachronistic nature of Afro-communalism informs Enweh's argument for interpretative rehabilitation. Hence, Enweh's call for rehabilitation of Afro-communalism suggests that all is not well with Afro-communalism. In all, we see no sound and defensible argument from Enweh to show that Asiegbu and Ajah's arguments amounted to difficulties.

So, we move to our second task in this response: What exactly did Enweh mean by 'rehabilitating Afro-communalism'? How relevant is such recommendation whereas according to him, others have taken the debate further for which reason he submitted that the problem has been overtaken, and Asiegbu and Ajah's contention are short of relevance? If it is already overtaken and/or so useful, why recommend a rehabilitation?

On the relevance of rehabilitating Afro-communalism

After submitting that Asiegbu and Ajah's central position falls short of relevance, Enweh argued for rehabilitating African Communalism. Let us assess that recommendation. To initiate this aspect of his task, Enweh reiterated that: "[W]hile Afro-communalism [sic] has registered some success by way of bringing about decolonization, it remains a serious task to realize its project of emancipation" (p.112). It is historically wrong to argue that Afro-communalism 'brought about' the end of colonialism in Africa. Yet, in that statement, an important question is what Enweh - and Nkrumah whom he cited severally (see p.104; p.108; p.112) - meant by Afro-communalism realizing its project of emancipation. Most African countries that experienced colonialism are over 60+ years old as independent states. What possibly is the purpose of the emancipation Enweh expects Afro-communalism to achieve?

Enweh maintains that Afro-communalism is good because it helped Africans drive away the colonialists (ENWEH 2021, p. 104). This is what he means also when he says that "in its ideological form, (Afro-communalism) contributed to decolonization of Africa ..." (p. 109). One would ask, by means of what, or better, in which way did Afro-communalism oust the colonialists? The independence fighters were die-hard capitalists. This is true of Nnamdi Azikiwe [Azikiwe, ODESSEY] and Awolowo. Azikiwe pursued his "Pilot" publication as a capitalist. The arguments, which the independence fighters employed to defeat colonialism, were arguments of freedom and individualism, and self-determination. They employed them to inform the colonialists that if their ideology taught them freedom, human rights, and self-determination, why then would they deny Africans these same things [AZIKIWE SPEECHES]? And so, African independence fighters turned Western ideology on its head to succeed. They made use of the logic of freedom, human rights, self-determination. Certainly, they never made use of any argument from Afro-communalism. The nationalists, who attempted to prove that African identity was different from the European own, tried developing their ideology to reach their goal. They insisted on the

indispensable character of African traditional culture. The nationalists suggested the partnership between state leaders and traditional African leaders. Ghana tried it out and it eventually failed. Many independent African states never gave it a thought. The traditional chiefs, thus, were not subsumed in the Constitutions of various countries. The nationalists did not also desire to appeal to scientific Marxism because it was Western. The nationalists insisted on the contribution of African culture. All things considered, the state and traditional chieftaincy parted ways. Enweh, therefore, has to prove how Afro-communalism was a key to the realization of end of colonialism.

Enweh admitted that with the current structuring of contemporary societies, there is “tension in the socio-political life of African nations... [Among other things] the kinship/tribal model, which is prevalent in the rural areas... is too limited in its scope to impact on multi-ethnic societies.” (p.112). Elsewhere, he also admitted that “kinship, clan or tribe as the basis for a relationship is too narrow for the nature of society we live in today, where people of diverse ethnic nationalities live together” (p.113). Instead of accepting the inadequacy and end of relevance of the kinship/tribal model, Enweh preferred to assign the merely polemic task of reinventing Afro-communalism to philosophers. He expects those he invited to the task to alter “the foundation of social relations while guarding its fundamental ethical principle.” For what purpose? What may serve as an answer to this question can be found in his idea of ‘authentic African attitude’ (p.104), or in his idea of doing so “[I]n the spirit of safeguarding and promoting African social attitude” (p.113).

If we interpret his use of ‘spirit’ above as ‘euphoria’, it may help to understand that Enweh didn’t really mean to assess the logical and practical relevance of Afro-communalism as Asiegbu and Ajah tried to do. He was more eager to retain a ‘spirit’, or an euphoria, or a psychologically satisfying wind. Besides, he was not interested in assessing the so-called African social attitude for continued relevance. His greater interest is in safeguarding it, as if it is whatever it is, once and for all. From this perspective, his call for a rehabilitation is empty and amounts to continued polemics.

Enweh returned to his critique of individualism, which he held, “is the bane of humanism” (p.113). He reiterated assigning individualism to the global West but thought it “very presumptuous to imagine that it is the culture of individualism that accounts for technological and scientific progress in the West” (p.113). He went ahead to describe Asiegbu and Ajah’s arguments for the good in individualism as “spurious” and “gratuitously made without evidence”. He insisted that “It is... erroneous to explain Africa’s underdevelopment, in any of its forms, by deriding Afro-communalism.” (p.113). Rather than deride it, the many people from various ethnic groups who were forcibly brought together during amalgamations, need to forge a relationship for their interest as people who share common historical experience: “In other words, amity should be the basis of relationship among the various ethnic groups.” Quite below a justified expectation of any reader of a rejoinder of his status, Enweh wrote that elaborating on what he meant by the term ‘amity’ was “too much for a paper that is simply intended to reopen a discussion on Afro-communalism by letting critics know that they have

no warrant to call for closure of dossier on a matter so vital and so close to the reality of the people's existential experience" (p.114).

One may give a helping hand to Enweh by teasing out some possible meanings of his term, "amity" Probably considered as an attempt to ease the encounter of different cultures and races with one another. It would surely entail friendly (l'amitié) relations and discourse among groups, ethnic nations or groups. His intended fashioning a means of resolving tensions locally and internationally. Within Africa, where close relations among African countries hold true, there has been numerous international upheavals, boundary disputes, conflicting commercial interests among states and expulsions of African migrant populations by other African states. It becomes difficult for the African states, in spite of attempts to the contrary, to relate à l'amitié (in a friendly way). But who is certain that this is what Enweh's amity of ethnic nationalities signify? Else he would have penned down volumes of such an idea with ease. Thus, the phrase, amity of ethnic nationalities remains inscrutable.

Conclusion

We set out in this paper to respond to Innocent Enweh's assessment of Asiegbu and Ajah's position that philosophical engagements on how Afro-communalism is unique to Africans, is no longer relevant. Enweh's assessment of their contribution warrants that we even ask more fundamental question: Is Afro-communalism really a fact or merely an interpretative conjecture of Afro-centrists? The opening sentence of Enweh's response to these authors warrants a consideration of this question. He started this way: "The intellectual revival of communalist culture was thanks to the challenges posed by colonization" (p.104). In the third sentence in the article, he also wrote that African socialism, as a form of Afro-communalism and "a political ideology succeeded in ousting out [sic] colonial regime, it was quite relevant at the time" (p.104). One may ask: So, without colonization and its challenges, as well as the desire to show how Africans differed from the colonizers, there was initially no need for this type of engagement? A 'YES' response to this last question implies that the engagement is irrelevant. Admitting this response will be fiercely countered by Afro-centrists. But that is what it is. Yet in the first sentence we just cited, Enweh admits this. That is, he admitted that it was the challenges of colonization that made it necessary to even articulate and revive communalism 'intellectually.' On his lecture of Taiwo (2016), Enweh would immediately embrace Taiwo's extensive analysis. But he would be stopped in his parts since reviving Afro-communalism would also mean that this revival is not in respect of its use as a form of social organization of lives and resources in concrete terms. It was merely as an intellectual engagement [period!]. Enweh also admits that its use as an ideology was limited to ousting the colonial regime. Hence, the clarification that 'it was quite relevant at the time.' So, one may add '... and no longer so [useful] in our time.'

Five things are obvious in Enweh's response to Asiegbu and Ajah's article. First, he admits that what he is arguing for its interpretative rehabilitation is no longer useful in concrete terms. It serves the intellectual engagement of some group of scholars on Africa. Second, he is arguing, not exactly for any usefulness of Afro-communalism, but merely for 'interpretative rehabilitation' as part of an

intellectually satisfying activity. This means that the relevance of what is being rehabilitated stops with the interpreters. Third, he admits that what he is defending had failed to achieve a so-called emancipation, for which reason, he claimed it is an incomplete project. And, instead of addressing why it failed and/or assessing Afro-communalism based on its practical/concrete usefulness in the here and now and the near future, he is calling for its rehabilitation. Fourth, he called up all his negative perceptions of individualism to ground Asiegbu and Ajah's reference to that view of approaching concrete persons. Fifth, he deferred articulation of what should have been the focus of his paper, namely, an explanation of what he meant by amity, how it is different for the many bandied concepts that project Afro-communalism, and therefore how exactly it justifies his insistence on the relevance of Afro-communalism. As a hint to the likelihood that the term 'amity' will be one of those neologisms in some of the misguided attempts to practice philosophy in Africa, Enweh gave no indication that amity will amount to anything different from the kinship/tribal model that defines Afro-communalism and which he admitted can no longer serve current human situations in Africa.

Despite Enweh's enthusiastic defence of Afro-communalism, he was unable to substantially counter Asiegbu and Ajah's positions that: (a) nothing about communalism makes it important to qualify it with 'Afro' as an indication that there is an African version of communalism; and (b) what is termed Afro-communalism has been unable to improve the understanding of reality and human existence in Africa. Enweh could not make any consequential point against these authors' positions apart from his misinterpretation of their use of individualism. Thus, we argue that the authors' positions can be retained. We also appeal to scholars on Africa to drop their passionate engagements on mere interpretations of cultural features of pre-colonial Africa. They need to rather focus on more challenging, self-reflexive, and development-enhancing needs of Africa and Africans. Africans need brutal assessment of themselves and their contributions to their world, not the heavy burden of polemically colourful generation of new concepts to say the same thing about unique and authentic Africa.

It remains strange why scholars in the most underdeveloped region of the world would be satisfied with intellectual engagements that neither improve their concrete existence nor clarify the world around them, but only satisfy some of their ideological preferences and psychological cravings. Preferences and cravings that suck them into and keep them entrapped in what Law (2011) described as intellectual black hole, without any hope of exit. So, while Enweh prepares to articulate his views in a follow-up article as he promised, we request him to consider answering one question in that follow-up: How exactly does Afro-communalism enable concrete Africans in concrete social urban contexts of co-existence with people from various ethnic groups, to make better sense of life and tolerate each other even as they claim to seek to live authentically? Until then, we submit that Enweh was unable to provide sufficient grounds to show that Asiegbu and Ajah's critique of Afro-communalism was 'uninformed... [and] harsh.' His critique of their views was indefensible just as he was unable to explain what he meant by the alternative model he claimed to introduce in the discussion.

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Traditional, Church or white Wedding? Conflicting mindsets and the need for synculturation in Igbo Weddings

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Abstract

The issue of wedding is of immense socio-cultural and pastoral concern for the Igbo people. The challenge revolves around the question of which wedding(s) the intending couple should choose. Which wedding is cost effective or more socially acceptable? Which wedding incorporates the extended families or alienates them? These choices are often so interconnected that to choose one is to reject the other. As a result, many young people have started cohabiting as families without wedding, or have had one wedding which is considered incomplete, adversely affecting their sense of belonging and participation in their churches, or in the family and socio-cultural settings. This article intends to expose the origin, causes and consequences of the issue. It does not elucidate the rituals of traditional or church wedding, instead it explicates the nuances of both weddings vying for superiority, and the subtle, yet sophisticated contention over their values in Igboland. Then it suggests solutions to help alleviate it.

Keywords: Catholic Church, Church-White Wedding, Traditional Wedding, Igbo, Synculturation.

Introduction

Igbo people are a heterogeneous ethnic group inhabiting most of the regions, coastal and land territories of the Bight of Biafra, in the present southern part of Nigeria, West Africa. They are a very populous and popular ethnic group, both home and in diaspora, numbering up to 60 million.

For a young man or woman of marriable age to wed and have a family is a normal valued expectation among the Igbo people. This value is being challenged by a number of factors. Once, it was about the financial implications of the flamboyant weddings among the Igbo people (SMITH 2017, 68). Then, it was about the denominational dissonance when the marital partners were from different churches (CHIGERE 2001, 397). Then, it was about the culture of extended families in marriages (DIKE 2001, 59), and so on. Nowadays, it would appear that the contemporary Igbo person is confronted with a combination of all these factors and more. The more serious concern now is that of a wedding choice, and it is not easy to choose between a few options. Every choice is a decision for and against the other. Every choice has its baggage, effects and implications. Every option demands a right of identity, a commitment from the Igbo in the relevance of his/her life.

The traditional wedding is a highly valued choice in Igbo land, gaining more acceptance even when it develops into occasions of extravagance and show of wealth. The church wedding is the popular option for religio-historical reasons, but it is getting challenged by social and theological factors. Court wedding, which seemed dormant before, is becoming more important owing to geo-political factors and global influence. And then there is the contemporary tendency towards the celebrated, media-promoted, sensationalized weddings, which have no relevant bearing within the Nigerian context, except that it is fanciful for the rich and underlines their social distinctions.

How would the contemporary Igbo person manage these diverging expectations? Although no current research has been done, but it would not be an exaggeration to put the percentage of Igbo people who identify as Christians around 80 to 90 (OKEKE 2019, 122). It makes this issue a serious pastoral concern for the Catholic Church, being the dominant denomination in Igbo land. Some people have remained unwedded in the church due to the wedding choices' complications. Some have done one wedding, perhaps the traditional wedding, and would or could no longer do the church wedding. Some are confronted by the consequence of their wedding not being accepted by the church community, or valued enough by the family or community, and so on.

For some, these challenges have enabled them to live a family life without the social/community or church commitments that a wedding carries. But for others, it is about the complexities of choice, of which wedding is expedient enough so they would not need to wed twice or thrice. What would or is the church doing to address this pastoral concern?

Explicating the Problem

Clarifying concepts

The concepts of church and white wedding have led to many misunderstandings. People have given different interpretations and meanings to these concepts, sometimes to promote their ideologies and other times, just to identify and distinguish the wedding type. For a majority of people both church and white wedding mean the same. But as concepts, especially in the context of Nigerian wedding discourse, both can be ideologically weaponized, if not properly identified and differentiated.

Many writers who present the white and church wedding as the same, suppose the difference is superficial and only in nomenclature (IKEDILO 2015; OBI 2010, 110). The 'white' wedding is supposed to be derived from the white wedding garment of the bride. So, the weddings in white gowns take place in the church and are called white or church weddings.

But there are other, not so superficial, angles to these names which require clarifications. With the consciousness to extricate him/herself from the systematic structures that have coined and defined his social and religious worldviews for many decades, the contemporary Igbo interprets and understands the white wedding as the wedding from the Westerners. It is a wedding type brought by Christianity, which, in his/her ideological consciousness, is a white man's religious system to destroy his/her indigenous spirituality. So, when he/she says 'white wedding', he/she is not thinking about a wedding gown in the first instance. He/she is thinking about a Western foreign wedding done in the church.

If the same wedding was to be done wearing *Agbada* or *Ishoke*, it would still be a white wedding.

Another serious angle to the term ‘white wedding’ is that it deflects the essentials of the Christian wedding as something beyond particular era and the Western socio-cultural limitations; something relevant in all Christendom. By this I mean that the term ‘white wedding’ relegates the Christian religious essence of the wedding to the background, while postulating ‘whiteness’ and its variable implications to the front. *Ipsa facto*, it robs other non-Western part of Christendom their right to Christian wedding and their right to bear such identity. Thirdly and importantly, by calling it white, such a wedding has already drawn an ideological battle line between the church wedding (as a white man’s foreign culture) and the traditional wedding (of indigenous culture), thereby exposing the Christian who is to wed to a choice of betrayal. The white wedding (church-Christian wedding) becomes, in this context, a white man’s culture, nothing more. Therefore, if only for this argument, the Igbo traditional wedding should be considered more valuable than the church wedding.

The anti-church-wedding proponents argue thus: “These foreigners came along and told us it is God that joins people in holy matrimony. In that case, in their assumption, our forefathers and mothers have had unholy matrimony (BOND 2010, 678)!” Their claim is that the church manipulates people to live according to the ancient socio-cultural forms of the white people, which the Europeans themselves have discarded many years ago and no longer submit to. If all people are equal creatures before God then the indigenous culture should be as valuable as that of the Westerner. Thus Igbo traditional wedding should equal his/her traditional wedding, which is the church wedding. Moreover, the important thing for a wedding is the consent. So why should the consent taken in front of parents and the community be less valuable than the one taken in the church before a priest? The same God in a church is ubiquitous and is surely present outside the church.

However, to avoid any ambiguity, I will mostly use the term, ‘church wedding’ to describe the Christian wedding in the church. ‘White’ wedding has pejorative connotations.

Exposing the conundrum of the Igbo Christian

Among the various tortuousness about weddings and marriages in which the Igbo Christian is entangled, the pivot of this article is on the current wave of anti-church marriage in favour of traditional marriage. Some people are overtaken by a wave of ‘Igboness’, informing them of how church wedding is a betrayal to their Igbo identity, encouraging them on how only traditional wedding should suffice. This ideology gives no room for compromise. It is either traditional wedding or church wedding. It used to be normal that couples do both traditional and church weddings so they would balance their allegiance to Christianity and their indigenusness. On the contrary, one has to justify and defend oneself for doing both weddings, especially the church wedding.

All along, there have been complaints about the financial burden of this double or triple weddings, especially with the continuous worsening condition of the economy; about the discrepancies between a sacramental monogamous wedding and a traditional wedding, joining the same couple almost at same period

in matrimony; about the theological style and bond in church wedding, and the practical expectations of marriage from a traditional wedding. These and more have busy minds in both cultural and church circles, but total separation of both weddings has not been pursued until recently. Now, the prevalent social consciousness is; church wedding vs traditional wedding.

For a long time the Igbo has lived in a pendulum of variant realities. At one corner of life is his/her indigenoussness. At another corner is Christianity. At the other corner is the socio-political conundrum of Nigeria from which he has not been able to extricate himself yet. At another corner is the Western-orientated secularism and ‘wokeness’. The Igbo grows into subconsciously normalizing his/her experiential reality of swinging his/her life pendulum to these various aspects that have become so integral to his/her being. He/she becomes Igbo when it is needed, Nigerian when he/she must, Christian when it suits, secularized Western- orientated millennial when needed. Like an amoeba, the Igbo assumes whatever form that is expedient to achieve his/her goal. But how long would the Igbo have to live in different worlds and struggle to appease them all?

Within the pastoral context, this question is very evident and relevant on the issue of wedding. The four conflicting aspects in the life of the Igbo; traditional, Christian, political, and secular, are vying for decisiveness in his/her marital family life. And the contention begins with the wedding.

Wedding is a very important event in the life of an Igbo person. In order to fully grasp that, we should understand what marriage means for the Igbo. In the traditional Igbo setting, marriage is a responsibility of immense importance. Some of the duties are: 1. To reincarnate oneself and to guard against personal obliteration 2. A duty to one’s lineage so that one’s family does not cease to exist. 3. A duty to the community (where one lives) so as to contribute to the community’s manpower and thereby live in accordance with the culture (ACHUNIKE 2017, 52). In this sense, it would appear that the very existence of the Igbo person as a community member revolves around marriage. If he /she is able to fulfil these duties around fecundity and social relevance, not wedded in the church becomes secondary. “The practice of marriage in Ibo culture is viewed as the core of the whole social structure because, until a person is married, he or she is not regarded as a distinct individual” (OKOROIKE 2009, 105). Indeed, marriage is one of the three cardinal points of human life in Igbo cosmology. “The Igbo consider birth, marriage, and death to be the three most important life events” (WILLIAMS 2020, 470). Since wedding is the occasion that initiates the marital family life, it is considered with the same importance and seriousness as marriage. One might even suppose that a good marriage starts with a good wedding.

Wedding is also important for some other reasons. It serves as an opportunity to showcase affluence, which is a social value among the Igbo people. The flamboyancy displayed in Igbo weddings have cultural roots. It was important in the olden days for a man to have the resources to cater for his wives and kids. One important occasion for showing that was the wedding. How rich or even extravagant the wedding looks, exerts conviction on the bride’s family that their in-law is capable of catering for their daughter and by extension, them. It became a thing of pride to have a wealthy in-law. So weddings became an opportunity to display one’s wealth, not only for the conviction of financial stability and provisional security, but also for the interest of social status and class distinction.

And recently, it is also an opportunity of taunting one's enemies and social intimidation.

The Igbo person, in his/her designing nature, now tends towards expediency in his/her choice of wedding. He/she has to consider which wedding would be more acceptable by the larger society, affordable and yet resounding in extravagance, religious and secular, and importantly, which wedding is of valuable relevance to his global consciousness. Navigating through these expectations and consequences of choices has been frustrating and, for some, demoralizing. Officially, there are two types of marriages in Nigeria to wed from: Traditional or statutory weddings. The choices of weddings though are: traditional, church, statutory/court, and/or secular-entertainment weddings.

a) Traditional Wedding

The traditional wedding has been a favourite to many people because of the peculiar proclivity of the Igbo people to their indigenesness. The phenomenon of indigenesness is very essential in understanding the Igbo people. The individual identity is essentially attached to his/her collective origin. The Igbo asks; *where are you from, who is your father*, before asking, *what is your name?* This is why they would travel across the globe on festive periods to come home and identify with their origin and indigenous community. This is why they would erect mansions at their ancestral homes, while living in average or below average apartments in the towns. This is why a foremost achievement of an Igbo man is to build a house in his ancestral home, even when he has no plans of going back to Nigeria. So, his/her affiliation to his/her ancestral roots is also expressed in his recognition of the traditional wedding.

There is also a new attentiveness to it. In the wake of the pro-Igbo consciousness within the socio-political context of Nigeria, the awareness and sometimes desire to uphold the Igbo identity and value it more than other phenomenon has increased. This awareness has become a whirlpool, ready to fuel any form of agitation and uprising in the political, economic, and religious spheres in Nigeria. It hopes to reinstate the pro-Igbo consciousness, and/or destroy the ideological and structural frameworks that suffocate the Igbo consciousness. This explains "the challenges of current struggles in many African countries today, including Nigeria, for a second independence from the domineering ethnic-groups and their foreign sponsors" (OBORJI 2020, 672).

In a contextual understanding of this ideology, a non-Igbo framework equals an anti-Igbo structure. This is why a part of its approach is to instil an aversion to non-Igbo elements in the mindset of Igbo people. As such, whether it is in politics or religion, society or culture, cuisine or music, in this new wave of consciousness non-Igbo elements are considered anti-Igbo and inimical to the propagation of Igbo identity. Igbo indigenesness becomes the base, the common denominator, upon which political, economic and social structures should adjust, and not the other way round.

Hence, the traditional wedding enjoys the promotion and propagation of this Igbo consciousness, as opposed to the other types of weddings in Igbo land. It has its peculiarities. It provides the valuable traditional enchantments of marriage an Igbo person expects; the colourful ceremony, music, food, and so on. It initiates a marital style that is broader than the others. It essentially incorporates the extended

families and is open to bi/polygamy. However, its most essential peculiarity is the value it has among the Igbo people. While traditional weddings have legal standings in Nigeria, its major value to the Igbo lies in its cultural value.

b) Church Wedding

With Christianity and its dominant influence in Igbo land, church weddings are very popular. Because there are many different churches, the weddings equally differ in content, style and theological meanings. The Catholic Church considers marriage to be a sacrament if the wedding is between two baptized Christians. This alone, marriage as a sacrament, confuses some Christians, and contradicts the understanding of marriage for some other Christians. Still, in Igbo land, the value of church weddings is not in its theological aspect. Sacrament or not, the relevance of church wedding for many Christians in Igbo land is in the fulfilment of church/social obligation. The best of its theological relevance to the Igbo is the blessings/prayers that the couple will get from the priest, not the sacrament-salvific aspect, or the spiritual-theological richness of being bonded in Jesus Christ. Also, that it fulfils the requirement of belonging completely to one's church family is very important. Hence, the importance of social/community acceptance for the Igbo people cannot be over-emphasized. This confronts one to wonder if, in the Catholic sense, people would still wed in the church if it would not affect any aspect of their church/community life.

Even more, since Christianity among the Igbo people, as evidenced on social media since the pro-Igbo awareness, is losing attractiveness, it would be cogent to understand how acceptable and relevant the Christian marriage would remain, and perhaps undertake serious pastoral and catechetical steps towards addressing it. One must understand the subtlety of this issue for the Catholic Church in Igbo land. Christianity in Igbo land is highly denominational, sensitively church orientated. The non-orthodox Christian denominations do not consider marriage as a sacrament, and the context of mixed marriage is not as trivial as it might seem. It is a challenge if the Catholic partner to whom marriage is a sacrament prepares him/herself accordingly for the wedding, while the non-Catholic understands it at best, as a mere religious occasion where a priest blesses their union. It is not trivial that even in non-sacramental marriages the Catholic partner still has to live out his/her Catholic faith and raise their children accordingly as Catholics (CODE OF CANON LAW, 1055 – 1165).

That, as a sacrament, it is usually indissoluble even with sexual unfaithfulness, is already challenging to some Christians. That monogamy is the only option is also considered culturally *unAfrican*, by those who consider church wedding as an invasion of foreign values. And the Catholic Church is the common anti-thesis to these different standpoints. She has to be sophisticated enough to contend values and ideological relevance with the culturally orientated anti-church consciousness on one side and the secularized-egalitarian Western influenced 'wokeness' on the other side. In the subtle irony of such combined pressures, the church needs sophisticated competence to evolve at the right pace, in the right direction.

c) Statutory/court wedding

With the exposure to globalisation's socio-political demands, especially from the Western world, court marriages are becoming serious decisions for new couples. One of the factors contributing to this is the diaspora phenomenon. The Igbo people highly value travelling and settling in foreign places for greener pastures. In order to deal with the marital and family policies that are involved in the immigration process and life in a foreign land, they have to wed in courts.

There is yet another deeper aspect to modern court weddings. This aspect is not peculiar to weddings but could be found on various issues concerning legal courts in the Igbo society. There is a sense in which the legal court system has overtaken some cultural settings and overridden their socio-cultural interpretations. The court system often thwarts the ordinance or cultural interpretation of certain situations, rendering the socio-cultural system ineffective, obsolete and meaningless. This is the case with property acquisitions, rights of inheritance, or relationship issues. It is not surprising that some Igbo people would distrust or even detest legal court system on matters that already have socio-cultural underpinnings to them. Court weddings is one of those issues where the legal system easily override the cultural interpretation.

Nonetheless, the Igbo traditional marriage setting before Christianity has no strict ethical demand on monogamy or extra-marital affairs, physical or emotional hurts. Marriage was not principally a romantic affair between two people, rather a social contract of affinity and togetherness for the two families and communities. Within the right contexts, men married more than one woman and had concubines, women had extra affairs and even have children, men assumed the sexual and provisional responsibility of their brothers' wives, men abused women physically and emotionally, women abused men sometimes physically and often emotionally. When the British Christian-orientated court system was set up, it collided with the traditional marriage on variety of issues. Extra-marital affairs, for example, became adultery, with its judgmental moral undertone (NZEKWU 2006, 87). The flexible traditional marriage was rigidified in the Christian marriage.

Through the provisions of court marriage in addressing the family and social problems of marriage and mitigate on issues between marital partners, another series of complications have been enabled. Nowadays, a partner can seek for a divorce on a number of issues, from attempted murder to 'irreconcilable differences'. Marital issues like divorce, which occurred sparingly and unceremoniously for non-profitable interests (NZEKWU 2006, 87), have become sometimes sensationalized and ideologically weaponized for financial gains and dominance. While court marriages intend to protect partners from abuses, especially in cases where the church and traditional marriages seem slow to react, yet, a motivation for court weddings now is the cultural infiltration into the Igbo concept of marriage/family from 'wokeness' and progressive idealism. The mantras of 'you do not need a man' or 'all men are scum', thrown around by women in Nollywood and social media expresses an ideology that asseverate the protection of women, but equally disavow marriage as good and safe for women. The popularity of court weddings increases by the desire of more women to wed in courts. This is because of the awareness of the social security, of finance and provisions, to which she is entitled, if the marriage was to collapse. Some of the

legal benefits of such weddings are to ensure that the woman remains the responsibility of the man after divorce, having a right to the proceeds of his hard toils, and enabling punitive advantages against the man especially when children are involved.

The other style of wedding, which I call the secular-entertainment wedding is not yet part of the social order. But among the wealthy class, it is becoming a wedding choice of signalling how westernized and affluent one is.

Synculturation and the Catholic Church

The efforts of the Catholic Church in Nigeria to integrate the church and traditional weddings into one was part of the inculturation project, which took a more serious momentum after the papal visit of Pope John Paul II in 1982. It was part of the effort to make Christianity less a foreign religion, but more a religion of the local people. One of the challenges, I would argue, is that the process of inculturation seems to concentrate more on cultural conformity. True to its concept, inculturation focuses on integrating different cultures into oneness. But in order to focus, it blurs out some essential human cultural tendencies like self-preservation and self-identity. Thus, one can see a weakness in the inculturation process on weddings in Igbo land; the indigenous elements were not, from the onset, addressed with high value and sensitivity. Instead of a balanced process where the tendency of indigenous self-identity of the people was respectfully valued, it was more like Christianity kindly assuming some aspects of the traditional wedding. With the new consciousness on 'Igboness', which has enabled the people's natural tendency towards identity politics, the weakness of inculturation has shown that there was no proper assimilation. It is the propaganda of threat and fear over the loss of cultural self-identity that causes the people's reaction of dismissing church wedding for traditional wedding. This is why I suggest synculturation.

Synculturation is the process by which two or more cultures relate with equitable balance for mutual benefits of the cultures. It takes cognizance of the importance of indigenesness in the process of inter-culturation. It is a concept where cultures engage and indulge with each other in mutual enrichment.

Mutual enrichment encourages the need for change and the openness for the achievement of it... Either the participant finds more appealing insights into his or her reality and embraces a different new world or rather finds more insights into the life structure he or she already has and thereby is enriched in his or her perception of the world. In both, change has indubitably occurred. (NWEKE 2017, 322)

Synculturation means that there is equal respect and recognition among the cultural elements such that the people do not feel alienated from their indigenesness. Both cultures concatenate and do not threaten the other with dominance.

I would like to concentrate on what the Catholic Church can do about the explicated issues of weddings with synculturation, because of her numerical and socio-political weight in Igbo land. Other churches can apply the suggestions here in their different domains. The Catholic Church in Nigeria is fully aware of the predicament and where exactly it is embroiled.

The truth is that attempts to have a marriage rite that effectively integrates catholic and traditional marriage rites have not yielded sustainable result. They have not satisfactorily met the canonical as well as statutory requirements. The issues of place and time as well as official witness of marriage have to be resolved to meet with canonical as well as statutory requirements for the celebration of marriage. (OKEKE 2014, 40)

I intend to only add to the other serious efforts and progresses made so far by soliciting for more seriousness with my suggestions.

1) Identifying and Analysing the Challenge

The Catholic Church is challenged to a new era. Whether she has taken this challenge seriously, paying attention to the new mindset, questions, concerns, needs and difficulties; and whether she has shown enough signs of readiness towards a contemporary approach to contemporary challenges in its catechetical and pedagogical apostolates, is left to be argued.

Less arguable, rather, is that the Catholic Church is struggling to keep up with the growing consternations of the newer generations from little things like dress code on church attires to bigger issues like weddings in the church. It is necessary not to be dismissive of these concerns as theologically incorrect, but to respectfully address them from the socio-cultural concerns.

- A) There is now the mindset of the new Igbo consciousness that the church has been brainwashing the Igbo people with her teachings, so as to keep them uncritical and alienated from their indigenous cultures and identities.
- B) There is also a prevailing awareness in the new Igbo consciousness that church laws were made to make the Igbo people Christians, nearer to the foreign cultures that brought Christianity than their indigenous cultures.
- C) The Igbo people have become critically aware that their cultural inclinations were neither considered nor consulted when the church canons on marriage were drafted. Hence, they were not coined in respect of their cultures or for the interest of the Igbo society. As such, the Igbo should not be involved in church marriages, or 'white wedding'. The traditional wedding is all that is needed. Church wedding after traditional wedding devalues the traditional wedding as insufficient and even inadequate. "Many Igbo people do the Church marriage or wedding mainly to remove the stigma that one has not wedded in the Church" (OKONKWO 2003, 167). This stigma must be eradicated, not through a compromise, but a subversion of the church wedding.
- D) Even more, there is an implied notion that church wedding is a disrespect to the couple's parents and elders. That a priest should certify and validate a wedding after the parents of the couples have already consented to and concluded the union in the traditional setting is disregardful.

- E) The priest, a man who might be younger than the couple and has no relationship or marital first-hand experience, cannot be the one to adjudge or permit if a couple should or should not be together.

2) *Proffering Synculturation as a Solution*

The discussions on this issue show a confusing mixture of opinions from different Christian confessions. Hence conflicting opinions and disinterests, or even aversion, should be expected. Matrimony is a sacrament in the Catholic Church. It is, as such, intrinsically different from traditional marriage. But it must not mean conflicting opposites.

Most Igbo Christians do not understand that the Catholic Church recognizes the traditional marriage as only a preparation and a prerequisite for the real marriage which is church marriage. Therefore, they do not see anything wrong with cohabitation and sexual union of the people who have only had traditional marriage. (OKEKE 2014, 39)

A sacramental teaching would not be understood or accepted by everyone. Yet, seeking for complementarity where others seek divergence, for interreligiosity instead of conflict of spiritualities, should be the Catholic way, a synculturation way.

One has to recognize that essentially the average Igbo couple is leading a marital life that is, in *stricto sensu*, neither Christian nor traditional orientated, irrespective of the type of wedding they had. While Christianity teaches the Igbo couple that marriage is a two-people affair, yet they know that as Igbo people they married a whole family in their partners. They cannot lose sight of their families and communities, which they have become part of by virtue of their cultural marital reality. They Igbo Christians are more than Christians, and that is a good thing. It does not mean that they have no religious affiliation or identity. It means that they are more than their religious identity. They can learn, respect, accept, reject, adapt, and so on. What this implies is that Igbo Christians do not have to choose between indigenesness and Christianity. They can always decide against rituals and religiousness of the indigenous spiritualities that contradict Christianity, and vice versa. Hence, synculturation is the way, church and indigenous culture together, not one versus the other.

For example, since it is of cultural value to the Igbo that his/her feasts are well attended and merriment would not lack, availing him/her of one wedding where both cultural and church elements are synchronized protects him/her from burdensome expenses.

On a single occasion, a bride can 'carry wine' to the groom, taking the cup of wine from her father to the groom, thereby making her person of choice public. The groom drinks the wine, stands up and both go to kneel before the elders. Then in the same flow the Christian exchange of ring could follow immediately after the groom takes the wine and come out to the elders with the bride. The Christian ring exchange could follow immediately after the groom takes the wine and comes out to the elders with the bride. The exchange of consent could be done through the parents/elders as they ask the traditional marital questions to the couple. The priest stands in as a witness. The prayers of the

parents/elders to the married couple could serve as the prayer of the faithful to which the priest concludes with his nuptial blessings.

In so many ways, the essential elements of the traditional and the church could be brought together in one wedding.

3) *Leading the Solution by Example through Structures*

I have three feasible propositions on how the Catholic Church can be proactive in applying synculturation in the pastoral concerns of *Ndi Igbo* on weddings.

i) A marriage rite for weddings in the Igbo Catholic churches is necessary, where the cultural and theological elements are synchronized into one aim; to afford the Igbo Christian a valid and licit marriage. Vatican II underlined the rightness of people of different cultures, Igbo people in our context, to be truly Igbo and truly Christian, through its reforms in the sacraments and liturgy. Through documents like *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963), *Lumen Gentium* (1964) *Ad Gentes* (1965), the church enabled the involvement of cultural elements in the Christian life of people, and in their mode of worship. “That the process of vernacularization or indigenization of the liturgy is part of the self-governance (or self-regulation) of the local church (always in communion) is captured by the change in liturgical law by Vatican II” (Uzukwu 2015, 138). There are difficulties to such a rite, but they are not unsurmountable hindrances.

I recognize with respect the numerous and tedious liturgical canonical works and propositions that have been done in and by the Catholic Church on this. The efforts of the CBCN towards achieving a rite, and the individual works of people like C.S. Mba, Hilary Okeke, Patrick C. Chibuko, and so on, are accessible evidence on addressing this pastoral problem. I can only urge for more, until the issue is resolved.

ii) It is also a lot of work, a responsibility the Catholic Church has already accepted in the pastoral interest of *Ndi Igbo*, to address the political-legal conundrum of combining a customary wedding and a statutory wedding. I believe that the difficulty in untangling this knot has been worsened by the fact that the church delayed till now on addressing this issue. “Religion does not only have the uphill task of repackaging and re-presenting itself to a secular world, it equally lacks any other option but to seek communion with the more decisive secular world” (NWEKE 2017, 147).

Providing the social security to the people that such a synculturated rite of marriage provides all cultural, theological and political requirements and services that a wedding in our time should provide, both nationally and internationally, would definitely reassure the people of the goodwill of the church, and attract more trust and openness towards her.

iii) It has to become officially structured and evidential that weddings are affordable to the average person, and no one can be denied of this sacrament on financial grounds. I am aware of the numerous efforts of some Catholic priests who periodically celebrate ‘mass weddings’ in their parishes where the couples pay little or nothing. I am also aware that sometimes, men's or women's groups choose to sponsor some weddings from their purses. Clearly, a lot of wonderful

pastoral works are done in many parishes so that people can receive this sacrament. Yet these efforts seem not propagated and presented well enough to the public. Consequentially, the church wedding is presented as a financially demanding occasion and so should be expunged, when that is not the case. If it becomes evident that financial situations cannot hinder a wedding, then it will be easier to attract people into a synculturated church and traditional wedding.

The church has to do more against the expensive mentality of excessiveness in ceremonies among the Igbo people. She has to communicate better that it is not church wedding that causes the extravagance. It is the cultural mindset on ostentatiousness. People deliberately avoid the core aspect of a church wedding, the prayerful-liturgical part in the church, but at the 'reception', the festivities that would follow, they are all ready for the party. The interest of many is on the entertainment after the church. Hence it becomes financially demanding to celebrate the traditional and church weddings on different occasions, providing the expected entertainments twice.

Besides entertainment, there are other frivolities whose assumed importance is only connected with the culture of ostentatiousness among the Igbo people. It is an untenable flamboyancy to have to change into three different expensively customized dresses in a wedding. Worse still, with each occasion, an unhealthy competitiveness of splurging provokes introduction of certain unsuitable things into the occasions. One wonders what a cake, for example, an expensively giant sweet flavoured made of flour cake, to be cut with a knife by the couple, has to do in an Igbo traditional wedding. Of what relevance is the cake to the cultural indigeneness of the Igbos? Of what significance is the 'cutting of cake' by two people who are supposed to be bonding in matrimony, and not cutting? From cakes and flowers to hiring expensive cars for the events, all are unnecessary burden, constituting stress and financial complications. Smith submits.

I have attended more than a twenty traditional weddings in southeastern Nigeria over the years. ... But in many ways the *igba nkwu* [traditional wedding] [[[ceremony is a performance of modernity, social class, consumption, and conspicuous redistribution. In other words, it is very much about having and spending money. (SMITH 2017, 68)

The church has to show its cards and insist officially on making weddings in the church affordable. Then, she can stand against the culture of extravagance in Igbo land.

Conclusion

We have been informed of the conflicting development, especially among the younger generations, promoting an alternative perspective against the hitherto church and/or traditional wedding style. This development creates an either-or narrative in a time when identity politics, inside and outside Nigeria, is prevalent. The narrative is: Foreign elements have destroyed the socio-cultural identity of *Ndi Igbo*. In the ideological climate of a struggle for an Eldorado 'Igboness' by disparaging non-Igbo elements and decisive structures, a vilification of 'white wedding' to promote 'traditional wedding' sounds appealing. Hence, a fight for superiority ensues. There is an increasing number of convinced propagators who discourage people from church wedding, which they succinctly connote as 'white

wedding’, suggesting its alien cultural origin and indicating its ‘superiority’. ‘White wedding’, is thus enrolled as part of the inferiority complex syndrome that suppresses whiteness to superiority. What can be done?

Beyond the readiness to change, the Catholic Church in Igbo land has to initiate the practical steps towards transformation, especially in her propagation style. The days of classroom catechetical recitation seem over, and its practical effect are not seriously felt. A new pastoral impulse suitable and matching to the contemporary sophistication in propagation is needed for her to communicate convincingly and effectively. Resources cannot be spared for technological advancement in communication, or on the utilization of social media channels.

However, more important in this impulse is the mindset. Given the pastoral situations, a revolutionary mindset is needed where the church sees alternative and opposing ideological standpoints as opportunities for mutual enrichment. With this synculturation mindset, I believe the problem of weddings in Igbo land would be resolved.

***The author declares no conflict of interest for this work**

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A Critique of “African Philosophy of Religion from a Global Perspective: Deities, Ancestors, Relationality and the Problem of Evil”

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Abstract

This critique thoroughly examines the scholarly article "African Philosophy of Religion from a Global Perspective: Deities, Ancestors, Relationality, and the Problem of Evil" written by Luís Cordeiro-Rodrigues and Jonathan Chimakonam. The main aims of this critique are to examine the article's impact on African Philosophy of Religion and evaluate its merits and limitations. Employing a qualitative research methodology, this critique examines the complex dynamics that exist between deities, ancestors, relationality, and the issue of evil within the African religious framework. In assessing the article's impact on the discipline, the critique analyses the novelty of the authors' perspectives and their capacity to propel philosophical discussions on African religious ideology. Furthermore, the paper evaluates its strengths and weaknesses, emphasizing its thorough examination of important subjects while acknowledging potential shortcomings in the portrayal of many African religious traditions. The primary objective of this critique is to present a comprehensive and well-informed evaluation of the scholarly influence of the paper in the wider context of African Philosophy of Religion. It seeks to provide valuable insights for future research and academic involvement on this particular topic.

Keywords: African philosophy of Religion, Deities, Ancestors, Problem of evil, Relationality.

Introduction

The scholarly paper titled "African Philosophy of Religion from a Global Perspective: Deities, Ancestors, Relationality and the Problem of Evil" offers an examination of the intricate dimensions of African philosophy of religion, taking into account its global implications. The authors (CORDEIRO-RODRIGUES and CHIMAKONAM, 2022) skilfully explored the complex relationship between deities, ancestors, and the issue of evil, providing insights into the African continent's diverse cultural traditions. The essay demonstrates its robustness through its thorough treatment of fundamental issues. But the article's potential impact on the Philosophy of Religion in Africa may be restricted due to the

generalization of varied religious beliefs and the lack of extensive contact with contemporary studies. The paper also provides a good foundation for scholars and researchers who wish to investigate the convergence of African Philosophy of Religion and global religious studies. This work's main contribution is its focus on relationality and its broader implications for fostering cross-cultural interaction. This adds to the current discourse surrounding the diversity and complexity of religious thought on a global scale.

In this critique, two primary objectives are identified, namely. First, to assess the article's contribution to the field of African Philosophy of Religion, determining its significance and impact. This task entails thoroughly examining the authors' viewpoints, arguments, and methodology, while also assessing the article's contribution to our comprehension of the complex dynamics between deities, ancestors, relationality, and the issue of evil within the African religious framework. Thus, this essay strives to assess the article's originality in terms of its insights and its ability to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field. Second, to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the paper. This necessitates a thorough consideration of the logical consistency and validity of the arguments put forth by the author, together with an assessment of the efficacy of the approach utilized. The primary objective of this analysis is to concurrently assess the presence of any potential shortcomings within the author's examination of numerous African religious traditions, including but not limited to oversimplifications and generalizations. Through a comprehensive analysis that encompasses an examination of both the positive aspects and limitations, the purpose of this critique is to offer an impartial and well-informed evaluation of the article's scholarly significance and its influence within the wider domain of African Philosophy of Religion.

This critique steers to its objectives through the following subheads: methodology, the overview of the paper, the strengths and weaknesses of the article and conclusion.

Methodology

The qualitative research method is the most appropriate methodology for critiquing the essay. The selection is mostly influenced by the inherent characteristics of the topic matter and the objectives of the critique. Qualitative research has a notable proficiency in capturing the intricate subtleties and complexities that are inherent in cultural and philosophical analysis. These aspects are of utmost importance in the discourse around African Philosophy of Religion. There are several compelling justifications for the suitability of qualitative research.

A comprehensive comprehension: Qualitative research facilitates a thorough examination of the complex concepts and themes expounded upon throughout the text, including deities, ancestors, relationality, and the problem of evil. This approach facilitates a comprehensive analysis of the cultural milieu, historical foundations, and philosophical principles, yielding a profound and intricate comprehension of the topic.

The application of qualitative research also facilitates interpretive analysis in the exploration of multiple views and interpretations within African Philosophy of Religion. This methodology enhances the comprehension of the diverse perspectives articulated in the article and promotes a holistic understanding of the manifold levels of significance embedded within the text. Further, qualitative research is suitable for studying cultural ideas. For example, the ideas discussed in the essay can be better understood by examining the cultural settings, societal influences, and historical trends that shape them.

Finally, the qualitative method recognizes the inherent subjectivity of human experiences and beliefs, which play a crucial role in the examination of philosophical and theological ideas. This methodology enables the researcher to explore the intricacies of individual and collective perceptions, providing a broad analysis that considers the diverse range of opinions and perspectives within the discipline.

Overview of the Paper

In their paper, Cordeiro-Rodrigues and Chimakonam (2022) examine and provide an analysis of relevant concepts in the African philosophy of religion. The paper does this from two distinct perspectives: a mono-disciplinary approach and a comparative framework. This article seeks to establish a forum for continuous discourse and advancement within the discipline, with a particular focus on fundamental notions, including deities, ancestral lineage, interconnectedness, and the philosophical quandary of malevolence. It also addresses the need for a more inclusive and diverse approach to the study of Philosophy of Religion, particularly in the context of Africa and its global significance.

The paper emphasizes the significance of this discipline within the broader context of African metaphysics, and highlights the increasing inclination of present-day African philosophers to actively participate in the advancement of their discipline, underscoring the significance of their contributions within the current intellectual milieu. The emergent state of African Philosophy of Religion, contrasting it with other well-established aspects of African metaphysics was presented.

They also emphasize the importance of adopting a global outlook when examining the field of Philosophy of Religion, especially considering the diminishing influence of Western epistemological frameworks. The authors propose to endorse the exploration of African philosophical viewpoints in conjunction with those of other civilizations, such as China, with the aim of promoting intercultural interchange and fostering mutual understanding. They stressed the importance of recognizing and respecting diverse epistemic standpoints which they argue is a means to promote healthy intercultural relations.

On the methodology adopted, the authors identify a range of comparative methods that investigate the connections and disagreements between philosophical ideas from Africa and China, providing interdisciplinary insights. The paper offered examples from many scholars demonstrating comparative exercises' advantages. These examples offer insights into the interrelatedness of cultural ideas and values. These examples include Wei Hua (2022) in his "Augustine, Ancestors, and the Problem of Evil," highlighting a noteworthy correlation between Augustine's widely accepted Western conception of evil and the underlying concepts in African traditional religions. Another example includes Naomi Thurston (2022) who draws a comparison between the concepts of communal bonds through the practice of ancestor commemoration in the Akan in Ghana and East Asian cultures. The examination of shared characteristics across these civilizations reveals the significance of cooperative and complementary coexistence, not just for individuals but also for varied cultural groups. They further argue that in the contemporary times, individuals hailing from many nationalities relocate to different cultural regions.

Furthermore, important topics are treated, including the problem of evil, the essence of divinity, acts of selflessness, ancestral reverence, and communal bonds, within the framework of African Philosophy of Religion. The paper examines how these issues are explored by different authors in the special issue, providing valuable insight on the varied viewpoints and analyses given within the article. The paper underscores the significance of these exchanges in advancing the boundaries of knowledge within the discipline.

In conclusion, the essay underscores the importance of comparative studies in the field of African Philosophy of Religion and highlights its potential to enrich the development of novel philosophical conceptions. The paper accentuates the significance of multidisciplinary perspectives and worldwide involvement in cultivating a more comprehensive understanding of the religious ideology, specifically within the African milieu. The article, published in a special issue, is acknowledged as a crucial advancement in addressing epistemic inequities and fostering an inclusive discourse within the field of Philosophy of Religion in Africa.

The Strengths of the Paper

In the article Cordeiro-Rodrigues and Chimakonam (2022) offers a number of notable strengths that make a substantial contribution to the ongoing discussion surrounding African Philosophy of Religion and its position within the broader global philosophical context. The article exhibits some noteworthy strengths, which are as follows:

1. **Interdisciplinary Approach:** The paper employs an interdisciplinary methodology, incorporating perspectives from several academic disciplines such as philosophy, religious studies, and cultural anthropology. This methodology enhances the investigation of African Philosophy of Religion and facilitates a thorough comprehension of its fundamental principles (see CORDEIRO-RODRIGUES & CHIMAKONAM, 2022: 3).
2. The study adeptly situates African Philosophy of Religion within a broader global perspective. By actively exploring philosophical concepts

originating from other cultural contexts, the authors facilitate the development of a sophisticated understanding of the shared characteristics and distinctions between African religious traditions and those of other cultures. Consequently, this process cultivates an environment conducive to cross-cultural discussion and promoting mutual understanding.

3. The work places significant importance on comparing African and Chinese philosophies, thereby enhancing the discourse on a range of ideas including deities, ancestors, sacrifice, and the problem of evil. The application of a comparative approach in this context offers a more expansive viewpoint and underscores the interrelatedness of philosophical concepts within diverse cultural frameworks (CORDEIRO-RODRIGUES and CHIMAKONAM, 2022).
4. The article skilfully articulates prominent subjects including the essence of divinity, the problem of evil, and the significance of forebears (Ancestors) in African religious ideology. This investigation enhances the comprehension of the intricacies and subtleties intrinsic to African Philosophy of Religion, hence illuminating the various viewpoints within the discipline (CORDEIRO-RODRIGUES and CHIMAKONAM, 2022).
5. The paper makes a valuable contribution to the advancement of epistemic justice by recognizing and emphasizing the significance of multiple philosophical traditions. The concept in question poses a challenge to the prevailing hegemony of Western philosophical discourse, while also revealing the importance of fostering mutual respect and acknowledging the legitimacy of many cultural viewpoints (CORDEIRO-RODRIGUES and CHIMAKONAM, 2022).
6. It catalyses debate and collaboration between diverse philosophical traditions by emphasizing the importance of building intercultural communication and understanding. This highlights the importance of cultural variety and stresses the common values that can foster positive intercultural relationships (CORDEIRO-RODRIGUES and CHIMAKONAM, 2022).

A careful examination of the paper shows that the article's inclusive methodology, international contextualization, and focus on comparative study provide a substantial contribution to the progression of African Philosophy of Religion within a wider philosophical dialogue. This phenomenon presents opportunities for additional scholarly investigation and discourse, ultimately enhancing the comprehension of religious ideology within a worldwide framework.

Weaknesses of the Paper

The present analysis aims to provide a critique which will be based solely on the information supplied in the text.

1. **Insufficient Depth of Analysis:** Despite the article's assertion of offering a comprehensive perspective on the African Philosophy of Religion, it falls short in thoroughly examining distinct African religious practices and their multifaceted philosophical foundations. The paper primarily

- emphasizes the theoretical framework rather than extensively exploring individual cultural intricacies and difficulties in African culture.
2. **Lack of Theoretical Engagement:** The paper has a deficiency in its engagement with established theoretical frameworks within the field of African Philosophy of Religion. The provided work lacks sufficient consideration of key philosophical discourses and fails to actively participate in contemporary discussions within the area. The article's limited connection with prior scholarship may constrain its overall impact and breadth of contributions to the subject.
 3. **Excessive Focus on Comparative Analysis:** The article's primary objective is to stimulate comparative dialogues pertaining to the subject matter. However, it appears that there is an overemphasis on the comparison of African philosophical notions with those originating from other cultural traditions, namely Chinese and Western philosophies. The aforementioned emphasis can potentially eclipse the inherent worth and distinctive contributions of African Philosophy of Religion, possibly diminishing the prominence of the African perspective.
 4. **Insufficient Empirical Support:** The article exhibits a dearth of empirical evidence to substantiate its assertions and arguments, particularly in the examination of distinct African religious practices and their associated ramifications. The inclusion of empirical facts, case studies, or examples from a range of African religious contexts might have enhanced the article's overall arguments and bolstered its authenticity.
 5. **Concluding Remarks and Implications:** The article's conclusion is succinct and does not extensively underscore the ramifications of the offered research for subsequent investigations or the advancement of the African Philosophy of Religion. A more comprehensive and insightful conclusion would have strengthened the research's importance and offered a distinct path for future scholarly pursuits in the respective topic.

In a nutshell, the essay endeavours to provide insight into the African Philosophy of Religion within a global framework. However, it would have been advantageous for the article to further explore particular cultural settings, improve its theoretical rigour, and adopt a more nuanced approach to comparative comparison. The article's effect and contribution to the field of African Philosophy of Religion may have been enhanced by incorporating empirical support and presenting a more comprehensive conclusion.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this critique of "African Philosophy of Religion from a Global Perspective: Deities, Ancestors, Relationality, and the Problem of Evil" highlights the importance of the article's scholarly contribution to the discipline of African Philosophy of Religion. The qualitative analysis conducted in this critique has brought attention to the complex interrelationship among different philosophical notions in the African religious setting. This analysis has provided insights into the extensive cultural history and varied views that are encompassed within this field of study.

While acknowledging the article's benefits in terms of its broad investigation of significant concepts and analytical insights, the assessment nevertheless notes certain flaws. These encompass the possibility of oversimplifying intricate religious beliefs and the necessity for a more comprehensive exploration of distinct African cultural traditions and present scholarly work.

In the future, it is crucial for academics and researchers to expand upon the fundamental principles established in this essay, employing its valuable perspectives as a catalyst for additional multidisciplinary investigations and intercultural discourse. The critique highlights the significance of promoting a more sophisticated and inclusive comprehension of African Philosophy of Religion. It advocates for an all-encompassing approach that recognizes the varied and intricate nature of religious beliefs throughout the African continent.

The critique ultimately catalyses scholars to persist in their exploration and advancement of knowledge in the field. By utilizing the insights and challenges presented in the article, scholars are encouraged to foster a more comprehensive and robust comprehension of African Philosophy of Religion within the global framework. Through the adoption of a nuanced and culturally sensitive methodology, scholars have the potential to make valuable contributions to the continuing scholarly dialogue surrounding the intricate and numerous aspects of religious cognition. This approach can facilitate the cultivation of mutual respect and comprehension among individuals representing diverse philosophical traditions.

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