

Review

Cultural hegemony and Africa's development process

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This work is about cultural hegemony and Africa's development process. It examines the backwardness associated with the truncation of African cultural modes of development and the unsuccessful adaptation to western systems introduced by colonial powers. Among the Africa's lost cultural values, as stated in this work, include the African languages for thinking and planning development processes; sense of community life for effective community organization and development which also would have culminated in the evolution of an ideology for state development in Africa. The paper points out the challenges posed by the destruction of Africa's cultural values especially language and conceptualization; traditional religion; sense of community life; social capital development; and, democratic system. The paper accentuates the point that Africa should desist from what could be regarded as the 'colonial overstretch' and finally, argues that because of the adjustment failures to western traditional systems by African states, the revival or equipment of African traditional values for development, constitute a way forward.

Key words: Africa, culture, development, hegemony, values, trajectories.

INTRODUCTION

One of the impacts of colonialism in Africa was the imposition of alien culture, which eventually pervades the various sectors of Africa's development, such as political, economic and cultural, through the medium of language and western education. It can be recalled that several European powers, such as British, German, French, Belgian, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese scrambled for African states and controlled the states acquired by them. Irrespective of the colonial power claiming authority, the impact on all the African states was similar, on the basis of which we can study the problem of cultural domination, arising from colonialism as a whole, as all the states colonized were dominated and had their cultural values

especially their languages stunted.

The predominance of western cultures following their imposition on African states poses as a stumbling block to the growth and maturity of African cultures. These dominant non-African cultures have assumed "naturally" unquestionable statuses and by virtue of their structural privileges, have incorporated the stunted and weakened cultures of African societies. Unfortunately, it is on the basis of non-African cultures that parameters, practices, values and concepts are consciously determined and organized. This portends itself, according to Ayantayo (2000:18), as a dangerous trend for the proper understanding of Africa's worldview and auto-centric

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resistance to colonial rule: Chimurenga resistance in Zimbabwe; Battle of Isandhlawana and Maji-Maji uprising in Tanganyika; Battle of Adowa in Ethiopia; Asante Resistance in Ghana; Somori Ture in Mandika Empire; and, Libyan resistance. All these resistances were sub optimal and did not produce expected results. The complexity of the African struggle against European intrusion was further complicated by the situation that the efforts of the European intruder were complemented by the African proxies through some form of collaboration. Perhaps, the only exemption was the case of Ethiopia which was able to defeat Baratieri's Italian Army and its Eritrean allies at the battle of Adowa. But as it is often said, "a tree cannot make a forest". Also worthy of note is the resilience demonstrated by the Opobo Kingdom by King Jaja and his men. The Europeans transcended most of the resistance in Africa to establish their dominion over Africa. It is therefore true to say that Africa succumbed to the quest of domination by European countries because of the problem of capacity and thus bowed to the superior fire power of the European countries. In sum, the incapacity of Africans as earlier noted was a product of lack of cooperation, unity, nationalism and commitment to common purpose.

What is so far clear is that African Nations were subdued by superior European powers. It is also clear that colonialism terminated the African modes of production. Also clear is the objective which motivated the European ambition to subjugate the African continent. Cecil Rhodes a British advocate of colonialism cited in Payne and Nassar (2006:59) gave the European motivation as both nationalism and economic interest. For him:

Britain must find new lands from which we can easily obtain raw materials and at the same time exploit the cheap slave labour that is available from the natives of the colonies. The colonies also provide a dumping ground for the surplus goods produced in our factories.

With that objective, the Europeans set out to colonize their captive societies of Africa. The motive is noted in the extant literature of colonialism. The policy of grandeur, which explains the expansionist quest of Europe in the international system, reveals the domination intention of Europe not only in Africa but also in other parts of the world. Domination, as conceived by European states, was a strategic theme in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The growth of European power during these centuries had enabled Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, and other European countries to thrust outwards to take control of Africa, North and South America and some other regions of the world in order to Westernize these areas world and dominate them.

Westernization did not only ensure that countries colonized were westernized, but it also ensured the extermination of their cultures. It has been argued that the Arab, Aztec, Chinese, Mogul (Indian), Persian and

other non-European dynasties and empires collapsed as a result of the domination and shaping of the international system in the image of Europe (Iwara, 2009:60). It is observed that the expansion of the Europeans over the rest of the globe was conceived as "a cardinal rule" of themselves forming an exclusive club for enjoying superior rights to those of other political communities. Apart from the political explanations as to why the Europeans considered it necessary to dominate other peoples of the world, economic explanations also exist.

From the economic fronts are the reasons that scientific and technological advances which sprang from the period of the Renaissance (about 1400-1650) in Europe, brought the Industrial Revolution which began in the mid 1700s in Great Britain and then spread to the rest of Europe, Canada and the United States. The industrialized European countries then saw the need to find raw materials, other resources such as human, and markets to fuel and fund their capitalist expansion. The capitalist expansion invariably promoted colonialism. The result eventually was an era of European imperialism, which subjected Africa to colonial domination.

Whether the political or the economic thesis predominates, is immaterial, the problem is that domination became the result and under which the cultures of African countries were subjugated below utilization for development. The provocative that motivates this discourse concerns the question of why African cultures were as vulnerable as to evaporating their intrinsic values to the extent that recovering them is seen by many as a mission impossible. This is what some scholars have described as the African predicament (Adefuye, 1992:2).

In line with the objective of providing a descriptive insight into the trajectory of culture and its nexus with state capacity building for development in this discourse, the qualitative approach is adopted. The discourse is presented argumentatively and analytically. The discussion of the paper consists of four sections. The first section introduces the subject. It articulates the problem and the motivations which fired the urge to write the paper, as well as the methodology. The second section brings in the conceptual prologue, while the third section discusses the African cultural values and their application for State capacity building, Section four is the conclusion. The paper makes two claims: The first claim is that the growth and maturity of African cultures were stunted by colonialism; and the second is that African cultures are important tools for sustainable development in Africa.

CONCEPTUAL PROLOGUE

Culture

Culture involves a set of traditions, beliefs, and behaviour which people express and hold. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

despondency and psychological trauma of inferiority complex which continues to characterize African's behaviour till day. Some philosophers in fact argue that the African predicament is ontological (Okolo cited in Ogudu, 2001: 46). For him, the effects of this ontological nature of Africans have permeated almost every facet of life in Africa. This accordingly, in his opinion, has affected the auto centric parameters of African development.

Explaining the process of Africa's cultural evaporation, Okorie (2001:50) states that, usually, in a normal wheel of cultural evaporation, when two cultures or more come into contact, a gradual process of mutual cultural diffusion develops, where each of the cultures consciously and sometimes unconsciously assimilate something or some things of the other cultures. Dominance for him comes in, when a culture demonstrates advanced postures over the other due to its highly developed techniques and media of expression, than the weaker. From this perspective, the western culture was presented as the possessor of a higher and superior culture, while the African culture was presented as inferior culture by the mono-vocal West that controls the intensive contact. The tool employed by the West was to discredit the African culture below acceptability. The implication of this was that the influence of western culture on Africa took a dominating dimension especially during the scramble for Africa which was facilitated by the Berlin Conference of 1885. Within this development, Africa was caught in a quagmire of new cultures, ideologies, attitudes and values. It was against this background that Africa lost its traditional or cultural trajectories of development as the era of colonialism and the subsequent neo-colonial situation sets in.

Hegemony

Whereas hegemony is the domination of one system over another or others, cultural hegemony is the over bearing influence of one culture over another or other cultures, leading to cultural extermination. This can be properly understood when we examine African colonization and neo-colonization by western powers. At the pre colonial times, there were African political systems which delivered the responsibilities of government to African societies. Thus, there were African governments in Oyo, Benin, Ashanti, Igbo, Songhai, Mali, Mossi, Zulu, Hausa-Fulani, etc. All these governments were stable before the coming of the Europeans. Colonialism connotes direct administrative control of a country by external powers. The literature of colonialism reveals that before 1921, Britain controlled about 25% of the land and population of the world. This is not to say that there was no colonialism before British colonial domination. Colonialism in fact existed before British domination. In fact, Europeans at a point in time were being dominated by non-European societies. The Turks, Huns and the Mongols at a certain

time in history dominated some parts of Europe and America. In any case, it was during the period of colonialism that Europe expanded beyond the European continent to explore, dominate, and exploit other areas of the world.

As the world moves into the 21st century, the classical type of colonialism is already giving way for a new mode of indirect exploitation, exploration and domination, implying that colonialism left a permanent legacy of domination. In contemporary times, this is described as neocolonialism. Payne and Nassar (2006: 60) noted that the European conquest of the world societies through colonization transformed the colonized societies forever. Most of them deprived of their major resources they came across. Many of them lost their languages when Europeans imposed their own languages upon those under control. It is no surprise that... the official languages of most of Africa are European ones.

Odugu (2001: 40) summed up the predicaments of Africa arising from colonialism as involving psychological, philosophical and identity crises. Psychologically, according to him, the cumulative effect of Africa's past with regard to historical disaster of the people for instance, was slave trade and conquest of Africa which plunged Africa into a slum of despondency and the psychological trauma of inferiority complex which characterizes Africa's relations with others till today. According to him, the systematic denigration of Africa in general as a people without culture, religion, history and philosophy impacted so much on Africa, to the extent that Africa was quick in accepting inferiority status and in asserting the superiority of the Europeans. This was accentuated by Senghor (1976: 17) when he stated that:

African misfortunes have been that our secret enemies while defending their values, made us despise our own.

On philosophical grounds of the crises, Odugu (2001:42) contends that the inferiority accepted tacitly by Africans casts doubt on the complete humanity of the African, in terms of equality with others. Coupled with this was the denigration of the African religious, cultural and social institutions purportedly regarded as inferior in relation to that of the white. Not even the Bantu philosophy which was an effort by Placid Temple who was able to assert that the behaviour of the African is motivated by his own principles, could reverse the philosophical axiom (Placid Temple, cited by Odugu, (2001:41). Although, Temple's work, according to Odugu became an inspiration for many philosophers who took it as a paradigm for African philosophy, the identity crisis, according to the argument, reduced the confidence of the average African on Africanity. The implication being the European cultures shaped and re-oriented African people to the extent that they lost confidence in their traditional values and sense of nature.

Table 1. Showing the subjugated West African Languages.

States	Official Language	Some of the Largely Lost Traditional Languages
Nigeria	English	Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Efik, Lokaa, etc
Gambia	English	Mandika, Wolof, etc
Ghana	English	Akan, Dagaare, Waale, Ewe, GA, etc.
Liberia	English	Krega, Mande, Kwa, Mei, etc.
Sierra Leone	English	Krio, Mende, Temme, Kono, Kissi, Susu, etc.

Source: Derived from various internet sources.

This also suggests that instructions for development may differ from language to language, meaning that the development problems of African communities first of all start from the language used for policy making, production processes and other economic and political activities. For instance, there is a general saying in Africa which goes thus; this is part of the problem many Africans using English and French languages face.

What then has Africa lost in terms of languages? Greenberg (1963) classified four major language families of Africa stunted by the European invasion. These are:

- a. Afro-Asiatic, formerly known as Hamiti-Semitic, spoken in North Africa and part of East Africa.
- b. The Nilo-Saharan spoken in much of central Africa and East Africa.
- c. The Niger-Kordofanian, which are spoken in West Africa, Central and Southern Africa.
- d. Khoisan family of languages spoken in the Southwestern flag of Africa and around Namibia.

Although some people may argue that some of these languages are still being spoken in Africa, the point is that such languages are rendered too circumscribed to exist as viable tools or factors of development. Another point is that because the languages were not allowed to mature, they seem to have lost the capacity to facilitate development thinking. This means African States would have to facilitate research on African languages in African Studies Institutes.

African cultural values were tools of development in the pre-colonial era in Africa. For instance, African conceptions were used in the pre-colonial era. In the agricultural sector where many Africans were engaged, language was used to characterize seedlings, describe planting processes, explain production of food crops, describe its consumption and conduct trade relations. These processes can be modified traditionally to encourage auto-centric practices and participation in the sector. In the area of traditional medicine, the traditional herbalists could use the African languages to describe doses, ailments and application, and conceptualize the typology of herbs and their application. Not only was language and conceptions used for production of goods and services in the pre-colonial times, but also used for traditional

education in various occupations such as farming, blacksmith, trading, weaving and other vocations in African societies.

The arrival of the colonial powers ensured that the African languages were discouraged, at least not used in teaching and learning as English was proclaimed as the official language. Alexander (2008:27) recalled that the colonial administration in Nigeria in 1882 issued an education ordinance making the speaking, reading, and writing of English compulsory in all schools. This ordinance subjugated the Nigeria languages (Table 1). The same problem was unleashed on other African languages throughout the British West Africa, For instance, the Anglophone West African states largely lost the following languages:

In the contemporary times, the traditional languages could be equipped and used as instructional medium in education for teaching and learning in primary, secondary and university levels. This step could help not only to address the falling standards of education in Africa, but to equip the languages for thinking and planning development. African languages could be used to make government policies and public laws so that they are well understood and obeyed. English language is spoken by about 15% of Africans, (Alexander, 2008: 15), while some misinterpret English. For instance, in Gambia, like other states of Anglo West Africa, people would say "I am coming" while "leaving". Some use the same pronoun (He or She) interchangeably. All these and many more problems do not make for effective communication that can facilitate development in a competitive world.

In spite of the high incidence of language diversity, a huge number of Africans do find themselves having to live in places other than their original abode and they conveniently possess some other languages, which makes the question of multiplicity not very tenable. In Nigeria for instance, Igbo and Yoruba, usually spoken by about 50% of Nigerians both possess a large number of words that are similar. For instance, table two shows us some of these similarities that can result in national of sub-regional language (Table 2).

Sense of community life

African traditional communities were quite noted for their

the gift of bountiful harvest. Although, one may say that such festivals are somehow being held in Africa, but such ceremonies are not usually full blown as they are lacking in motivation and enforcement which motivate activities in the area of agricultural production. It can be recalled that western civilization led to the rural-urban population drift, and the neglect of traditional ethos. We can go on and on again and again to count Africa's losses of these cultural values.

There are certain indices, which make African religion more rewarding for developmental activities of African states. One of them is to look at the dispensation of justice where some level rightness is necessary. In Courts of Law in Africa, the Bible and the Quran are used to swear or take oath that what they say in court is true before the court of law. But Africans general belief that one can swear with the Bible and Quran and no harm can come out of it. Rather, what Africans fear is swearing in the name of African Deity that they belief is closer to them and therefore more effective. The fact is that Africans do not swear by their gods unreasonably, but they can do so with what they consider as foreign gods. This does not mean that African traditional religion does not have disadvantages. The Chief Priests in some cases act extra-religiously. But in the balance, it is important for African states to promote African religion especially in oath taking to promote transparency and accountability in government

Africa's social capital development

The challenge of unemployment in Africa is one that the continent of Africa is faced as we inch deep into the twenty first century. There are new dawn of questions concerning unemployment, poverty, and well-being of the African people. The African traditions before the coming of the colonizers were those in which families and communities fully employed the people through the traditional occupation system. In other words, under the traditional occupation system, populations were not redundant. In fact, it was un-African to be unemployed. The coming of the European colonizers, revised this trend of Africa's value of employment of the people on traditional occupational lines such as farming or employment in agriculture, carpentry, tailoring, blacksmith, horticulture, and so on. Since the dawn of western civilization in Africa, the responsibilities hitherto carried by families and communities were transferred to the nation state.

The nation-state under the European arrangement or culture is the depositary of the ultimate role providing what they describe as good life to its teeming population through the provision of employment, social amenities, infrastructural development, and managing the ultimate lot of its citizens generally. As Payne and Nassar (2006: 83) noted:

The nation-state, which since the treaty of Westphalia (1648) has been the political institution on which mankind has relied on the wide variety of benefits (whether it be political, social or economic) has been placed under enormous pressure.

Meanwhile, the nation-state in Africa is not properly equipped to assume its historic responsibility in line with the way Max Weber and other classical authors describe state responsibility. In Max Weber's terms, according to Payne and Nassar (2006: 85), the nation-state is:

an organization composed of numerous agencies led and coordinated by the state leadership (executive authority) that has the ability or authority to make and implement the binding rules of all the people as well as the parameters of rule making for other social organizations in a given territory, using force if necessary to have its way.

Unfortunately, the European created nation-state in Africa is unable to fulfill conventional expectations. It also cannot provide fulfillment in an average traditional African society relative to what was obtainable before the introduction of the European nation-state's system.

The point however is that the subjugation of the ideals of the traditional African society and its replacement with the western nation-state, displaced Africans from their traditional way of human development. Therefore, it is arguable that the African traditional society system which had a simple and more rewarding method of human capital development would serve a better purpose for Africans.

At the pre-colonial times, traditional education was based on the vocations of parents. Thus vocations such as carpentry Blacksmith Traditional medicine Bricks laying and so on were professions handed down to children by way of training. These various vocations or professions enable Africans to carry out the production of goods and services in African societies before the European intervention.

It is imperative for Africa to start encouraging the development of these vocations, especially those that are technologically driven, such as Blacksmith and African Art and creativity to continue with their technological innovations, to bail Africa out of technological dependency in the future. Africa is blessed with natural resources of various types, but unfortunately these bountiful natural resources are thrown to the faces of international economic actors at give away prices (Nwoke, 2013:21). Apart from crude Oil, Africa is blessed with mineral resources such as Asbestos, Fireclay, Graphite, Kaolin, Manganese Limestone etc. The government of African states could encourage the production of equipment or tools which had begun with the Blacksmiths in the pre-colonial period for processing Africa's natural resources. This will reduce Africa's dependence on

Pickering.

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