

Would Africans become Proud of their Heritage? A reflection on issues underlying Africa's existential fears and sublimity

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Recent SAFM 'After 8 debate' which hosted a Sudanese scholar on Arabisation of Sudan and Africa has raised concern about what is Africa's problem. The honourable scholar raised his own fears about increasing Arabisation of which he cited that many African states are at risk of being invaded by Arabisation. The expressed fear shows the inclination this time of an African scholar querying the usual encroachment of foreign culture over Africa which remains helpless. The interest drawn focuses on the seeming uncritical attitude in Africa over the past centuries and the lack of African text and literature which create the space for encroachment as a people, thus without legitimate existence, so to say. The ensuing identity and development crisis which Africans found themselves in is evidenced in the state of politico-economic policy dilemma and existential weaknesses. This article will consider why the scholar's fear should be an issue of worry, but rather something that draws African to become critical in their own world. It will also locate the cause of rush in continuous assault on this continent by external forces.

Development doesn't take place in a vacuum. We can take a cue from Achille Mbembe that Africans have left out their own history and culture to embrace other forms of histories and cultures which all have served and contributed to the situation of underdevelopment on the continent. Development in this article isn't in Western sense as 'civilisation' or a romanticised modernisation. Development in this context implies basic human security where the average home has adequate security and access to food, good water, good education, good health, economic freedom, good and affordable shelter, clean environment among other basic human needs. Development here centres on what Srinivas R. Melkote and H. Leslie Steeves (2001) describe as an 'atmosphere free from coercion and dependency'¹. Development in Africa has been lopsided as majority of African population are deprived of opportunity to decent living in the only place they have as home. This outlook of Africa makes many African intellectuals shy from easy identity with the continent and would prefer Western identity rather than an African one in the guise of globalisation.

Indeed, I always argue with my colleagues that I have confidence in Africa and proud to show my African identity to the point of embracing African faith and values without mixture. As many educated Africans have difficulty in expressing identity with African culture and positive traditions, yet still, they admit there should be African distinctiveness. What has caused this apprehension of African identity isn't my concern now. The important issue is why Africans have allowed gradual corrosion of African heritage and identity? I quite remember, in my childhood period for example, *oburoni* (Akan description of European) was the symbol of truth, perfection, and quality. I grew with the idea and belief that if one wants truth it comes from the West or somebody without colour (white). It wasn't surprising to hear people say that the black person is synonymous with evil and witchcraft. Also dark forms are regarded as satanic. Now, I've come to discover it's the contrary. Dark forms are a concentration of high energy (this shall be discussed in another paper). Other literature also bear evidence that the belief in Satan depicted him as light energy personality and not dark. For example

¹ Srinivas R. Melkote and H. Leslie Steeves 2001. *Communication for Development in the Third World: Theory and practice for empowerment*. New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London: Sage Publications, pp. 332.

Akan people depict witchcraft as a form of fire or reddish. Africans don't originally associate evil as dark, it rather connote serious mode. As I grew with the perception that Europeans are ultra human without weaknesses such as jealousy, stealing, bribery and mention all other vices. So at High School my aim was to get education in the West in as much as it is a heaven, before I could be content that I've succeeded. I have narrated this experience to show that something has gone wrong distorting perceptions of being African. Africans have embraced this belief!

In contemporary times, many emerging African movies (especially West African ones) and some sponsored media maintain the *status quo* by making everything about African negative. They are educated Africans who have been deeply brain-washed with strong taste for Western life and things that they are blinded to see the wonderful things on this continent. The unfortunate part is that these movies and news are just propaganda carefully make-believe designed and organised to achieve its purpose that Africa sinks in her own world, whilst elevating other cultures and beliefs as sanctified and sanctuary for Africans. Today, some of our great ancestors are unknown and those emerging like Jacob Zuma are vilified. Zuma is like Biblical David who has triumphed upon all the odds against him to achieve his status today. Zuma is a model of determination. And another issue is **when would Africa have her own prophet (s)?** Nelson Mandela is nothing less than a 'divine' leader whose speech and words should be compiled not just for leisure reading but as moral guide. Mandela is a typology of Hebrew Joseph. Mbeki is a true modern African political seer (forget about Polokwane). Kwame Nkrumah and few of others of contemporary times should be elevated to special authoritative positions, as leaders who understood the needs of the African context despite the fact that they have their own weaknesses as human and falter in some places, yet hatched the African dream of unity an awaiting goal for Africa Union (AU). Nkrumah is another ideal model for African young people to be dreamers and action oriented. The continuation in embracing values which are segregational and divisive makes the African campaign against racism and ethnicism ridiculous². Divisive attitude in the cloak as belief undermines the effort to transform the African societies from dependency to sustainability in coexistent, let alone unity. It is time Africa should identify her own prophets. This doesn't refer to the greedy sycophant money grabbers who are in business pauperising the so called poor from their ignorance. I mean indigenous African moral voice that has nothing to do with other foreign traditions, but embodies the mind and soul of the Negroid.

Well, let's link this to the expressed 'fear' or concern of the eminent scholar about Arabisation in some parts of Africa. Firstly, I thought it wasn't something new as the first time another culture is overwriting what makes the African distinct. The issue isn't with Arabisation but the passiveness of the African. Passive African is implied here as a situation of socio-cultural and politico-economic dilemma after encounter with the Western world that has resulted in some mesmerising effects. In this case a condition of stupor out of overwhelming enthusiasm, so to say. Why have the definition become like this? Let's find answers in the next sections.

Aristide Zolberg (1968) had, for instance, expressed his scepticism about the African political competence based on what he describes as the *syncretic* orientation of the African. This is explained as the effects of colonization where Africans exhibit dual attitudinal predilection tendencies, which have its own consequence for peaceful political development. According to Zolberg, 'The Syncretic character of contemporary African societies tends to be reflected in every sphere of social activity, including the political'³. Therefore the African leaders and their citizens are faced with political and

² Rukuni 2008

³ Aristide R. Zolberg 1968. The Structure of Political Conflict in the New States of Tropical Africa. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Mar., 1968), pp. 70-87.

socio-cultural dilemma due to partial African Europeanisation that create friction between both identities. Zolberg further argues that, '[I]t is generally evident that the operations of even the most "modern" institutions in Africa are governed by values and norms that stem from both the "new" and the "residual" sets' and serve as potpourri for political fiasco as well as socio-economic and socio-cultural confusions of unplanned and unproductive living and mismanagement of resources.

The impact of multiple or dual identity of the African is an unrealistic confusion which need to be recognised and the situation changed. Citing Peter L Berger (1974) and C. Hamelink (1983) works Melko and Steeves direct us point blank that human existence requires basic needs which 'include two categories: physical requirements for an ideological meaningful existence, rooted in one's culture and traditions...cultural diversity, which is being replaced or irreparably altered by modernity, is essential for human survival, as it reflects the ways humans have differently adapted to their environment. Therefore, from an ethical perspective, what have been the consequences of weaning people away from the *traditional* structures and habits and drawing them towards the modern system? This process has further impoverished the vast majority, as the traditional social support structures that had provided security for many hundreds of years are being destroyed'. This doesn't mean people should live like hunting and stone-age era, but the basic principle of natural evolution if tampered has its own problems and frustrations (See Frijtof Capra 2001). It is like doing everything for a person from childhood that the stage of adulthood this grown up cannot make personal decisions or choices. It is more than this. It is simply a destructive upbringing that corrupts the individual. Africans need the freedom to mature in their environment in independent manner. But where naturally interruptions had occurred, regaining and retrieving capabilities requires knowledge, and specifically the African context basic information.

In a similar way, the African attitude to corruption, its destructive nature and effects in Africa has been described as 'empty shell' by Chabas and Daloz (1999)⁴. This graphic portrayal of the African excessive consumerist negative attitude depicts a state of sad emptiness and seeming lack of purpose and direction. The age old African humiliation by the early European traders who described Africans as *tabula rasa*, implying a state of emptiness or without what is valuable appears to be confirmed⁵. But, I personally reject 'emptiness' outlook of the African, but a symptom of general historical anaemia and scientific denials among contemporary Africans, even among some educated Africans. Many even fear to explore any knowledge beyond the rigid demarcated realm of their foreign adopted beliefs. Yes, the African has fed excessively on wrong non-indigenous ideological diets. In 2006, a group of women leaders who held a conference on African problems in the Eastern Cape Province arrived at some resolutions among which was African lacking its own soul which impede an effort to development. The issue now is the sense and non-sense of how external perceptions of the African have become Africa's own destiny trap. Until African scholars and people could get rid of these 'legalised inferiority', and rebuild on an Africa that is an entity with a soul or spirit *kra*, the perceived vacuum in the continent shall attract more serious encroachment with bitter consequences than has been witnessed in history over the years.

The perceived fear of the eminent scholar isn't untrue but in another sense it expresses his awareness of the socio-cultural and political (leadership) vacuum which naturally makes good relish that attract imperialist cultures and other belief systems. The expressed helplessness of African people is

⁴ Chabal, Patrick and Daloz, Jean-Pascal 2006. *Culture Troubles: Politics and the interpretation of meaning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁵ Kate LP Lowe 2005. Introduction: The black African presence in Renaissance Europe. In Earle, TF and Lowe, Kate LP (eds). *Black African in Renaissance of Europe*. UK: Cambridge University Press.

exemplified where *winds* from the west, east and the north becomes whirlwind because there are no local environmental breakers to protect our own systems. Africa is left naked over years of humiliation due to factors which need to be considered in the next section.

Africans are left with nothing but the proverbial three finger pointing back to say what has been Africa's role to her humiliation.

i. The absence of adventurism on this continent has left room for invasion. The people in Africa have been passive only embracing, but not extending themselves into discovery of other places. The unfortunate aspect, as European historians made us to believe, is that some of our early leaders were ready to exchange precious gold in exchange for alcoholic beverages and clothing. Some African chiefs took gifts and demean the values in their custody. The value of exchange didn't match but what can we say as great chiefs got intoxicated. A sheer nakedness of blindly sell-out.

ii. Excessive hospitality without some sense of caution has been the African uncritical weakness as Mbembe has criticised. Some past African leaders gave away lands with resources without thinking about future population growth and what the consequence would be. Most of these tenure or freehold were done without appropriate procedures as happened in Southern Africa where religious materials was exchanged for land, but how much has that brought to the African in value terms, unless one want to succumb to the theory of emptiness⁶. If Africans believe, without the Europeans, Africa would have been worse off than today determines the answer. In this case the awareness and knowledge of events and development preceding colonisation of Africa should become the determining factor. I enjoin readers to do their own research.

iii. The absence of African alphabets and text remain one of the key hindrances to introspective evaluation of the continent and her development. And that still remains a significant factor that creates the impression of empty region. In the Far East external encroachment, in terms of culture and values, has been minimal with cultures and beliefs intact which has propped the pride of the East. Even some Asian violence culture (presented as kunfu and karate movies) has become a source foreign exchange earner since the 1970s raising the status of Asian countries on the global scene. Africa has almost all aspects of her culture demonised and caricatured to the point where the young generation are confused and find the continent not inspiring enough. As I constantly chat and interact much with young people, my greatest sadness has been many of them wonder if there is anything good left in Africa because they aren't known or written. There are few available literature that has such information of exposing the continent's immense cultural wealth and history, and they are also not many or none in African libraries. The common literature knowledge sources in Africa are focus much on foreign issues and ideals.

There is no precise history of Africa as many dominant documented histories begin with the continent's being discovered by European traders ignoring the earlier Arab and Indian activities. Some of these gaps have become a serious vacuum which is dwarfing Africa with more aggressive invasion. Paulo Frère (1993) emphasised that a people without history are more or less nonexistent⁷. Before Frère thought of these principles, an example has happened in history. The great bulwark behind the existence of Hangeul today is due to King Sejong (General Yi Song-Ye's grandson) 1446

⁶ RW Johnson 2005. *South Africa: The first man, the last man*. Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, p.66.

⁷ Paulo Frère 1993. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin Books, p.

AD legacy of calling for a Korean Alphabet to enable preservation of Korean people by their history⁸. That time Korea was hemmed in by strong pressure around them from China, Japan, Russia and later Euro-American expansionism. The significance has been the inspiration Koreans gained from their own Hangeul documented history to fiercely resisting Japanese colonisation and attempted suppression of Korean existence.

Gandhi resisted all attempts to convert him to something else whilst outside India, after realising that Indian history, culture and beliefs merit equally virtues that other were proposing. Today, the pride Gandhi left for the Indians using Indian philosophy to liberate and attain independence for India isn't just territorial one but both cultural and economic among other benefits. Arab states have stood their ground against all manner of cultural transmutation which has preserved the Arab world. Political and economic scholars agree that in part the success in far Asian economic boom and stability can be attributed to issues of culture and values that remains untainted. There is nothing like psycho-social dilemma where a whole racial group remain so helpless because there is no self-written legacy of history that sustains the body and spirit of the race. There happens less syncretism because such people don't have identity crisis by borrowing core value systems from elsewhere and becoming mere parasites. Similar to Gandhi's example, the Hebrew's history shows, when Moses discovered his Hebrew descent and realise the pride to be Jewish though they were slaves, he forsook the lavish paradise of being adopted Egyptian Prince (Exodus). It was a matter of identity and uniqueness. Today, Jews remain unique even in globalisation everywhere they are found. Isn't this beautiful? Isn't this lovely? What has helped the Jews and others to remain unique all the time?

Globally, we can also see that the role of having a text culture or written values among others has preservation effect of identity. It is not a matter of just having Asante or Venda borrowing roman alphabets to document Roman stories. Yes, some European ethnic groups borrowed alphabets and numeral from the Romans and the Arabs. What is distinctive is that these borrowed scripts were further developed and used to preserve their history, culture, and other forms of knowledge. For instance, among the Hebrews, literacy has been a form of authority and only men of special class had privilege to become literate⁹. It gave them authority to interpret the Hebrew history and religious values to the rest of society without such privilege. It made such officials very powerful as decision-making class. This privilege excluded majority of women until the 20th Century that literacy became a right for all citizens.

The Jews have become special because they were able to advertise their worldview through lettered format (not oral) easily accessible if a person is literate. This has contributed in putting the Jewish people on the map as great people by their own assertion. If Akans and Zulus have similarly done that with the events in pre-colonial times, the story of the Akans and Zulus would be similar to the Jews or another group such as the English, Chinese or Indians. The game of greatness isn't a matter of arms and weapons but by letter and numbers, as some would say by the word. The misinterpretation of the relevance of codifying one's own values has caused many sub-Saharan African people to voluntary acquiescence of their sovereignty and values as subservient to some foreign ones as acquired superior-deficiency (ASD). This has a lot of implications until Africans work enough to mitigate the impact of the non-letteredness on African attitudes. Such lettered society shall have Hausa, Zulu or Igbo languages mathematics books.

⁸ Jong Gon Hwang. Literacy Education in Korea: A historical perspective. Unpublished dissertation. Seoul National University. [online] Available at: <http://aped.snu.ac.kr/cybereduc/cyberedu1/index.htm>

Also in: David Rees 1988. *A history of Modern Korea*. Ham Publishing.

⁹ M. Bar-Ilan 1992. Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E. In Fishbane, S., Schoenfield, S. and Goldschlaeger, A. (eds). *Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society*. II. New York: Ktav, pp. 46 – 61.

Where the mistake lies and must be corrected is that when missionaries and other bodies decided to do for Africa, what Africans should do themselves by borrowing roman alphabets to write African languages, they did so not using it to advance the African heritage by writing precise history and values and cultural issues. It was used to impose foreign values quite incongruent with the African world¹⁰ which already had some of the best moral standards capable of social preservation and advancement of society¹¹. African source of spiritual powers were obliterated¹². **What matters is why these so-called good friends didn't see the need to translate mathematics, history, geography and science books into African languages but only Hallelujahs and Amens!** Africa needed 'plus', 'cos' and 'tans' in their languages. In some way one can argue it wasn't their responsibility. Africans should have known better that time. If educational books have been translated into African languages, the continent today would be within middle income average continent. The secrets of Egypt to Shona lands, the Congo, Red Hunter and Okomfo Anokye of West Africa among many others could have been preserved in other local African lingua and would have advanced African sense of adventure and innovativeness to improve existing inventions of those days and become self-solution finding and producers other than just typical consumers. And today, miracle workers using Ancient Egyptian and traditional secrets are shy to declare the truth which isn't wrong, but hide it behind Semitic facade as non-African power. Why Africans have failed to be proud is, Africans have become unconscious of positive realities of African beliefs and systems and world.

The world needs the African worldview for the survival of the globe for today and tomorrow. The concept of 'Mother Earth' and understanding of dynamism of the ecology (Pan-Vitalism) is crucial to survival of our globe and the galaxies¹³. The African all encompassing view of the universe and the need of value system that recognises other creatures not as mere things (because they cannot express their emotions palpable to humans) is needed to preserve this planet and future homes on other planets in the galaxies. Majority African ecological values (apart from the Egyptian ones) haven't been encoded. This is the challenge passed on to present African scholars to search and document.

Today, many African scholars despite Western training cannot be critical enough to see the need to reverse the trend of pauperisation by turning to living African values, but continue to trample on Africa and parade as pseudo-European or African-Jews. There is even emerging pseudo- African Asians, simply because with all our learnedness we cannot deal with African challenges in-depth knowledge and understanding of the continent through its own values and belief systems. The continent, Africa, is an entity that needs to be known and understood in her own ways and manners. Mother Africa cannot be sacrificed for the sake of globalisation which has little benefit for her children. Africans have failed to market Africa positively; after all there is no race in existence without their own negatives, terrible ones. Whilst many Westerners abhor polygamy, many embrace gayism to the core as Roman heritage. It was practice common in ancient Roman Temples but taboo in other non-Western cultures. (Excuse saying this isn't condemning gays but just comparison sake to expose prejudices as weakness).

Let's consider the Chinese Olympic Games (2009) and one asks if they have just done what is simply European or American it wouldn't have been anything amazing. We all saw China out there but in Africa we will import experts from elsewhere to do that and apart from the economic drain it also robs

¹⁰ H. Assefa . Peace and Conflict in Africa: Reflections from an African Peacebuilder,pp. 5 – 23.

¹¹ Mutombo Nkulu-N'Sengha 2008. African traditional religions.In De La Torre, Miguel A. *The hope of liberation in world religions*. Waco, Tex. : Baylor University Press, p.220.

¹² Mutombo Nkulu-N'Sengha 2008. African traditional religions, p. 233-235.

¹³ Emmanuel Asante 1985. Ecology: Untapped resources of Pan-Vitalism in Africa. *African Ecclesial review*, No. 27 (1985), p. 292.

the continent of any ability of creativity and capability to put itself on the global scene by its own values and beliefs and capabilities. **Is there an African brand?** This has come about after such a systematic translocation of African desire and aspiration to long for a transcendental home and land, and a taste of foreign goods against Africa's enormous heritage and beautiful productive land.

iv. The translocation of the African point of reference from the continent to somewhere Middle-East is in itself problematic. It robs the people of their sense of pride and ownership of their world and spiritual allegiance. Africans have repudiated some of the great achievement of her pre-colonial forebears from West Africa, Southern Africa, East and Northern Africa. These were significant feats and attainments that are enough inspiration and authority to demand moral aptitude and sense of wholeness in a demoralising world. I normally refer to this scenario as the 'Esau episode' in Africa where some Africans have failed to see the enormity of taking petty dollars to spiritually castrate their own people. Resulting poverty of values impacting on social life where begging leaders and breeding of dependency make it easy to buy communities with handout, food parcels and used-clothing. Some for the sake of temporary gains have had the audacity to castigate everything of the African continent as 'devilish' in order to please external parties. This leads to the discussion of the issue of many Africans forsaking long-term considerations for short-term ones.

v. Many mistakes have been caused in Africa today because African societies and their leaders failed to estimate the future impact for upcoming generations and became so myopic to the point of seeing their time as the end. Whilst European traders were carrying wealth from the 'dark world' into Europe, Africans gave their wealth and properties away without critical assessment of the other parties' intention and future effects showing the beginning of enticement into irresponsibility. In post-colonial Africa, leaders and elite continue to siphon wealth from the continent to elsewhere; nothing comes back showing the veracity of Chabas and Daloz illustration. I beg to ask, if those Africans counted the future cost?

During my high school days, I remember one evening after serious commotion at evening religious worship service the Headmaster, (late) T. Osae, decided the entire student population be punished for impropriety. What happened? The students were made to write 'in the animal kingdom where stupidity is the norm, sense is essential' 1500 times. I've never forgotten this punishment in 1978 (if am right with the year). Common sense is the ability to weigh options and decide on the optimal. It can be a strategy that gives a person the chance to win in a dicey situation.

A former tertiary Scottish college Principal Mr Chapman once point out to me personally that having faith doesn't rule out the use of common sense. It went deep into me that after having lost African worldview and its values, I find myself at race with grafted values that increased my sense of African bankruptcy and the need to pretend to be 'something else' for acceptance outside my own precious world. Now, where is common sense in Africa today that we continue to believe without a bit of being critical? Hardly, ordinary Africans, dare ask questions; behaviour acquired through religious indoctrinations. 'Take it as it is', and unquestioned acquiescence is what the African has imbibed. This has been modern Africa's problem accepting the situation of self-created hopelessness as it is. After all 'God understands. Where did that happened? God wants people to think, work and make achievements.

vi. Fear remains number one enemy in Africa whether it is pre-colonial issue or part of the encroachment effect. The African fear may likely predate the advent of European and Arab entry into the continent when fear was used as means to control society, instead of providing reasons why certain things shouldn't be done or avoided. Reasons for environmental preservation through creation of sacred groves were lacking. This made it easy for such systems breakdown with encroaching

foreign beliefs that also had least understanding and regard for ecology as equal partners in creation. So the structure for incarcerating the African soul has already been prepared for subsequent method of 'moralising' and 'civilising' if not Marx sense of 'opium'. The avoidance of providing reason can be understood as a few individuals monopolising knowledge and power. The ensuing lack of documentation therefore, has left the unfortunate legacy of emptiness leaving room for Europeanisation and Arabisation, with psychological impact in increasing sense of hopelessness and despair over Africa. But the situation isn't irremediable but requires some intervention by African intellectuals and ordinary people to aggressively forestall the trend of dismay, especially among young people. This can be achieved by producing profuse authentic information and knowledge through effective documentation in indigenous languages and publications accessible to the ordinary African.

Today from global climate change to what nots, the negatives are supposed to befall Africa most, whilst this shouldn't be the case. The continuous instilling of fear seeing it as an African weakness has rendered many into a kind of situation where fear is making the ordinary African mismanage time, ignore critical-meditation, escaping facing the reality rather a migration outside Africa for nonexistent greener pastures. Spiritual 'vultures' are on other hand cashing in on the African helplessness adding salt to gaping wounds. Fear robs individuals and groups of ability to get organised and do proper thinking to make judicious use of their livelihood. This leads us to look at the next factor which is resource management and productivity.

vii. Resource management and productivity remain critical in impoverishing African societies. History is evident that Europeans grew their economy and prospered by the resources they discovered in Africa, but not neglecting their aptitude to resource management. They found a way (whether it is acceptable or not) on how to use the people they 'discovered' and their rich natural resources to their optimal advantage. Portuguese traders paraded along the African coast from present Senegal to present East African coast. That alone was enough income, but what happened that Africans couldn't utilise their portion derived from the olden days' commerce to benefit their societies? Many scholars and ordinary people are quick to point a finger but the situation turns three fingers back to the African that he/she is guiltier.

Economic jurisprudence shows wisdom in gradual accumulation of incomes leads to financial independence, and dissipation of abundance ends in poverty. What can a person do to achieve much with available resources? After years of squandering African states resources, the solution to rectify African economy continues to evade African states, and its people, in spite of the rich endowment of varied and diverse resources and livelihoods. Where people failed to understand their stewardship role they become consumers and beggars. I wonder why many Africans spend enormous time in supposed noisy spiritual activities amassing informally acquired knowledge that is seldom used or applied wrongly. Such unproductive use of time leads to African failure to be realistic with life basic principles embedded in common sense.

People from Asia and Middle-East enter Africa not rich but become better-off with time. Productivity goes with time and management of resources depend on people's values, what they fear, and behaviour of excuses. I get a bit worried when I see an organisation like Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) spending useful time fighting political ideological battles instead of teaching workers how to manage meagre income to achieve better wellbeing whether with socialism or capitalism. I know in Ghana a night soil disposer labourer managed without scholarship to get his children education and eventually one became a medical doctor. The owner of White Chapel one of the largest supermarkets in the same country that, had said that he began trading from table-top along the street (vendor). Retrenchment isn't death warrant but independence and growth license. Management of resources goes beyond accumulation of individual income to how people can manage

themselves as groups by common sense to equally arrive at cooperatives that economic meltdown hitting big industries have far less impact- strategies.

viii. The absence of Africa on the global scene. Indeed, we see African people have headed the UN and some involved in space project and all manner of activities. But what is apparent is that there is no African brand out there. Africa (Black people) only, in this sense, consciously and unconsciously copy and imitate others which is a lame duck approach to achieve change. My former house owner who became a friend and more or less like a father in SA uses to question me why 'blacks always do what they see Europeans do'. Even though I felt a bit offended by such a remark at that time but after reflecting on the remark later, it made me to think. The person was right! I understood him afterward as he always used the Chinese as example of people who are part of the developing world, but their culture and everything remain intact. As mentioned somewhere above there is economic cost to this behaviour of Africans. We've been using colonisation as an excuse all along. But let it be repeated here again that it isn't Africa alone that has experienced colonisation, in as much as the other colonised races and places didn't retain the image and effects of whomever the coloniser may be. The knowledge of that history is good, after all over several centuries the Jews still maintain the history of their suffering elsewhere. Neither the Jews nor Asians abandoned their heritage and identity for that sake. Why should Africans behave as if they were exported from somewhere to Africa. The presence of emptiness on the continent undermines every effort to transform people for change and advancement in living standards. Quoting Professor Pitika Ntuli, the 'African is photocopy of something else'.

The import of this statement is enormous as one reflects on it. Let's take this example, supposing somebody wants to eat French cuisine and there is French owned restaurant around, and another person being African also serves French dishes in a nearby restaurant, certainly, one may first think of going to the French because psychologically one may feel like taking the original dish. It doesn't mean the French meal is better cooked than the non-indigenous French person, but humanly speaking the impression speaks enough for itself. In this vein, we find Africans trying to imitate Europeans but it doesn't work. Europeans would want to pay for something African which they don't have, but not what the African has copied from them! Things that are European culture or belief, Europeans can do it better than a non-European. This shows the economic cost of remaining imitators than a people who are creative and have the ability to improve and project our own cultural and indigenous systems and beliefs and other indigenous knowledge.

Today, across the global market, we find Asian traditional medicines, which I believe Africans have similar ones, but many African government policies don't encourage traditional medicine usage and its promotion. Some governments prefer importing food from elsewhere than encouraging locally produced food for consumption which is far costly. In SA e.g. one hardly finds local food restaurants. Restaurants are either Indian or European for over 15 years of the African change. If an African singer goes to Europe only to sing Western style music and dance ballet, I believe the attendance shall be minimal because the impression already exists that a foreigner cannot perform better than indigenous European. It will be sensible to perform the 'Lion King' which rings something new and unknown and the inquisitive people in their numbers bored by the same repeated things shall flock to watch. Is Africa therefore presenting something new now that the world is bored with all Western and Western forms and styles?

I think the time is ripe for Africa to become introspective and examine the so-called 'demonic' things, improve some and reinvent others as source of economic gain. Europe isn't any more extremely religious minded that repudiated foreign things as 'pagan' barely a century ago. Today's Europeans are objective free thinkers with better accommodation of other worldviews, less religious (but not without spirituality in its own sense) and they want to know more and be inspired by what used to be

‘barbaric’ or ‘pagan’ world. Many have flocked to Asia looking for other spiritual experiences. India and other Asian states have advanced in marketing their world, and Africa should forsake imitations and project authentic Africa which is unique in its own way.

Africans should master issues of the continent not that of other places which though some Africans become scholars, but they lack basic understanding of our own systems and world (Rukuni 2008). Permit me to use this example that African Christian priests are well versed in Hebrew traditions, culture, geography, history, etc., but how many can talk about the daily things that happen on the continent. A complete blackout! No wonder a former University Dean said to his class that contemporary theological studies are a liability. The point is there are scholars who are so clever to pinpoint the grave where Abraham and Isaac are situated by imagination (not having been to Israel) but know nothing about their own great grandfathers, the source of true spiritual authority, neither what they did and lived for. It is better to have broader knowledge but not at the expense of that which is essential to one’s wellbeing and development. There is a saying that where one’s heart is, there lies one’s focus and interest. Yes, I know many want to migrate to ‘Jerusalem’ for good, but some of us love to remain in Africa.

Africa’s enormous challenges remain unresolved because religious, political, administrative and some traditional leaders are trained on external models, though they have enormous knowledge, but it is hardly effective and applicable to help in resolving African problems. Let our leaders become more conversant in African matters and issues and Africa shall witness its own change. They should stop going for Western experts and rather have confidence in African trained personnel. Training Africans should focus on African circumstances: history, land, values, traditions, science and others. Many African languages have Scriptures translated for them, but again, none has any maths book or geography etc. done in similar manner. It behoves the African as Koreans did to do our own thing. The saying that charity begins at home makes it crucial for all manner of African scholars to stop imitation which indicate a shallow knowledge of the continent, and begin to relearn and align their thinking within the geo-political and historical context of Africa which needs them most.

ix. Short-cut in the guise of miracle is what many Africans look for today. In contemporary world where age old sexual impotent have found simple chemical solution, Africans instead of pursuing education and using the knowledge to explore the universe and its secrets, chase miracles as short cut to end the consequence of their own shortcomings. Nature truly rewards hard working and serious people. Most of the borrowed religions Africans have, attest to this as a fact. The universe is governed by basic law of which one cannot use short cuts and placations to bribe one’s way out. As mentioned above, productive hours are wasted in places waiting for miracles. So any sound of miracle today attracts Africans. By this attitude many have rather enriched others who have the boldness to promise miracles. If some of these miracle chasers could invest such time in making money by investing such time in thinking and proper planning towards something meaningful, nature will reward such efforts, and they can generate income that will enable those who happen to fall sick to find available remedy and cure at cost. With money a person can afford modern treatment of all kinds to treatment such as blindness and bareness. A Hebrew wisdom book affirms ‘money is the answer to everything’. When I first read that statement I had my own doubts of its veracity. But as I grew I came to realise that there is more sense in that saying. It calls upon the individual to pursue activity that is economically rewarding as a solution to disease and sickness, hunger and starvation, drink good water, and appropriate shelter.

My own personal experience out of religious zeal made me to think making money was ungodly, and as such I met some period of frustration in pursuing my childhood and youthful dreams. I never did relinquish counselling young folks on the need to pursue vigorously good education and independent career. And those I found serious I provided needed support which I am proud to see some of them in

dignified positions and financially independent. If I had asked them to wait for miracles they should be begging today. Africans in their mistaken adoptions have relinquished the virtue of silence and quietness which is the cradle of creativity and brewery of brilliant ideas. What is implied here is that many ordinary Africans know nothing about the reward of quietness in indigenous religious practice. Among many ordinary Africans what has become popular is unnecessary noise making prevents clear focus on issues and challenges. Ordinary Africans no longer think about looking for solutions, but miracles without sweat. Some minorities resort to alcohol and drugs as another way of escape from the shadow of uncertainties in Africa. But Africa is still secure to those whose eyes are opened to see with authentic African eyes.

These factors are significant issues that have rendered the African unrecognisable in the world they, inevitably, have significant role to play. Of course, if Africans cannot resolve petty problems within small countries and little county localities, but only breeding refugees, then it tells the dislocation from our own realities by having knowledge that isn't powerful enough. But then if Africa is so insignificant by dint of her own doing what makes the continent and its people a poaching ground for ideological incursions and tactical assimilation by other groups and foreign belief which is the fear of the honourable scholar on the SAFM radio with Tsepiso Makwetla (hostess)? Why is Africa not allowed some breathing space to take stock of her own past mistakes as victim of her own short-sightedness? I had the privilege of staying with European descent Africans, Chinese, Koreans and Indians and what amazes me is that their identity and culture has been intact. They eat their own food even whilst in Africa. Africa's importation of exotic foods alone as available information indicate, has saddled African states in deepening negative external credit balance since the past 50 years. Africans citizens have such unbridled taste for foreign things from religion to turkey tails that no income can be enough to sustain such life in present circumstance of global economic order.

The challenge, rest with Africans to prove, like Gandhi did that the continent is self-sufficient in everything that is why it has become a source of attraction. This cannot be proven if the above mistakes are not corrected through both political will and cultural education that restores the dignity Africans deserve, and not as mere 'photocopy of something else' nor supposed syncretistic dilemma or *tabula rasa* (emptiness), but like other recognised people across the world having own authentic history conversant to African people, sense of true identity which is steeped in positive African tradition and norms. It is sad to hear supposed African moral custodians fighting over circumcision rite when there are enough social challenges and crucial issues of social re-education they could contribute immensely. Where is the African priority in the world today? How can the continent minimise the skilled and unskilled young people migration? What is better solution to HIV/AIDS? I believe our noble *Akomfo* and *Sangomas* have much to contribute in making up and coming African generation exposed to what Nkulu-N'Sengha describes as African 'wealth of values and priceless human qualities'¹⁴. Some of the African societal custodians also need to re-educate themselves as some have already compromised their traditional ethics.

Some Africans have argued that in a globalisation era why bother about identity and cultural issues in borderless world. It is better said SA citizens don't need visa to enter USA, let all move now. We're all becoming a global village. These enfeebled thinkers have failed to see we're not becoming same colour and language etc. Not even is global economy being equally shared. In the midst of globalisation religious, ethnic and racial identity is growing stronger in current world. How would a world without variety look like, all just same? A world where there are no distinctions at all would

¹⁴ Mutombo Nkulu-N'Sengha 2008. African traditional religions, p.220.

mean colonies on other planets have been achieved, but then we shall find the Russians, Americans, Chinese and Indians speaking their language and showing their culture over there. National flags are being used even in space and not UN flag. Even then if globalisation is accepted as such why should Africans become the target group for transmutation and assimilation? Why it is that Asians and Arabs don't adopt African culture and practices? Some think globalisation will bring western wealth to Africa cheaply but fail to realise that even among the Westerners one have to pay full cost for ones desire for comfort and level of consumption. Such day-dreaming has kept not only some feeble thinking African people from being unproductive but lazy, waiting for a heaven on earth where everything is free. The same problem again, guess what it is.

I strongly believe that the Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest still hold in the real world. One can dispute that but real life faces the African, especially the young ones, and challenges the majority in Africa to put in place mechanism and sound perspective, not only for survival but having better living condition some Africans deserve and not shacks, and RDPs; home grown foods and not donor relief aid that doesn't satisfies dependency hunger. African leaders have for long frowned over pertinent issues that are the core undermining issues of development in Africa. To some extent some African scholars have done enough under constraining circumstances to write on African issues, e.g. the African writers' series group. It is incumbent on our political leaders to put in their support counting there is no any known short cut to development and change than the one which is also home grown. As the saying goes the unexamined life isn't worth living has much to tell Africa that over decades of independence from absolute foreign control there is a need for self check up and it should be regular.

To conclude on this matter that bothers me to the core, my intention has been to join in the call for Africans to begin to look inside and not outside. Few factors have been discussed above as constraints and burden of Africa that has become impediment to the African world and people's recognition in the global scene in spite of rising elite and academia in our midst. The level of development does not equally match the resources and opportunities on the continent. The factors raised are evidence that until Africans begin to appreciate what they have as heritage and begin to build on the so called demonic culture for transformation in living standards, development will continue to be slow if not severely difficult. Such attainment is possible if there are no laws or principles governing the universe. The issue of Africa without text stand out key and significant element that has given the impression that Africa is more or less empty. And it is a truism that places on the continent where there have been cultural and indigenous displacements over decades of African states independence basic development is a crawling issue, let alone thinking about serious changes in terms of achieving majority middle income growth. From Abyssinia to Dakar and the Nubians to Nkandla in KwaZulu-Natal imported goodies have failed to address critical human needs in Africa in a far advanced post-modern digital world.

The attention being drawn, let it be repeated, is a genuine recognition of what Africans have as God-giving heritage, irrespective of how others wrongly perceived African ways from other biased and prejudiced points of view. We can only boast of what is indigenous and unique to Africa alone, and not what is imported as Africans have no authoritative claim to such things. So it has economic cost. Europe, Asia and Middle-East stand in their uniqueness in ongoing globalisation. What has Africa got to offer is due and this is what Africans need to work towards now. The failure will attract deeper economic cost as Africans rejecting its basic tradition and value systems for authority; and by adopting foreign systems will only deepen ordinary Africans social distress and sufferings. Development of Africa's own systems, as evidence in other parts of the world shows, will contribute not only to GDP growth and economy improvement but instil sense of pride in African people,

especially, the young generation who feel lost and forlorn in their own mother continent. Problem! Thank you and cheer up.

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