

EXPLORING AND PRESERVING OUR AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUES AND HERITAGE IN THE FACE OF GLOBAL CIVILIZATION

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Abstract

Why and how should Africa's cultural heritage be preserved? Africa is a home for a wealth of traditions, customs, and historical legacies that have been bequeathed through the ages. In the face of modern civilization, however, many of these cultures which are true to life stand at risk of extinction. If the true African past is lost to civilization, then there will be a gap in continuity between the past, the present and future generations. In other words, Africa can hardly speak of identity within the global community. This makes the question of preservation of African heritage expedient in contemporary African literature. This work employs the critical method of study in philosophy to explore some of the African cultural values and examine the consequences of preservation or non-preservation of the true African heritage. It finds that it is only through preservation of true African culture and traditions that African people can maintain a sense of identity and belongingness, and a sense of unity and cohesion which are essential to development within African communities. Preservation of a people's heritage is indispensable for its development and indigenous knowledge management. This paper argues that the key to preserving African culture lies in making it accessible to younger generations through education, documentation, and languages.

Keywords: African heritage, African traditions, African identity, true culture, indigenous knowledge.

Introduction

There is a saying about Missionaries in Africa that goes like this: “When the white man came to Africa, he had the Bible and the black man had the land. The white man said, 'Let us close our eyes and pray.' And when they opened their eyes, the white man had the land and the black man was left with the Bible.” This anecdote has far-reaching implications in the understanding of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial African society generally. It models a set of arguments against the colonial masters that has become commonplace in the discourse of so-called loss of identity in Africa – arguments that are quite necessary, but insufficient for understanding the history and impacts of colonialism and its antecedent modernity in Africa generally.

In his *Philosophy of History* published in 1956, Hegel depicted the Africans as people who have not attained consciousness or realization of any substantial objective existence. The African for him is yet to reach the level of realizing his own being (Hegel 1956, 93). He further portrayed African worldviews such as morality, culture and religion as being at the lowest conveyable phase of mind, tapped in nature, bonded to the body and barely above the level of animal. Simply put, Africa, Hegel maintained, was still at the level below that of a normal human being. Classical writings like that of Hegel have led to different misinterpretation regarding Africa as a people viewed through the lens of her culture and values. Against this background, many African scholars in contemporary discourse generally describe colonial masters and colonialist writers as the enemy of African cultures and freedom.

However, this study demonstrates that notwithstanding the attendant evils of colonialism, it has also been central to Africans' own narratives of improvement. One of the valuable changes carried through by colonizers are stopping the taking of the life of twins. They also opened schools and spread education which helped the Africans to raise the level of their academic and cultural capacities. In doing this, however, they consciously altered African tradition and African values. This is because they could not identify the valuable elements of the traditional African culture that kept the Africans living in peace and security (Hoffman, 2017). Indeed, *Things Fall Apart* reflects how Europe treated Africa as both primitive and cultureless (Achebe, 1994). Colonialism she exerted on Africa ruptured the traditional process of moral identity and its practice.

It was believed that the ethics and values of the colonizer were superior to those of the colonized. This belief was accomplished through the change that has resulted such as the establishment of schools in which curricular were geared to achieve the goals of the colonizer rather than help the colonized to be politically and economically independent; and also the missionary project, which helped in vitrifying the religious notion and scope of the colonized. One result of this was the ruin of the values, culture and religion of the colonized. The African society became victim of a strange creed with which it has continued to struggle till date, with little or no success. Hence, this present study which tries to explore and foster the preservation of African cultural values and heritage becomes very apt.

Tylor (1971) believed that there was a functional basis for the development of society and this, according to him, was universal. He maintained that all societies passed through three basic stages of development: from savagery, through barbarism, to civilization (Long, 2016). He asserts that the human mind and its capabilities are the same globally, despite the stage in social evolution of a particular people (Stringer, 1999). This would mean that a hunter-gatherer society would possess the same amount of intelligence as an advanced industrial society. The difference, according to Taylor, is education, which he considers the cumulative

knowledge and methodology that takes many years to acquire. Thus, Taylor often likens so-called primitive culture to “children” and sees culture and the mind of humans as progressive. A child, if given the opportunity will surely grow; in the meantime, however, she is still a human being.

The novel, *Things Fall Apart* presents two persona (Achebe, 1994). Okonkwo symbolizes the first persona who respects and appreciates the customs and traditions of his culture and believed that the colonial masters came to tear up the African society and culture. Thus, he had to bring an end to this colonization and go back to African heritage. But finding that he could not succeed, he made a suicide. The second, was the modern African character who gets benefits from the colonization. As is evidence, there are so many benefits gained by the Africa from the colonizers.

Despite these benefits, however, there are a number of challenges that face the future of the Africa. It is a truism that social factors structure our thoughts and behavior. Therefore, as Long (2016) remarked, it is in his culture that the Africa can fully interact with the world and become fully human. There is no gainsaying that the chances of the African attaining his life aspirations have been limited by colonialism. This is a form of “death” of the African. What is behind the suicide of Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, is to show he sacrificed to his people or he mourned the death of the African people – the dramatic change of the African people from satisfied and self-dependent to “improved and modern modes” (Stipe, 2003). No society could work without a system of representation and action, common to the members, that distinguishes it from others. Thus, the need to explore and preserve the African heritage even in the face of today's civilization and modernization cannot be overemphasized.

Simply put, cultural heritage preserves the way things used to be: the way that people used to think, used to behave, used to celebrate. It preserves the way people used to live. With cultural heritage, therefore, we can always remain in touch with a true knowledge of who we are. Who would we be if not for the connections we draw from our ancestors? Who would we be if not for the traditions passed down by our parents? Thus, the African cannot speak of a sustainable future if he throws away his cultural heritage.

On a very large scale, therefore, cultural heritage when preserved, tell us the history of a people. Even a single tradition or artifact can speak volume on how a people lived, on the history of their ancestors. From what were passed on, one can discern easily what the people thought was important, and that strengthens the history of the community. Granted, what was important for the ancestors may not be entirely considered important to the contemporary or future the generation. Hence, preservation of culture does not imply stagnation. Yet the past and the improved present combine to strengthen the history the community writes.

The Concepts of Culture and Traditions

Taylor sees culture as that complex whole that includes many elements like knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, or any other abilities that are ordained by the people. It includes lifestyle, common knowledge, images and myths (Taylor 1987, 1). It follows that culture is the totality of the way of life of a people that have been developed, shaped and practiced over years – modeled by environment and the need of the peoples. According to Adler (1983), culture is the mass programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another. People are seen as being from different cultures if their life styles as a group are obviously different.

In the words of Igwilo and Ogbo (2018):

Culture refers to the shared beliefs, customs, values, and practices of a particular group of people. It includes various aspects of human life such as language, religion, cuisine, art, music, and social norms. Culture is dynamic and can evolve over time based on certain factors like globalization, migration, and technological advancement.

Traditions, on the other hand, are specific customs or practices within a culture that are typically preserved and observed over time (Ogbo & Ndubisi, 2018). They are often rooted in cultural beliefs, rituals, and historical experiences. Traditions help to reinforce cultural identity and to provide a sense of continuity and connection to the past. Traditions are a part of culture, yet, they are more specific practices or rituals within that broader cultural framework. Over the years, as society progress and modernized, cultural and traditional practices undergo changes to mirror the changing times to better serve the needs of the people. This means that culture is not static. As Baffoe noted, culture is always tolerating development established on the changes in the environment in which it exists (Baffoe, 2018). Hence, that culture is represented in various particular identities should not prevent the quest for popular values. Each culture has the potential to reach universal but none can claim to have a monopoly of it. Meanwhile, universality is not equivalent to identification. No society could work without a system of representation and action, common to the members, that distinguishes it from others.

According to Idang (2015), African culture is considered a powerful moral status. It has a system of beliefs and customs which every individual must possess in order to live a good life. The African culture strongly hinders immoral behaviours. Anyone found guilty of breaching the moral order is punished severely; a suspected guilty person who opposes a charge brought against him, would be made to take an oath for proof of innocence. This taking of oath is a conflicting, yet an important aspect of

African culture that cannot be dispensed.

Towards a Recognition of the African Cultural Values

There are two major historical influences on African cultural values, namely colonialism (the practice of control by one people over another) and human slavery (which was practiced in Africa even before the broader slave trade that started in the 15th century) (Stipe, 2003). Existing slavery system in Africa then, started selling captured slaves to countries around the world. The resulting diaspora returned indelible foreign ways of life to Africa. These have reshaped the African world as they continued to influence our economic, political, religious, moral, intellectual and cultural lives. These factors are the bases for emphasis on the need to preserve a culture already battling with strong external influences.

Definitely, culture varies among ethnic groups in Africa. But most cultures have common trend. The *Pengium Dictionary* describes the word “value” as having a connotation of permanence. Unlike attitudes which are fleeting and unstable, values are dimmed to be permanent and important to the societal fabric (p.373). Hence, society depends more or less on values. Iheanacho (2014, 2) remarked that social order depends on the existence of general shared values which are regarded as legitimate and binding and act as a standard by means of which the ends of action are selected. This is in line with the understanding of Nicholas et al (2000) which posits that values are permanent social cultural tenets which sustain social order and which is intrinsically binding on members of a particular nation, culture area or professional calling. The fact of general acceptance as something conventional makes value very essential to any given society. It is also this general acceptance that gives it a legal backing and functionality. It follows therefore, as Iheanacho observed, that values, whether cultural, religious, social, ethical or professional, remains a yardstick through which human activities achieve their original ends (Iheanacho 2014, 2).

Indeed, values of a people are a simple way of understanding the culture of the people. Thus, African values are enshrined in the African cultures and traditions. And it is these culture and values that attracted our colonizers. African artifacts are worthy of mention here as they priced more than gold due to their inestimable values within the African mindset. Having made this point, some of the forms of African cultural values and heritages can be explored.

Family Relationships: This is highly valued everywhere in Africa serving as the cornerstone of society and culture. The immediate and extended families have an irrevocably strong tie. Older members of society as well as constituted authorities enjoy unreserved respect and reverence. Family ties are strengthened through communal living, mutual support, and collective decision-making. Indeed, the concept of *ubuntu*, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity, calls attention to the importance of family in African culture. Family gatherings,

ceremonies, and rituals play important roles in maintaining bonds and passing sown traditions within the family unit.

Community Living: Community living is deep-seated in African tradition and heritage, reflecting values of solidarity, cooperation, and interconnectedness. In this way, it prioritizes communal wellbeing over individual interests (Ndubisi & Ogbuishi, 2015). This communal ethos extends to various aspects of life, including decision-making, resource management, celebrations and knowledge. The Africans believe in community life in order to enforce the rights and responsibilities of everyone. The society advocates belongingness, rewards and punishments, good living and general wellbeing of its citizens. However, care must be taken to ensure that the community aspect of African heritage is not manipulated for the marginalization and operation the few/individual. If community living is positively embraced, it will promote cohesion, resilience, and collective progress.

Respect for Elders: In traditional African societies, elders hold positions of authority and are revered for their knowledge, leadership and contributions to the community. They are the acclaimed custodians of traditions; often providing socio-politico-moral guidance in the community. Hence, young generations are expected to show reverence and honor towards them. Respect for elders, as an important part of African heritage is, therefore, a reflection of wisdom, experience, and community cohesion. It fosters intergenerational harmony, continuity of cultural values, and collective wellbeing.

Indigenous Knowledge: Indigenous knowledge is integral to African heritage. It comprises traditional practices, wisdom, and cultural insights passed down through generations. Ogbo and Ndubisi (2018) remarked that African indigenous knowledge is a rich tapestry of knowledge on important issues like agriculture, medicine, arts, technology and spirituality. It thus offers unique perspectives and solutions to contemporary challenges such as unemployment. Recognizing and preserving this heritage is necessary for honoring Africa's diverse cultures and fostering sustainable development.

Oral Tradition: The traditional African culture values oral tradition. It is not necessarily because of illiteracy as often presumed. The traditional African society could afford a written system just as it was not found lagging behind in other aspects of life including language, art, science, mathematics. A society that understood education “as socialization” of the child (Ogbo & Ndubisi, 2018) did not dim writing and the burden of reading and memorizing wise. The adverse effect of the written system is glaringly evidence too in today's society. We read lots of books, write volumes, and even acquire certificates without really being adequately knowledgeable in the field of study. Only a handful of our studies can be converted into knowledge. Hence, the problem of unemployable graduates abounds in our contemporary societies. Oral tradition, therefore, has some salient benefits. It is learning friendly as it taps on the power of memory in such a way that no doubts can be cast on whether the learners have understood what is taught. Hence, no need for frequent exams.

Storytelling and Folktales: These play an important role in the African world. Apart from provision of entertainments, they transmit values from generation to generation. Through storytelling family, village/clan histories and other important information were passed. Teaching and learning were easily facilitated. Generally, storytelling serves as vehicles for preserving history, transmitting cultural values, and fostering a sense of identity. These tales often feature colorful characters and moral lessons. By cherishing and sharing these stories, Africans uphold their rich heritage and ensure its continuity for future generations.

Spirituality: Faith practice in traditional African societies is the traditional religions, which include beliefs in a necessary supreme being as well as in other deities (gods). It also involves the practice of reverence for ancestors, spirits, and nature. This belief emphasizes community, harmony, and maintenance of balance with the natural world. It is typically passed from one generation to the next through oral tradition, songs, festivals. Over time, Christianity and Islam have also become influential, blending with African indigenous beliefs to form unique expressions of faith. Prayer is an important element in African spirituality. The African can speak to God directly or through the lesser deities. As Achebe (1994) remarked, you do not approach a great man directly but through his servants. Meanwhile, prayer in African spirituality does not take long periods of time. For traditional Africa, prayer is not work or a profession.

Hospitality: This is a cornerstone of African heritage, with different African cultures valuing warmth, generosity, and welcoming dispositions towards guests/visitors. A traditional African does not look at a stranger with prima-facie suspicion. Instead, he welcomes him with a spirit of compassion and love, making him feel at home. Indeed, different African societies place importance on hosting visitors with open arms, offering kola nut, food, shelter, and companionship as a sign of goodwill. It thus fosters bonds between individuals and communities, promoting mutual understanding and solidarity as well as the spirit of inclusivity and harmony.

Music: Music, defined as the product of an organized sound that is pleasing to the ear (Ogbo, 2021), is undeniably one of the most vibrant and integral aspects of African culture and heritage. African traditional music is not music for music's sake. It is used basically for promotion of good moral behaviour, to spur one into positive action (such as love, war, work, prayer, repentance, charity, hope, patience), for maintenance of peace, to encourage or discourage actions or practices as the case may be, to praise or condemn, to heal a broken heart, etc. African music comes in form of songs, instruments, dance or their combination, serving as a powerful means of expression, communication, and connection. African music plays a central role in ceremonies, celebrations, storytelling, social/religious gatherings – serving as a unifying force and fostering a sense of community.

Sense of Connection with Nature: One of the fundamental aspects of African heritage is strong connection with nature. This is deeply rooted in many traditional beliefs systems and cultural practices across Africa. Historically, African societies relied on nature for sustenance, livelihood, physical and spiritual wellbeing. This sense of connection is often expressed through rituals, ceremonies, as well as folklore that honor and respect the natural world, including humans, animals, plants, water, and the land itself. Many African proverbs and teachings further emphasize the importance of harmonious living with nature and recognizing human beings as part of a larger ecological system.

Oath-taking: Oath-taking holds significance in many African cultures and heritage. They are often used as solemn promises or commitments. Oaths are administered in different contexts such as interpersonal relationships, religious ceremonies, legal proceedings, and community governance. This practice is deeply rooted in spiritual beliefs. It is believed to invoke the power of deities and ancestors to enforce honesty, loyalty and accountability in the society. It also serves as mechanism for the maintenance of social order, conflict resolution and reconciliation. Although it is important that the specific rituals and customs surrounding oath-taking in Africa be reconstructed to ally properly to social justice, its importance as a symbol of trust, integrity and communal values cannot be overemphasized. If, for example, political leaders go through the processes of oath-taking in authentic traditional African ways at the swearing-in ceremonies, it might be a better deterrent from refrains from fulfilling the fundamental promises made to the community or nation by the candidates.

Medicine and Healing Systems: These systems, though diverse and varying from community to community (Ogbo, 2018), are integral parts of African culture and heritage, often incorporating traditional practices, herbal remedies and spiritual beliefs. Despite their variation according to different communities, they share some common elements such as the belief in the interconnectedness of body, mind, and spirit which inform their belief in the importance of holistic healing. Medicine men and women generally known as traditional healers, play significance role in providing healthcare and addressing ailments believed to be either physical or spiritual. These medical traditions often coexist alongside modern medical practices, thereby contributing to a comprehensive approach to healing.

Some Benefits of Preserving African Heritage

Africa is a country rich in cultural diversity and heritage. With over 3000 distinct ethnic groups and over 2000 languages (Grindler 2023), Africa is home for wealth of traditions, customs, and historical legacies that have been passed down through the ages. Many African cultural traditions, however, stand the risk of being lost in the face modernization and civilization. Therefore, we consider the urgent need for Africans to preserve Africa's heritage for the future generation a social responsibility for everyone. The positive results can never be overemphasized.

First, it is essential for maintaining a sense of identity and belongingness for the African people. Africa's cultural heritage such as music, language, food, dress, arts, festivals, moral and social values, will help the future generation connect with the past, understand and appreciate their roots, and provides a sense of continuity. It will strengthen their sense of self and contribute to a positive and stable societal fabric. This connection, in turn, promotes mental well-being and a stronger sense of community. A people can have no sense of pride if they have no identity, and there can be no way to identify a people culturally as being different from another if their cultural traditions are not preserved. Therefore, in order to assert an African identity and promote belongingness among various African communities, preservation of the African heritage is indispensable.

Again, preservation of African culture will help to promote a sense of unity within African communities. Consider, for instance, the age-grade festival of Egede community in Enugu state, Nigeria. The festival occurs once every ten years during which the male citizens within the age bracket gather together to unite, strengthen their bond of friendship, and share their experiences. They will then be able to speak in one voice in matters concerning the entire community. It follows then that by celebrating and reserving cultural practices, various African communities are able to come together to bond and share their experiences. This creates a strong sense of solidarity and mutual understanding, and can help to bridge the gaps between communities, and between different ethnic groups and tribes within Africa.

Moreover, as Grindler (2023) rightly noted, preserving African heritage is also important for the broader international community. Just as Africa readily learns, and sometimes improves itself, from the rich cultural legacies of other parts of the world; so also, should the rest of the world learn from Africa's heritage and also enhance themselves from it. But this cannot be possible if the culture is not preserved. Thus, failure to preserve the African traditional heritage is a loss not only to Africa but to the rest of the world. This is because African traditional heritages are valuable pieces of human history, and contribute as such, to the rich tapestry of global heritage. By ensuring that these heritages are preserved, humanity is able to appreciate and learn from Africa's diverse and fascinating cultures and traditions. Cultural preservation generally fosters an environment of inclusivity and acceptance within the global community. Exposure to different traditions, languages, and customs promotes a deeper understanding of one another, breaking down barriers and creating a more harmonious global community.

Furthermore, preserving the African heritage will be beneficial for economic growth of African communities. Cultural tourism, for instance, is a significance source of income for many communities in Africa. Tourism helps in promoting traditional practices and artifacts, and when it is preserved, these communities are able to attract visitors, thus providing opportunities for employment and business. By involving in

the preservation of cultural assets, African societies can create sustainable economic opportunities and support the livelihood of those involved in cultural industries. Historical sites, traditional crafts, and cultural festivals attract visitors, generating revenue for local communities. In this way, the potency of preservation of African traditions and cultures in driving economic growth cannot be denigrated.

Finally, it is an avenue for safeguarding indigenous knowledge. African cultures hold invaluable knowledge and wisdom that has been passed down through generations: from traditional medicinal practices to sustainable agricultural methods. Preserving these time-tested approaches can offer solutions to contemporary challenges. Indeed, preservation of African cultures will ensure that we do not lose sight of these valuable insights that can contribute to a more sustainable and resilient future. By embracing and safeguarding our indigenous knowledge, we not only enrich human's understanding of the world but also lay the foundation for a more interconnected, tolerant and prosperous global society. This point is well captured in Ogbo and Ndubisi (2018) when they noted that indigenous African communities possess a wealth of knowledge about sustainable living, biodiversity, ecosystem management, medicine and healing approaches, etc. By preserving the African heritage, her indigenous knowledge would be safeguarded and this is essential for addressing contemporary challenges. By acknowledging and safeguarding this valuable wisdom, the future generation can learn from sustainable practices that have sustained African communities for centuries.

Ways of Preserving the African Cultural Values

The African culture can be preserved in many ways. One important way of preserving the African cultural values and heritage is education. By teaching the young ones about their traditions and heritage, African societies ensure that younger ones remain connected to their roots. Through formal and informal education systems (eg. community gathering, storytelling, proverbs), Africans learn about their heritage, language, history, and cultural practices. Education also empowers individuals to engage critically with their cultural heritage, adapt traditions to contemporary contexts, and contribute to the revitalization and preservation of African cultural values for a sustainable future.

Again, documentation is necessary if we will preserve our African heritage. A Latin saying has it that *verbo volunta sed crima manet* – words flies but writing remains. Thus, while the oral tradition is good, it cannot meet up to the challenges of contemporary society. Therefore, efforts must be made to document African traditional rituals, symbols, languages and practices. This can be done through the establishment of cultural archives, libraries and museums. The rich oral histories should be gathered and preserved in writing. Also, different African communities should gather and record traditional music and dance. Traditional African societies have a rich philosophical tradition as well as great philosophers. For lack of documentation, the international society as well as many African young, do not

know about most of the ancient African philosophers not to talk of their insightful contributions to knowledge. The African proverbs, riddles, storytelling, and names are sources of philosophy which have the potency to transform the human society for good if they were documented and developed.

Finally let us look at language as a veritable means of safeguarding the African values and heritage. Indigenous African languages serve as carriers of cultural heritage since it has the potency to encapsulate the nuances of African traditions, beliefs, and worldviews. The African languages are the mother-tongues of the African children. As such they can better think and better understand and also better express ideas within the society. A “people” without language is a contradiction in terms because language is one of the basic defining elements of a people. By allowing their native tongues to die off as something primitive, the various African societies are doing themselves a disservice. Therefore, efforts to promote and preserve indigenous languages, both within formal education systems and through community initiatives, are essential for safeguarding African cultural values and promoting intergenerational continuity.

Universalizing the African Values and Heritages

A universalized world is one in which political, economic, social and cultural events become more and more interconnected. Universalization of African values and heritage is therefore a process of increasing interconnectedness between Africa and other societies of the world, such that more and more of African values and heritage have effects on people and societies far away. This term was referred to by Anowai (2007) and Iheanacho (2014) as globalization; the aims and objectives of which is the pursuance of cooperation of political, economical, social, scientific and technological ideologies, innovations, discoveries and consumptions in the world.

If the African is proud of our African cultural values, and if he really prices it more than gold, then he should strategize on how to make it available and accessible to the global world. This is universalization of the African values and heritages. We would want other people to know, cherish and appreciate these values like ourselves. This universalization is readily possible now because, the rest of the world wants to know what is happening in the next village or community. This possibility is further conditioned by the present global communication network which fast tracks information dissemination from any part of the world to others. We must utilize these opportunities to sell our own values and knowledge to the world. This will not only bring pride for the African peoples, but can earn reasonable foreign exchange for different African communities. In other words, it will serve as economic windfall which will be ploughed back to bring about development in Africa generally.

It should be noted that universalization of culture does not mean instituting a mono culture in the world. If one of the aims of universalizing the African culture is cultural monism, its success will be low or impossible, for it will certainly meet

strong reactions across opposing views. According to Iheanacho (2014), cultural diversity is one big block the forces of universalization should not target to penetrate. Acculturation is therefore the nearest success as people would still relapse into the cultures while greeting, conversant with why you eat, dress, and act the way you do. Universalization of African values and heritages is the advocacy of certain attitude towards and the preservation of them for imitation by other race communities of the world. It is necessary because Africans especially can testify to the effectiveness and efficacy of these beliefs and practices in their lived societies and relationships.

For instance, in a world under the bondage of corruption, atheism, etc, and in which most world popular religions are increasingly becoming mere socio-politico-economic organizations, and a world at the same time increasingly afflicted by pandemics and other diseases, belief in a just society and in the efficacy of conventional medical practices are gradually and systematically eroded. World-reorientation on the African *oath-taking systems* as well as *healing practices* would put Africa in the world map once again. Given the fact that some people of the world might reject African values come-what-may, it should not be ruled out that some non-Africans may be interested in knowing and investing in African beliefs, ideology, and values as something which of course can stand as a credible and reliable alternative to other cultural values of the world.

Meanwhile, African cultural values have not been strictly kept within the bounds of Africa all the while. Some aspects of African values have been universalized since the 14th AD (Iheanacho 2014, 13). This was the period when the exploratory activities of the Portuguese in African continent were going on. History had it that during this moment of interaction, the Portuguese discovered some magnificent art works of African province. These were taken away and stored in European museums (Iheanacho 2014) which later formed the greater percentage of European artifacts collection corpus. This alone, despite its negativity, is a major breakthrough in the quest to universalize African values. Everywhere they are, they speak about their sources and ingenuity. Any other aspect of our cultural values and heritage could be universalized in a positive exchange this time. This includes dress code, community life, hospitality, chieftaincy system, marriage rituals, and religion.

Conclusion and Recommendations

African values and heritage are the rich and diverse encompassing principles such as communalism, respect for elders, hospitality, spirituality, and a strong sense of connection with nature. As such, they reflect Africa's deep history, culture, traditions, and contributions to the global tapestry of humanity. There is urgent need, therefore, for contemporary Africa to cherish, maintain and preserve our life-enhancing heritage. This, nevertheless, should not prevent the quest for popular values. Preserving our African cultural values and heritage amidst global civilization involves a delicate balance of embracing modernity while safeguarding the African traditions. By recognizing and preserving African cultural values and heritage, we

uphold our rich heritage and identity and ensure the continuity of these values for future generation. It requires initiatives like education, documentation, and promotion of indigenous language. Balancing progress with preservation requires thoughtful engagement and proactive measures to ensure the longevity and relevance of African heritage in an ever-changing world. Future research on this subject can navigate the influence of globalized norms and technologies which can sometimes overshadow African traditional practices.

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