

*Full Length Research*

# African philosophy: A nebulous label for demeaning indigenous philosophies of people of Africa

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The dark complexioned African academics have written profusely about 'African philosophy' and are consequently causing some confusion in the philosophic realm. A continental tag implies homogeneity of the people on the continent which is not the case. Embracing a nebulous term, 'African philosophy' has a semblance of emotional reactivity. The dark complexioned African academics while in European universities were caricatured as descendants of a people who had no history or philosophy. They wanted to prove their academic worth and thus embraced the term 'African philosophy'. The nebulousness of the term 'African philosophy' needs to be exposed so that philosophers focus on the then core issues of contextual philosophic thinking of the dark complexioned indigenes of Africa. The term 'African' is interrogated and the works of renowned 'African' philosophers were purposively selected and critically analysed to expose the contributions of these academics to the perpetuation of the nebulous term.

**Key words:** African philosophy, nebulous label, indigenous philosophies.

## INTRODUCTION

The term 'African philosophy' should not be taken simplistically, just as a label of a philosophy. It is so complex and multi-faceted that it is difficult to decipher whether it is a philosophy; of, for or about Africans. The illusory nature of 'African philosophy' stems from the complexity of the term 'African'. It is imperative that one clarifies the 'Africanness' of anything for instance a philosophy, before engaging in discourses. Some of the issues that are considered in discourses about being African are; spatiality, temporality and racialism (Higgs and Smith, 2002). Thus the term 'African' is quite nebulous.

The coining of the term 'African philosophy' has some of its roots in some philosophers who have made claims that there was no distinctive philosophy that influenced the livelihoods of the people that lived on the continent of Africa before colonialism. Mudimbe (1988) postulates

that, 'Africa is an invention of Europe'. The implication is that philosophy was alien to the people on the continent of Africa and that the livelihoods of the people on the continent could only be understood through the philosophy of the people of the West. Mudimbe (1988) further connotes that the people on the continent had no 'civilisation' since civilisation is influenced by a distinctive philosophy'. Such a consideration has limitations since 'civilisation' also had its roots in Egypt. According to Pheko (2012);

Africans built the city of Memphis in ancient Egypt in 3100 B.C. Greeks built Athens in 1200 B.C. The Romans built Rome in 1000 B.C. Africans invented writing. It was Hieroglyphics before 3000 B.C. and Hieratic alphabet shortly after this. Demotic writing was developed about 600 B.C., while a Kushite script was used in 300 B.C. Other African scripts were Merotic, Coptic, Amharic,

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Sabeen, G'eez, Nsibidi of Nigeria and Mende of Mali. There were many others such as the Twi alphabet of the Twi people of Ghana.

Thus with the invention of writing and the irrigation technology, the shaduf, some indigenes on the African continent were the forerunners of civilisation. There is no sincerity in that the indigenes of Africa lacked philosophic guidelines of civilisation (James, 1954) since there are speculations about the origins of writing being in Africa. Also according to Pheko (2012), the ancient educated Greeks received their education in Africa, Mizraim (ancient Egypt). The claim is corroborated by Herodotus, "the father of European history". Thus 'Africans' by virtue of being inhabitants of the continent of Africa are not inferior in terms of philosophic thinking and civilisation. In the same line of thinking, Higgs and Smith (2002) are contented that before colonialism, 'Africans' had a world view that was uniquely their own and that could be contrasted with the scientific world-view believed to be characteristically Western.

The reference of Egyptian philosophy and civilization as 'African' has some controversies surrounding it. Some Eurocentric philosophers claim that the light complexioned people of Egypt are precluded from the label 'African' and that the label is meant for the dark complexioned people south of the Sahara who are racialistically classified as Negroids.

There is a contention about 'African philosophy' which stems from that, Placid Tempels, a European missionary claims that he is the 'father' of 'African Philosophy'. What this means is yet to be explained since it's not clear about what one would have fathered about a philosophy purported to be of the whole continent (Hountondji, 1996). The claim could be aiming at fore-closing the contributions of other scholars and to afford the claimant great fame since there has been no one who has been credited with a title of the fatherhood of a philosophy of the whole continent of Africa. The term 'African philosophy' needs to be interrogated with considerations of spatiality, temporality and the racist aspect.

### **Spatial aspect about African philosophy**

One wonders if there is a philosophy that does not transcend continental boundaries. If philosophies were restricted to such boundaries then there could have been five distinctive philosophies each with its peculiarities that are determined by continental boundaries. Just as there is an 'African philosophy', there should be an/a; American, Australian, Asian and European philosophy. Since there is no other continent used as an adjective to qualify a philosophy then there are contentious issues surrounding the so-called 'African philosophy'. In some philosophy discourses there is reference to British philosophy and American philosophy. Some people may think that pragmatism can be referred to as the American

philosophy but it refers to the USA only and does not go as far as Chile and Alaska which are the other states on the continent. The national descriptor of philosophy is equally confusing. A critical reflection of the national descriptor of a philosophy complicates the nature of the term 'philosophy' since a philosophy that is confined to a nation state appears as if there is reference to national ethos. The national ethos of a people is concerned with the creed formed from the shared values and traditions through which the nation views its past, present and future. Thus it is the integrating doctrine that defines a nation's identity and bonds it into a coherent social group (Olela, 1984).

The continental ascription of a philosophy has implications that there are geographical features and climatic conditions that are peculiar and homogenous to the whole of Africa. It also implies that the people on the continent with 'homogenous' physical features and climatic conditions are also 'homogenous' in their thinking. The thinking about the homogeneity of Africa is fallacious when there is a consideration of the etymology of the term 'Africa'. The name 'Africa' is believed to have been coined from weather conditions as described by the ancient Greeks, Romans and Phoenicians (Olela, 1984). It is believed that 'Africa' is derived from the Greek word 'aphrike' which means 'land that is free from cold and horror' (Pheko, 2012). It is also believed that the etymology of the term 'Africa' could have been from the Roman word, 'aprica' meaning sunny or Phoenician word 'afar' meaning dust. The Greeks, Romans and Phoenicians had experiences of North Africa where the weather was relatively warm, sunny and dusty (Wilford, 1999). However, there are no homogenous weather conditions for the whole continent of Africa.

The spatial consideration for labelling a philosophy is misleading since Africa has heterogeneous people with diverse world views, socio-historical and geographical situations. The people of northern Africa, central and southern Africa are not homogenous in the way they view the world. Thus there cannot be a common philosophy for the whole continent of Africa.

In Europe there were some stages of development of philosophies. Each philosophy is believed to have had its own epoch. That there was a period of philanthropism does not mean that during that epoch there was nothing in the Europeans' lives that was attributable to rationalism, naturalism nor pragmatism. These philosophies have been there in Europe and amongst all the people of the world. Through the ages, all the philosophies have been there but the proponents of different philosophies had foci on the interpretations of life issues that had prominence in the then times.

### **Temporal aspect about 'African philosophy'**

A people with a language have a culture and obviously a

philosophy (Anyanwu, 1989; Gyekye, 1987; James, 1954; Tempels, 1945). The colonialists found that the indigenes of the African continent had their indigenous languages hence cultures and indigenous philosophies. Since the philosophies were not documented in most societies, the colonialists demeaned the philosophies and declared that the indigenous Africans had no philosophies. Immerwahr (1992) described Africa as an unhistorical continent and that the Africans had no civilisation or philosophy. In the same line of thinking, Okolo (1990) asserts that 'African philosophy' started with Placide Tempels which he documented in his book, *Bantu Philosophy* (1945). The implication is that the indigenous Africans had no intellectuals for the documentation of philosophy and that Western epistemic thinking and philosophies which Tempels had, contributed to the inception of the documentation of 'African philosophy'. Thus Tempels' claims gave the hegemonic rationale for colonialism in Africa. The colonialists considered themselves philanthropic claiming that they were salvaging the indigenes of Africa from the doldrums of non-civilisation and non-documentation of philosophic thinking. According to Oguejiofor and Ezenwa-Ohaeto (2015), Tempels had an ulterior motive of achieving improved evangelism by the missionaries and subsequent effective colonisation by the colonialists.

The humanity of some indigenes of the African continent was doubted by some Westerners. Montesquieu (1989) clearly stated that the 'African' was not human. Some European scholars like Kant, Hegel and Bruhl caricatured the indigenous Africans. Kant postulated that the dark complexioned Africans were semi-humans (Hund and Mills, 2016). In the same line of thinking Levy-Bruhl (1947) had postulated that the Africans were pre-logical and two-third of human. Hegel (1975) posited that the dark complexioned Africans had neither history nor philosophy and had contributed nothing to world history and civilization.

In contrary to the assertions by the Eurocentric scholars, Tempels affirmed the 'Africans' humanity by rationalizing that the 'Africans' whom he interacted with were cultural. Since they were cultural, it follows that they were philosophical. Thus he was one of the first philosophers to use philosophy as a means of affirming the humanity of the dark complexioned Africans. Human equality and dignity for the dark complexioned indigenes of Africa had not been considered due to the long period of exploitation, humiliation and subjugation (Lewis, 1997). The period stretches from the trans-Atlantic slavery to colonialism. Thus the Africans who experienced the turmoil were thought to have a philosophy that was by and large shaped by the colonialists (Higgs and Smith, 2002). Thus why Mudimbe (1988) postulates that 'Africa is an invention of Europe'.

The term 'African philosophy' was coined by the philosophers who had orientations in the philosophies of the colonialists. It is a derogative term that is used to

celebrate what Oguejiofor and Ezenwa-ohaeto (2015) refer to as Western philosophical triumphalism. Utter debasement of indigenous philosophies had been achieved by convincing the intellectuals that there is an 'African philosophy'. The intellectuals with colonial orientations were obsessed with the philosophies that were suffixed by '-ism' and it appears that the indigenous philosophies that are devoid of the '-ism' do not qualify to be considered in the realm of philosophy. The philosophers who wrote about the 'African philosophy' have written with overtones of stigmatised inferiority complex of the indigenous philosophies of the people on the African continent.

Colonialism had transformative effects on the cultures of the colonized. Thus with colonialism, the cultures and the philosophies of the colonised were transformed with respect to the philosophies of the colonizers (Lewis, 1997; Franz, 1965; Abraham, 1962).

During colonial times, for example, the British debased the native languages and cultures of their colonies and educated the natives in the British language and culture. The debasement is confirmed by Lord Macaulay's address to the British Parliament on 2nd February 1835;

*I have travelled across the length and breadth of Africa and I have not seen in this country such a high moral values, people of such calibre, that I do not think we would ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation which is her spiritual and cultural heritage and therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Africans think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem, their native culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation.*

The British were successful in achieving their goal. The natives were given the impression that they were semi-British. Thus their thought system was demeaned. Similarly, the French had their policy of assimilation which was crafted by Chris Talbot in 1837. The policy had the intention of extending French culture to its colonies and to turn African natives into French people by educating them in the French language and culture (Lambert, 1993). The natives were considered French citizens after they had renounced their indigenous systems (Betts, 2005).

Since some indigenes of Africa were colonised by different European states then it should follow that the indigenes of Africa could now be having diverse 'African philosophies' born of colonialism. For instance, the indigenes of Africa under the British colonial rule could now be having a 'British philosophy' and not a 'continental' philosophy. According to Higgs and Smith (2002), philosophy is a cultural specific, not universal in character since no philosophy is applicable to all cultures.

Thus philosophy is a cultural requisite since philosophic

thinking is grounded in cultural experience (Gyekye, 1987). It is vicious to refer to the philosophies of the indigenes of Africa only as ethno-philosophical since all philosophies have relevance within particular contexts.

There are some African states which were never colonised by the European states which are Ethiopia and Liberia. If colonialism brought philosophies that were qualitatively different from the philosophies of the indigenous philosophies then the philosophies of these two countries could have been different from the so-called African philosophy. Thus the philosophic triumphalism of the West over the indigenous philosophies of the people of Africa needs to be interrogated. The claim that the indigenes of Africa had no philosophy or had inferior philosophies up to colonisation is misleading. The implications about the claim are that Ethiopia and Liberia still have inferior philosophies but this is not the case. The cultural criterion of labelling a philosophy 'African' is not without problems. The cultures and the philosophies of the indigenes of Africa have been defined with reference to the temporal aspect which is hinged on colonialism. The term 'African philosophy' serves the interests of the philosophers with Western philosophic orientations and is a deliberate misnomer of the indigenous philosophies of the people of Africa.

### **The Negritude aspect concerning African philosophy**

The indigenes of Africa south of the Sahara are referred to as the 'black race' (Charles, 2008). These indigenes have skin colours that vary from very dark brown to light brown (Gary, 2005). They have been historically labelled as Negroids or Congoids (Diagne, 2010). However there are dark complexioned people who are purported not to possess other Negroid physical characteristics and these are referred to as 'dark Caucasoids' for example the Ethiopid of Ethiopia. The term 'Negroid' is a racialist classification of the indigenes of Africa who are found in Sub-Saharan Africa and some parts of South and Southeast Asia who are dark complexioned (Lambert, 1993). The contemporary consideration of the term 'Negroid' is more racist rather than racialist. It has racist etymological roots in Ancient Greek, from the term 'negro' meaning black (Betts, 2005).

The term 'Negroid' influenced the development of Negritude which is a framework of critiquing racist misconstructions about Negroids. Negritude aims at raising 'Black consciousness' across Africa and its diaspora (Chimakonam, 2014, Charles, 2008; Senghor, 1967). The term was constructed from the French word 'negre' which is derogative about 'Black' people (Gary, 2005). 'Negre' was associated to the 'Black' African's culture which was considered to be barbaric and unworthy of being seen as 'civilized' (Lambert, 1993).

Thus Negritude was considered as a philosophy that

was aimed to oppose colonialism, denounce Europe's consideration of inhumanity of Africans and rejection of the European philosophic ethnocentrism. The emphasis was that the Black people had a history, cultures and philosophies and were worth beings among other people of the world.

Since the indigenes of Africa who are labelled Negroids are not found all over Africa, the non-Negroids of Northern Africa could be 'outside' exponents of the Negritude philosophy. The racialistic characteristics of the people on the African continent are not the same. Thus the racialistic criterion for determining what is African in 'African philosophy' is problematic. The philosophers on the continent of Africa have not been considerate when they wrote about 'African philosophy.'

### **Postmodernism and philosophies of indigenes of Africa**

The philosophies of the West are believed to have created conditions for the development of science, reason and technology. The generic philosophy that developed from these philosophies is referred to as modernism. The thinking that underlies modernism is that science, reason and technology will solve all the problems of the world (Lyotard, 1979).

Thus the parts of the world that were not guided by Western philosophies were thought to be lagging behind in terms of 'civilisation'.

In the 1960s there was scepticism about the efficacy of the guidance by modernism. The western societies experienced some social problems which among others are; violent crime and racial unrest in British and American cities (Higgs and Smith, 2002). Thus a philosophy reactive to the vices of modernism was evolved and it was postmodernism.

Postmodernism is a philosophy which reacts against the intellectual assumptions and values of the West modernist philosophy which had prominence from the 17th to 19th century (Duigan, 2019). The postmodernists refute the philosophical viewpoints that were taken for granted during the era of modernism. For example, reason and logic were thought to be the panacea to social ills but they have been seen to be insidiously destructive since they are used as tools for oppressing other people particularly the Africans (Duigan, 2009). Also according to the postmodernists, reason and logic are relative constructs that are valid in particular contexts. There are no absolute and universal rationalities for how humans transact their livelihoods. Different people have different philosophical thrusts that are responsive to their circumstances.

The discourses that were guided by the modernist philosophy were found to be parochial since they reflected the interests and values of the more powerful.

Thus modernist philosophy was brought under

epistemic interrogations by the critical theorists and the postmodernists. Postmodernism exposes the unjust hegemony of the West modernist discourses over the equally valid philosophies of the non-West, particularly those of the dark complexioned indigenes of Africa. The postmodernists regard their theoretical position as inclusive of the philosophies that have guided human prosperity through the ages.

The postmodernist era could be viewed as the 'enlightenment' period about the non-Western philosophies especially those of the people on the African continent that were thought to be non-philosophies. The philosophies of the people on the African continent should not be described using a generic, continental label but should be considered from the finer nuances of the philosophic thinking of the people on the African continent. The Western philosophic thinking should not be considered as the criterion for what constitutes a philosophy. Thus postmodernism creates a platform for rethinking the labelling of philosophies in terms of 'civilisation'.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research approach was employed in the generation of data for the discourse on the antecedents of the nebulousness of the term 'African philosophy'. The focus was on the explications of contributions of some philosophers.

Thus the paradigm employed was the hermeneutical phenomenology (Creswell, 2014; Creswell, 2007; Guba, 1990). The aim of hermeneutical phenomenology is to interpret the contextual meanings of epistemic discourses by some philosophers (Schulze, 2002; Mouton, 2011). The verbatim explications were used to authenticate the interpretations of the researcher (O'Leary, 2010; De Vos et al., 2011).

The researcher used document analysis to generate data from the texts that were purposively selected. The texts were considered to be information-rich about how they contributed to the nebulousness of the term 'African philosophy'.

Analysis of the data was done by employing the thematic approach with a focus on the Johnson and Christensen method which generates themes from the philosophic texts (Johnson and Christensen, 2008; Slavin, 2007; Steyn et al., 2004). The philosophers' explications of thoughts in their own words (*emic* explications) informed the researcher's interpretations (*etic* interpretations) (Hoberg, 2001).

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF PHILOSOPHERS ON AFRICAN CONTINENT TO THE NEBULOUS 'AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY'

### *Antecedents of 'African philosophy'*

The philosophies of the people on the African continent were labelled 'African philosophy' or 'Bantu philosophy' by Placide Tempels who was a European missionary. He endeavoured to dispel the myth that the dark complexioned Africans had no philosophy. He explained that the Africans he interacted with had their own philosophy and he went on further to contrast the

religious spirituality of the Africans that he studied and those of the Europeans. In support of Tempels, George James was another European who attempted to explain the worth of 'Africans' in the philosophy realm. He authored a book entitled, *Stolen Legacy* (1954). In this work, he explained that it is not only that 'Africans' have a philosophy but that the so-called Western philosophy was stolen from Africa. However, George James' work did more harm than good since he was only referring to the light complexioned people of North Africa and excluding the dark complexioned people of southern Sahara.

In reaction to the claims by Tempels, Hountondji (1996) postulated that Tempels did not address anything concerned with African or Bantu philosophy but he focused on his own philosophy which was concerned with paraphernalia of a particular society of people whom he interacted with who were referred to as 'Black' Africans. Thus Hountondji (1996) claims that Tempels was more concerned with eclecticism of paraphernalia of the people he was interacting with at the expense of the philosophy of the people.

### *Reflections on being reactive to embracing the term 'African philosophy'*

The works of the two Europeans, Tempels and James provided the platform for the dark complexioned African scholars to write about the philosophical basis of the Africans. Some of these scholars are; John Mbiti, Odera Oruka, Leopold Senghor, Julius Nyerere to mention just a few. The works of these philosophers were meant to affirm and consolidate the claim that 'Africans' had a philosophy and a history. Thus the works they produced were reactive to the debates in European universities on the status of philosophy of the 'Africans' (Wiredu, 1989; Wright, 1984).

The so-called African philosophy has been categorized in eras which have been labelled as 'pre-systematic era' and the 'systematic era'. The pre-systematic era refers to the philosophies of the indigenes before colonialism. One of the reasons for the 'pre-systematic' label is that the philosophic thinking of the indigenes was not documented. The acceptance of the label is unfortunate for the dark complexioned Africans since even the great philosophic ideas by Socrates were not documented by him but by the other philosophers who came after him but they were not considered to be pre-systematic. The philosophy which guided the livelihoods of a people since time immemorial should not be given such a label since it is tantamount to saying the livelihoods of the people concerned were not systematic until the introduction of formal education which was introduced by the colonialists. Ability to read and write using a particular alphabet is not a prerequisite to philosophy. The so-called systematic era has been attributed to the contributions of Africa's first eleven, Western-tutored 'philosophers since the 1920's to the present time. The

era has been periodized (Abanuka, 2011; Chimakonam, 2014);

- 1) Early period 1920s - 1960s
- 2) Middle period 1960s - 1980s
- 3) Later period 1980s - 1990s
- 4) New (Contemporary) Era since 1990s

The implication of the periodization is that 'African philosophy' as a system first began in the late 1920s with the people who were educated in European universities. There is the iron that these philosophers were philosophically Eurocentric and could have lost their philosophic 'Africanness' in the universities. Their works could have been deliberately hybridized in order to have identities in philosophy dealt with in European universities as well as the philosophic identities of the different people of Africa. A philosophy is not African simply because it was produced by Africans (Hountondji, 1996; Oruka, 1975). The philosophers who were educated in British universities had been educated to despise their native thought system (Betts, 2005). Those educated in French universities had been exposed to the assimilation theory thus their works have traces of fitting into philosophic system that was emphasized by the French (Lambert, 1993).

The other important philosopher of the so-called 'African' philosophy is John Mbiti with his work *African Religions and Philosophy* (Mbiti, 1969). He endeavoured to convince other scholars that Africans were philosophical through their religion.

Even though his studies focused on the Kikamba and Gikuyu tribes of Africa, he generalized for all the tribes in Africa.

In the realm of the so-called African philosophy, there is William Abraham's work, entitled *The Mind of Africa* (1962). He studied the Akan of Ghana and generalised that the dark complexioned African tribes have similar cultural and political rationality.

The other renowned philosopher about 'African philosophy' was Kwame Nkrumah. The books that he authored are; *Africa Must Unite* (1970), *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (1965), *I Speak of Freedom: A Statement of African Ideology* (1961) and *Consciencism* (1954). The focus of Nkrumah's works was on socio-economic philosophy of the dark complexioned Africans. The title of the works of Nkrumah of 1961 is too general since it precludes the African states that were never under colonial rule.

Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal had almost the same ambitions as Nkrumah. In his work entitled, *Negritude and the Germans* (1967), he postulated that an 'African' cannot be African when living like a European. To corroborate the loss of identity of the 'African' due to colonialism, Ruch and Anyanwu (1981) posited that an 'African' can never be a British or French even with the colonially imposed language and culture.

Thus Senghor (1967) and Ruch and Anyanwu (1981) were against the colonial principle of assimilation aimed at turning the indigenes of Africa into Europeans by eroding and replacing 'African' culture with French culture (Chimakonam, 2014). Of interest is that a national culture (French culture) is contrasted with a continental culture ('African' culture).

In line with Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania produced several works concerning the politico-economic philosophy of the 'Africans' who were once colonised. His works are; *Uhuru na Ujamaa: Freedom and Socialism* (1964) and *Ujamaa: The Basis of African Socialism* (Nyerere, 1968). Nyerere was convinced that the philosophies of the indigenous Africans were embedded in their culture. The ideas of Nyerere were the basis of the ethno-philosophy whose thinkers were contented that philosophy of the dark complexioned Africans was manifested in their cultural practices. The ethno-philosophers generalized that the indigenous Africans had a common culture. One of the ethno-philosophers Momoh (1989), edited a book entitled *The Substance of African Philosophy*. The book was a collection of essays on different conceptions of 'African' philosophy. The essays were consolidating the works of Bodunrin (1985), a book entitled, *Philosophy in Africa: Trends and Perspectives* which focused on the conception of the nature of 'African' philosophy. The works focused on the generic aspects of the philosophies of the indigenes of Africa. In 1998 Omoregbe had works entitled *African Philosophy: Yesterday and Today* which were critical about universalism concerning the philosophies of the indigenes of Africa. He asserted that some philosophers who were exposed to Western philosophy are generally biased about that the indigenous Africans were not philosophising. Acceptance of the prefix 'ethno-' on philosophic thinking of the dark complexioned Africans is tantamount to relegating their philosophies to parochial parameters that cannot transcend ethnicities. Since all philosophies are meaningful in particular cultural contexts it's obvious that they are essentially ethnic. Thus the tagging of a philosophy with 'ethno-' has connotations of debasement.

The so-called ethno-philosophy is also found in the works entitled *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa* by, Ruch and Anyanwu (1989). They presented a discourse that focused on the philosophic thinking in folklores and myths of the indigenous Africans. The similar focus is in the works of Momoh (1989) entitled *The Substance of African Philosophy*. Despite these philosophic rationalisations, Hountondji (1996) in his *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* challenges the orientation of the 'Africans' in their philosophizing. He postulates that 'African philosophy' should have the same principles and methodologies as Western philosophy. His ideas are corroborated by Anyanwu (1989) in his paper *The Problem of Method in African philosophy*. He postulated

that the criteria of Western philosophy present challenges to the methodologies of 'African philosophy'. Similar thinking is presented by Oruka (1975) in his works entitled *The Fundamental Principles in the Question of 'African Philosophy' (I)*. He presented a discourse about the nature of 'African' philosophy. The consent of having an 'African' philosophy and explaining its nature was nebulous since that fore closed the exploration of the finer nuances of the philosophic thinking of particular indigenes of Africa in different historic-geographical contexts.

In 1985 Bodunrin produced works entitled *Philosophy in Africa: Trends and Perspectives*. He came up with perspectives of the so-called 'African' philosophy which he referred to as the Traditionalist and Modernist schools. Similar categorizations are made by Kwasi Wiredu (1989) in his works that are entitled *On Defining African Philosophy*. More about the issue of perspectives, Uduigwomen (1995) came up with the Universalist and the Particularist schools of the 'African' philosophy in his works that are entitled *Philosophy and the Place of African Philosophy*. All the works that were produced about the so-called 'African' philosophy are challenged by Maurier (1984) in his published essay "*Do we have an African Philosophy?*"

In response to Maurier (1984), Keita (1984) argued that the indigenous dark complexioned Africans were intellectually philosophical. In corroboration with Maurier, Omoregbe (1998), in his works entitled, *African Philosophy: Yesterday and Today* postulates that Aristotelian or Russellian logic is not the prerequisite for philosophizing. He further argues that the ability to think logically is inherent in rationality and that dark complexioned Africans did their rationality independent of the Western philosophers. The argument was rational except for the nebulous title of the works. Omoregbe (1995) attacked the works of Kwasi Wiredu in which he asserts that 'African' philosophy was some sort of community thought or folk thought and was thus unqualified to be called philosophy. The ideas of Wiredu (1995) in his works entitled, *Philosophy and the African Experience*. He had asserted that 'Africans' lacked logical, mathematical and analytical thinking abilities. Oladipo consolidates his thoughts in his works; *The Third Way in African Philosophy* (2002) and *Core issues in African philosophy* (2006). The consent by the renowned philosophers that there is an African philosophy is problematic. The substantiations that are given tent to consolidate the misnomer of the philosophic thinking of the indigenes of Africa in their particular realities of life.

The method of 'African philosophy' that Andrew Uduigwomen, the Nigerian philosopher advocated for was eclecticism. He was convinced that the integration of the African indigenous philosophic system and the Western system could produce a synthetic philosophy that is both 'African' and modern in terms of systematicity. Thus his philosophic thinking is referred to

as Afro-eclecticism (Chimakonam, 2014). Uduigwomen presented his thoughts in his 1995 works entitled "*Philosophy and the Place of African Philosophy*". One of the notable eclectics is Batholomew Abanuka who in his works entitled *A History of African Philosophy* argues that eclecticism should be the ultimate approach to doing 'African' Philosophy. The assertion by Abanuka (2011) contributes to the demeaning of the indigenous Africans' philosophic thinking. Since the method of all philosophies has been critical rationality focused on the prevailing life issues, the eclecticism devoid of critical rationality demeans philosophic thinking.

The dark complexioned African philosophers had perceptions that their European counterparts were expecting them to come up with a 'systematic' philosophy that guided livelihoods of the indigenes of Africa. These philosophers wanted to do a lot in very limited time because it was felt to be intellectually inadequate for the 'African' to continue to be an appendage of the Eurocentric philosophers (Cesaire, 1969). Consequently some of them developed a hybridized 'African' philosophy. They had received missionary education which had a focus on Eurocentric philosophic thinking. Most of these 'African' philosophers were taken away from their communities by the missionaries before the puberty stage which in many communities of the indigenes of Africa is critical in shaping philosophic thinking. Some of their texts show a close intertwinement of religion and philosophy and they could not use a neuter term like 'Creator' for the Supreme Being, they used the term 'God' which is biased towards the Christian religious-philosophic thinking.

The label for the philosophic thinking of the dark complexioned indigenes of the African continent needs some rethinking and renaming. There is a misnomer of the philosophies that guided the livelihoods of the dark complexioned Africans which has since been consolidated and perpetuated by the renowned dark complexioned scholars who have authored various texts which are tagged 'African'. There are books about African philosophy, African traditional religion, African traditional education, African epistemology, etc. In which the dark complexioned African scholars and academics endeavoured to assert their identity and worth by writing about their communities but inaccurately described them as being continental issues. The Eurocentric philosophic descriptions had rendered them as having neither history nor philosophy. The philosophers of the West like David Hume had asserted that there was no philosophy of the dark complexioned people south of the Sahara. Another philosopher, Immerwahr (1992) described Africa as an unhistorical continent. Thus the dark complexioned African scholars and academics were rather emotionally reactive though in subtle ways and began to produce texts that were tagged 'African'. The tagging of texts with the descriptor 'African' has connotations of emotional reactivity. The consequence of the emotional reaction

has compromised academic rigour in the texts purported to be 'African'. The dark complexioned academics and scholars from Africa who were educated in European and American universities were labelled 'African' being considered as descendants of semi-humans, who were slaves. When they returned to their native lands, they met with the same derogatory labels by the colonial officials (Chimakonam 2014). Thus the frustration they got motivated them to write about their philosophic thinking of their societies. By tagging their texts 'African' they were trying to assert their identity trying to prove that they were intellectually worthy in the philosophic realm. The assertion was overly done since no researches were carried out about all the different people of Africa by these text producers.

## Conclusion

The 'African' tag on texts is not an accurate descriptor of most of the issues that would be under consideration. It has an obfuscation effect on the crux of the issues. The tag appeals to most scholars on the continent of Africa but it is vicious in that it obviates critical literacy of the texts. Most dark complexioned African scholars are made to believe that the texts tagged 'African' are relevant to their situations as dictated by their negritude, their exposure to denigration and exploitation by the colonialists. Most of the texts are biased towards the community or a particular society of the text producer. An academic critical literacy of the text could help in unveiling the precise issues that would be under consideration. Thus most of the texts that are tagged 'African' are not authentic about their 'Africanness'. The term 'African' should be expurgated and replaced by more epistemic contextualized descriptors.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflicts of interests.

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