

REFLECTION ON AFRICAN AGRARIAN PHILOSOPHY: TRANSFORMING EGBIRA ENDOGENOUS AGRO-ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The central theme of African agrarian philosophy is the pragmatic utilization of human relation to nature (in agro-ecology) for the nutritional betterment of humanity. This is the fundamental essence of African communitarianism cum utilitarianism enrobed in agrarianism. Behold the indigenous Egbira¹ people (indeed Africans) are in acute shortage of sustainable nutrition and food insecurity in the midst of abundant human and agro-ecological heritage resources. Hence the imperative for an enduring transformational development in nutritional enhancement and general food security. The crux of this paper is the recognition of the quagmire and the fervent search for pragmatic transformation of the indigenous agrarian system for sustainable agricultural development. An analytical inquiry into the endogenous knowledge of the indigenous Egbira people supposes a strategic veritable heritage resource for sustainable agro-ecological living. Suffice it that the Egbira (African) endogenous knowledge system encodes environmental management policies for transformative resource development in our complex and ageing ecological system. It is true that the traditional lifestyles of the Egbira person (African) is seriously threatened with virtual extinction by insensitive developments. Satisfying existential needs must be anchored on transformation paradigm that will promote sustainable agriculture, achieve food security and improve nutrition concomitant with improved economic status of the indigenous Egbira (African). We conclude that through the mass cultivation of the soil that ushers food sufficiency, the Egbira will derive high credit balance of hard work, perseverance, self-reliance, resilience, spiritual good, eco-ethical/moral integrity, virtuous life, courage, humility and hospitality.

Keywords: African Agrarianism, Egbira Heritage, Endogenous Knowledge, Environmental ethics, Transformation

Introduction

This essay is a critical inquiry into the African agrarian endogenous knowledge system of the Egbira people which remains a strategic veritable heritage resource to salvage the technologically abused environment. African agrarian philosophy stresses the role of man,

¹ Ahmadu, *Who are the Ebiras*, 1; Hussaini, *Cultures*, 2; Ohiare, *The Ebira*, 7-8

nature, culture, land and climate as fundamental foundational elements in the formation of moral, cultural character as well as economic, social and political institutions. And like a spider web when any of the fundamental elements within the threshold is threatened, the whole is troubled and in existential danger. Obviously, the Egbira (African) traditional lifestyles are under siege threatened, abused, disorientated and plagued with food insecurity.²

The human person in Egbira (African) metaphysics and ontology is acknowledged as a well-positioned enigma, powerful, creative, ebullient, intelligent, and a dominant force among all divinely created beings in the cosmos. This perspective connotes that the divine decree subjecting the lower beings to subservient status to human species is intended to be a source of harmony, hospitality and betterment of humanity. The essence of Egbira eco-doxological inclination asserts that the wellness and wellbeing of man is of paramount interest to the Almighty Creator, Supreme Architect, and controller of affairs in the Universe. It is imperative for pragmatic transformative / transformational approach in agrarian system for sustainable agro-ecological living. Food sufficiency can be improved, achieved and sustained in Nigeria and Africa with less dependency on genetically modified foods (in the mode of aids) from the Western countries. Over-dependent on hangouts from outside Africa with its attendant consequences is no longer sustainable.

The Egbira (African) cultural traditions in its dynamic nature acknowledges the utilization and relevance of science and technology for sustainable agrarianism. In tandem with African communalistic utilitarian tendencies, agrarian system is dependent on the health and vitality of a region's entire human and nonhuman entities in the neighborhood. For the Egbira, it is most imperative that the empirical basis of knowledge has immediate practical results in agriculture, herbal medicine and protection of man and his environment among others. Our forebears were well acquainted with the systems of rotation of crops, knew land fallow techniques, and applied the technology of food processing and preservation.³ And within the African existential reality abounds substantial evidence and countless testimonies of people about the knowledge of medicinal potentialities of herbs and plants therapy. The traditional healing practitioners readily serve as the main source of health care delivery system before the introduction of Western medicine into Africa. Suffice it that current scientific studies recognizes the pragmatic positive role that endogenous knowledge play in the formulation and implementation of sustainable development policies and projects in Africa and other parts of the world. The World Commission on Environment and Development observes that "some traditional lifestyles are threatened with virtual extinction by insensitive development over which the indigenous people have no participation"⁴. Thus it is imperative that the traditional rights of the indigenous peoples be

². Ihuah, "African Endogenous Knowledge", 296

³. K. Gyekye, *Philosophy*, 26-7

⁴ Holt, et al, *Our Common Future*, 12

accorded respect, recognition and afforded more decisive voice in formulating policies about resource development in their ecosystems. It is true that the concept of traditional ecological knowledge is not exclusively the preserve of the indigenous peoples of Africa.

We assert that the African traditional ecological knowledge system outside Western scientific tradition has implication for African agrarianism. One agrees that the endogenous knowledge system contribute immensely to the conservation of biodiversity by promoting the use and management of agro-ecological resource development. The relevance of traditional knowledge and management systems which serves as foundational cornerstone to the use of local ecological knowledge in the cultivation of the soil cannot be overemphasized. Inquiry into African concept of agrarian development appreciates the capability and capacity of its knowledge systems as sufficiently endowed heritage resource. Critically leveraging on food development through a transformative recalibration of the agrarian system remains our solid argument in this essay.

Thus we asserts that African endogenous knowledge system encodes environmental management systems and policies for transformative development in Africa's complex and ageing ecological system. There is need for constructive conversational engagement with stakeholders about current and potential land sovereignty work in African Indigenous communities. The progressive goal of this kind of initiative will promote sustainable agriculture, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and transform economic status of the African indigenous food-producer/provider.

Egbira Agrarian ecological worldview

The traditional Egbira ethnic linguistic group are predominantly agrarian farmers of great repute. Etymologically, Ebira in generic activation means character, goodness, hospitality, culture, and language. Yet it is apt to note that Egbira is essentially the ethnic group name.⁵ This essay shall use endogenous as umbrella references to ways of knowing that are traditional encapsulated with local beliefs, practices, customs and world views that are helpful in managing environmental, spiritual and socio economic challenges.

According to the renowned jurist, Ustaz Yoonus Abdallah: “There are nine Ebira linguistic groups in Nigeria”⁶ located majorly in the North Central geopolitical zone and identified in North West, and the North East geopolitical zones. The Egbira sociocultural ethnic linguistic group remains one of the highly distinct nationalities comprising of Egbira Tao/Opete, Egbira Mozum, and Egbira Koto in Kogi State; Egbira Toto and Egbira Umaisha in Nasarawa State; Egbira Etuno of Edo State; Egbira Abaji in Abuja (Federal Capital Territory); Egbira Jukun/Kwararafa in

⁵ Hussaini, *Cultures*, 2

⁶ Abdallah, *Ebira will Survive*, xxvi

Taraba State; Egbira Zuru in Kebbi State; Egbira Panda/Kakanda of Plateau State; Egbira Agatu of Benue State, and Egbira Oloko of Ondo State and Ekiti State are uniquely positioned in Nigeria. Wherever the Egbira peoples are found in the traditional settlement or environment in Nigeria, they are resourceful, hard-working and maintains high social relationships and pragmatic ethical values.

In Egbira agrarian-ecology the metaphysical world of forces is acknowledged and essentially centered on man and land that is intricately webbed into a solid profound ontological bond of unity in diversity.⁷ Within this underlying background, man tries to maintain strong and harmonious relationship with all other forces/beings in the universe. Man is thus the center of existence in the cosmos and dwells in the ontological hierarchy of forces in relationship with his land (space/place), all that it contains, produces, grows or lives on it.⁸ The understanding here points to the belief that all acquisitions bring an increase of vital force. Yet everything which breaks into this patrimony causes it to deteriorate or even destroys it into a diminution of being and essence. It is truism that the Egbira person acknowledges man as an enigmatic force existing as part of the ontological relationship with other forces including agro-ecology. Thus agriculture and seasons are being discussed along with space and time⁹ world view as inseparable ontological realities. In this regard, the investigations into the nature of Egbira traditional agrarian thought can be seen in the light of being an epistemological and ontological enquiry. The African sense of the infinite future is further substantiated by their regular practice of agro-ecological planning for progressive arrival of seasons (rainy and dry) for farming and fishing. This essentially accumulates to shaping the world view of the Egbira people. Land is however, more than a major territory. Picton observes that “It is also a metaphysical or mystical entity capable of having effect on the peoples' lives... the land is... a force to be reckoned with.”

The Egbira ecosystem worldview just like many indigenous African societies is reflected in the flourishing traditional management practices which encompass individual and community wisdom and skills. We observe that the Egbira indigenous ecological knowledge system fundamentally finds expression in the knowledge which has been acquired by indigenous and local peoples over many centuries through direct contact with the environment. In this regard, it is a holistic knowledge, or “world view” which includes an intimate and detailed knowledge of plants, animals, and natural phenomena, the development and use of appropriate technologies for hunting, fishing, trapping, agriculture, and forestry. This African holistic “world view” parallels the scientific discipline of ecology as it further includes knowledge of indigenous soil taxonomies, indigenous knowledge for potential use of local plants and forest products, and

^{7.} Ahmadu, *Who are the Ebiras*, 1; Hussaini, *Cultures*, 2

^{8.} Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, 100

^{9.} Mbiti, *African Religions*, 10

animal behavior. The acquisition of basic hunting skills, local knowledge of important tree species for agro-forestry, firewood, integrated pest management, the control of soil erosion and soil fertility remain intimate traditional eco-knowledge system of invaluable proportion in the existential life of the people. The indigenous soil and water conservation and anti-desertification practices evident in the fodder management and the indigenous agronomic practices such as terracing, contour bonding, fallowing, organic fertilizer application, crop-rotation and multi-cropping are constant factors in Egbira land.¹⁰

The Egbira traditional belief-system eco-doxology appreciates God's benevolence at creation. This echoes profoundly and profusely in His main attribute as *Ohomorihi*¹¹ (God) meaning the creator of rain. And invariable other phenomena in the universe by virtue of being the Almighty. Rain essentially and fundamentally is abundant life that is meant to nourish the soil needed for the production of food for sustenance as well as humanity survival on earth. It is imperative that Ohomorihi (God) did not want us to starve or die of hunger hence provision of abundant water through nourishing rainfall. What this means is that humanity is under obligation to work as a team for greater production and acquisition of wealth. Being an attribute of societies with historical continuity in resource use practices, humanity cannot be distinguished from endogenous knowledge system. We summate that agro-ecological epistemology acknowledge that land developed by traditional African resource managers and enforced by social and cultural means, are in many ways as good as Western scientific prescriptions.¹² Hence a conceptual labyrinth is apt in this context.

On the Contextual Clarifications

(i) Agrarian Philosophy and Agrarianism: The terms agrarian philosophy and agrarianism are often used interchangeably ditto this paper. Unequivocally, all agrarian philosophies and cultures have common fundamental factors revolving round the use of land and its management to satisfy the needs of people and the community. For Paul Thompson, agrarianism relates to human culture and practice on the broader environment formulations on norms, values and social institutions and interaction with nature in the form of material subsistence practices of obtaining food, clothing and shelter.¹³ Underscoring this position is that agrarian philosophy stresses the vital roles of nature, soil and climate in the formation of moral character as well as social and political institutions within the ambit of human society.

Some commentators emphasize property ownership and the character formation towards becoming a responsible person that this relation to nature brings, as the core values of

¹⁰. Picton, "Masquerade", 68; Picton, "Reflections", 20

¹¹. Ahmadu, *Who are the Ebiras*, 4; Hussein, *Cultures*, 12

¹². Ihuah, "African Endogenous Knowledge", 294

¹³. Thompson, *Agrarian*, 528

agrarianism. Heath opines that agrarianism as a social and political philosophy that stresses the primacy of family farming, widespread property ownership, and political decentralization thereby cultivating moral character of a responsible person.¹⁴ For Freyfogle, agrarianism is tied primarily to land and people where crafted modes of production is tailored to the soil, water, and other geographic features of the home lands.¹⁵ Fundamentally, nature plays essential with entrenched shades of social interaction, norms of behavior, and structures of living and governance emanates from these locally adaptive modes of production. Furthermore, Montmarquet critical observation is “focused on the relation to land as a source of value”.¹⁶ This view presupposes that our relation to nature is basically under the canopy of certain enduring human values which essentially authenticate the preoccupations of agrarian philosophy. Traditionally, these intrinsic values associated with agriculture are not principally economic but finding expression in society's existential goal of living well. Emphasizes on the basis of the most important moral aspects of human's relation to the land is also defined by certain rights with inherent tendency to degenerate into property and wealth acquisition that is essentially indifferent to agrarian ideals.

Critically, agrarianism is not measured solely by the success and failure of the projected income statements or by economic growth. It is by the health and vitality of a region's entire human and nonhuman neighborhood which focuses on a vibrant soil base. Within this context are species diversity, human and animal contentment, communal creativity, responsibility, joy, usable waste, social solidarity and sympathy, attention and delight, and the respectful maintenance of all the sources of life.¹⁷

(ii) African Agrarian Philosophy and Endogenous Epistemological systems: African Agrarian Philosophy belongs to a class of African social and political philosophy that relates to the ownership and use of land for farming, economy and society tied to agriculture.¹⁸ This system fundamentally relates to the traditional ownership and use of land as a farmland within a society exhibiting significant economic values that is concerned with agriculture. In the African parlance, local indigenous agrarian practice values rural society as superior to urban society. It goes to say that the independent indigenous farmer is superior to the paid worker and stresses the superiority of a simpler rural life as opposed to the complexity of city life.¹⁹

Though highly contested area of epistemology, the African Endogenous Knowledge Systems

^{14.} Heath, *The Encyclopaedia*, 2022

^{15.} Freyfogle, *Fostering*, 546

^{16.} Montmarquet, *Philosophical Foundations*, 13

^{17.} Wirzba, *The Essential*, 3

^{18.} Merriam 2020; Collins 2020

^{19.} Ihuah, “African Endogenous Knowledge”, 296

variously referred to as Local Knowledge Systems, Traditional Knowledge Systems or Traditional Ecological Knowledge remains integrative African epistemological system. Pointedly, the Ebira (African) endogenous knowledge succinctly encapsulates traditional folk knowledge of plants and animals, belief systems, cultural and historical artifacts that supports human existential conditions. Buttressing the above assertion, the International Council of Science defines traditional knowledge as 'cumulative knowledge, know-how, practices and representations maintained and developed by people with extended histories of interaction with natural environments ... encompassing languages, naming and classification systems, resource use practices, ritual, spirituality and world views'.²⁰

Eyong's conceptualization includes a set of interactions between economic, ecological, political, social, environmental²¹ premises. This is within a group or groups with a strong identify, drawing existence from local resources through patterned behaviors that are transmitted from generation to generations to cope with change. Favoring the usage of endogenous argued as more dynamic and less derogatory, and rejecting attempts to qualify African Endogenous Knowledge Systems with 'traditional' and 'indigenous,' Paulin Hountondji²² has however opines the concept to entail a corpus of elaborate knowledge in oral cultures. It must be noted that, some endogenous knowledge encodes the philosophical foundations that undergird physical and spiritual development in the different cultures in Africa.

Strengthening this line of thought, we contend that from the primeval period the Egbira (African) endogenous knowledge system pragmatically factors in cultural experiences, epistemologies and empiricisms.²³ Concomitantly, these factors are inherent and significantly implicated in the Egbira agro ecology, subsistence systems, medical practices, periodic/seasonal cultural festivals, music, oral traditions and technology. This said, we discover that in such knowledge systems therein are elements created, decoded and protected through components like language, heritage resource, folklore, cultural practices and cultural resource use. Virtue requires a certain level of wealth that reflects a version of agrarian values and time devoted to philosophy.

Endogenous knowledge system and epistemological approach to resource management

Ramose plausibly asserts “Ubuntu as the root of African philosophy... it is the wellspring flowing with African ontology and epistemology. If these latter are the bases of philosophy then African (agrarian) philosophy has long been established in and through Ubuntu”.²⁴ In traditional African society, people owned property, especially land, in common. Basically the indigenous ecological

^{20.} International Council of Science, 3

^{21.} Eyong, *Indigenous Knowledge*, 122

^{22.} Hountondji, *Introduction*, 1977

^{23.} Ihuah, “African Endogenous Knowledge”, 297

^{24.} Ramose, *African Philosophy*, 35

knowledge system underpins the imperative of applying the dynamic epistemological approach to contemporary resource management problems in traditional rural agricultural practices in Africa.

The horizon of African agrarian thought is pragmatically built on moral ethics, creativity, and innovation which identifies with the needs and aspirations of Africans and Africa. Buttressing the above perspective fathoms that the indigenous Africans are the repositories of vast accumulations of endogenous knowledge and lifestyles which offer modern societies many lessons in the management of resources in complex land ecosystem. In unique ways these traits are distinguishable from Western knowledge systems as pointed thus: (i) the Egbira endogenous knowledge is transmitted through language (Ebira) and is also collectively owned by the people (Anebira) and community (Ekura anebira).²⁵ Whereas Western ways of knowing stresses collation and transmission through writing and seen to be fundamentally 'personal' commodities that are protected for personal and corporate gain. (ii) Compared to Western ways of knowing, Egbira (African) epistemological systems are foregrounded on a holistic worldview through obligations and responsibilities. Here underpin the fundamental foundation that endogenous knowledge intertwines different facets of the cosmos to interconnect living things, the dead and the landscape. (iii) Fundamentally, the Egbira knowledge systems have embedded characteristic attachment to particular places as opposed to the 'universality' of science. Being multiple knowledge systems, the Egbira epistemic systems can best be understood within their cultural context. (iv) Consciously, the Egbira (African) epistemic systems uses oral traditions and demonstration for preservation instead of documentation (v) thus in existential reality, the Egbira endogenous system has an inward focus on local conditions around health, security, environment, economy, survival and religion.

From the foregoing, in all spheres of traditional African community, the endogenous knowledge remains a philosophical exploration aimed at a salutary initiative in the quest for achieving the much needed epistemic autonomy. In essence, African endogenous knowledge systems are apparently the building blocks of human development rigorously and resiliently acquired from the pristine times to the contemporary epoch. It behoves that the means of indigenous stewardship methodis sustained through direct experience and contact with the environment. Dynamic transformation approach comes through the physical, spiritual, mental, emotional, and intuitive relationship of indigenous peoples with all aspects and elements of their environment remains fundamental in this regard.

Furthermore, there is no gain-saying that (sustainable) development as a concept is most commonly conceived as a process of growing larger, fuller, and more mature or becoming

^{25.} Ahmadu, *Who are the Ebiras*, 2; Hussaini, *Cultures*, 2; Ohiare, *The Ebira*, 7-8

organized through better methods thereby getting better results. Its conceptual understanding includes economic growth, industrialization, progress of technology and Gross National Product (GNP) or Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In this vein, Evandro Agazzi asserts that development to be “a set of interconnected changes, which are goal-oriented and produce a certain global result that is positive”.²⁶ This substantiates man's intended goal of obvious expectation of “good” results in our experimental experiential endeavor.

Flowing from the above realm of understanding is an implicit teleological foundational flavor evoking a set of interconnected changes which produces favourable goal-oriented result. Therefore development have a value-side added to its general idea which refers to a harmonious growth of a multi-dimensional complex structure realizing an intrinsic dynamism, a plan, a kind of ought to be. Understandably and consciously too, every development has some structure of significant growth but not every structure of growth is development.

Reflection on Egbira (African) Ecological Knowledge System

It is very clear that the concept of development in Egbira (African) is communitarian cum utilitarian in nature that presupposes purpose and meaning in life for the greater majority. This in a nutshell means the possibility of displaying man's potentialities at the different levels of self-realization. This line of thought strengthens the fabrics of unity and African brotherhood displayed through fellow-feeding and respect for other human beings within the totality and contextuality of their beings. Thus it further entails a progressive economic and social engineering of human society through maintaining the security of livelihood for all peoples. Flourishing within this understanding presupposes the fact of enabling the people to constantly meeting their most urgent needs, good quality of life, dignity and well-being. This is guaranteed without compromising the ability of future generations to do likewise.

Furthermore, agrarian belief and practice encourages the protection and healing of ecological environment/nature through shifting cultivation. The practice of shifting cultivation ensures that the soil, vegetation and the fauna recovered and reasserted themselves after a period of human exploitation. Unfortunately this vital practice is fast disappearing, as a result of increasing population and increasing use of imported chemical fertilizers. Strict taboos on eating or killing certain insects, reptiles, birds and mammals also ensured the survival of the fauna within this ecological niche.²⁷ These values and practices ensured that production methods did not cause pollution and the living did not exhaust available resources. And where there was an overuse of the Earth's resources, the area was allowed for some time (for one or two years) to fallow or heal for farming again by future generations.

^{26.} Agazzi, *Philosophical*, 31

^{27.} Tangwa, *Bioethics*, 189

The fundamental reflection on the Egbira utilitarian relation to agro-ecology development underpins the wise management of land resources. The philosophical intent is basically fastened to enriching humanity and enhancing sustainable human well-being for the greater good of humanity. It suffices to say here that the African notion of development is all about the dignity of human person in a given social milieu. This realm tends to acknowledge rights, satisfying essential desires, enhancing Egbira person security of livelihood and quality of life.²⁸ Essentially and most fundamentally, all these attests positively to the enduring Egbira humanistic tendencies that is outstandingly manifest in the peoples character, behavioral patterns and identity often carried with dignity.

Authoritatively, Bala Takaya asserts that the territory under this enquiry is amenable to year-round crop cultivation by both rain-fed and fadama irrigated farming and abundant fishing being home to the River Niger and River Benue. The region is a natural home to, among others, grains, legumes, fruit and tree crops, root crops as well as everything vegetable and livestock grazing and other forms of animal husbandry; whether commercial or pastime animal rearing.²⁹ It is thus safe to argue here that African agrarian practice connects the practitioner with the community and nature as the professional agro-ecological practice enhances harmony and sustainability in the eco-system. It stimulates a positive spiritual good that offers the virtues of honour, self-reliance, courage, moral integrity, and hospitality in the practitioners.

The Relevance of Research on African Indigenous Ecological Knowledge

Apt reasons are adduced for the relevance of research on African indigenous ecological knowledge which cannot be over emphasized. The first reason is that African endogenous knowledge does not separate humans from natural environment. The second reason is the fact that the long-term generation and transmission of knowledge of the local ecosystem offers a unique historical perspective into indigenous risk adjustment options. The third reason is the view that alternative knowledge would significantly benefits modern scientists involved in the management and conservation of areas that are ecologically fragile or marginal. Fourth, that such acknowledged alternative knowledge contains immense information about genetically beneficial plant or animal biodiversity.³⁰ And fifth, that the world is interconnected and interdependent within the ambit of globalization. Thus reflecting the fact that abstract tradition of the West (scientific ecology) and historical tradition are significantly embedded by traditional systems of knowledge of the indigenous people. These are well encoded in rituals and in cultural practices of everyday life of the African. The indigenous African ecological knowledge remains the cumulative body of knowledge and beliefs handed through generations by cultural

^{28.} Ahmadu, *Who are the Ebiras*, 2; Hussaini, *Cultures*, 2; Ohiare, *The Ebira*, 8

^{29.} Takaya, "Pastoralists" 4-5

^{30.} Ihuah, "African Endogenous Knowledge", 296

transmission of the indigenous people. Most fundamentally, these invaluable knowledge and cultural belief-systems resonates the symbiotic relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment.

There is no gainsaying that pragmatic process of agricultural transformation through traditional knowledge leads to protected areas, conservation of education of the residents in communities and continuation of the traditional lifestyles. This in a nutshell brings out the benefits of conservation accruing to the people especially where the local community jointly manage such a protected area. The use of traditional knowledge for development planning may benefit development agencies in providing more realistic evaluations of environment and natural production systems. It is basically observed that involvement of the local people in the planning process improves the chance of success of development.

Traditional knowledge for environmental assessment is evident where people who are dependent on local resources for their livelihood assess the true costs and benefits of development better than any evaluator coming from the outside. Their time-tested, in-depth knowledge of the local area remains an essential part of any impact assessment. Through local knowledge, Africans are capacitated and enhanced to appreciate their cultures and beingness in qualitative social changes in local communities. Thus, ethno-science has significantly made available the acceptability of the validity of traditional knowledge in a variety of fields. The economic adaptation of the Egbira is based on a widerange of ecological knowledge such as components of nature “resources”. Others are utilization of resources, ecosystem functions, relations between species and sustainability of different resources that are latent in the endogenous wisdom bank of the African.

Egbira Agrarian Practices and Metaphysical value system

The Egbira agro-ecological tendency embodies metaphysical value system which is a consciousness of the limits in which we must live in order not to degrade natural and human environmental forces. This classical endogenous philosophy guarantees a humane and more human friendly development which improves the quality of human life on earth. There is no gainsaying that in Africa, an interface of magico-ritual incantations has the maximum potency of balancing the environmental forces as they help the individuals psychologically ready and receptive in seeking agrarian fortunes. Within the complexities of the rapidly growing population, the Egbira sees access to cultivable land as a security in an insecure world. In a nutshell, this is a sure way to human sustainability and continuity with all other entities in the enlarged boundaries of the community.³¹ Tangwa asserts that this indigenous African relational worldview can be described as “eco-biocommunitarian” which involves “recognition and acceptance of inter-dependence and peaceful coexistence between earth, plants, animals and

³¹. Senghor, *Negritude*, 239

humans”.³² Thus in this interconnected and interdependent conception of the cosmos, resonates the belief of the community as a continuum of natural and supernatural forces. Ete serves as the dwelling place of the living, source of cultivation of food crops and the exploitation of the crust for ornamental riches endowed and buried within. The same earth (ete) serves as the graveyard (resting place) of the living-dead (the ancestors-Ohikwu),

For the Egbira and in some parts of Africa, the Earth cannot be cut or farming carried out without obtaining the ritual permission of nature, the gods and spirits through ritual sacrifices. Recognizing and acknowledging the believability in the spirit world of forces which are intricately and intimately connected with the daily life of the people is in order to maintain the ontological harmony. Unequivocally, the ontic relationship between man and the spiritual world is maintained through many channels. Thus, “Obedient to the codes of behavior and the customs approved by the ancestors and enforced by the earth goddess through priests and titled elders, and the heads of various extended families, is one of the most important classical establishment channels.”³³

Conclusion

Thus, African Agrarian Philosophy here interpreted as rural agro-ecological practices avails the theoretical knowledge of man in setting him properly on the road to his dignity and destiny, and of sustainable living in the biotic community. This transcends the idea that human nature is good and instinctively seeks the divine where every person and everything is related to every person and everything. It is an aberration that humans only become dysfunctional due to sick culture, theories and practices which produce violent and damaged humans. It holds profoundly and fundamentally that humanity is organically embodied in a series of associations and relationships with nature which appears to have full value only in those close ties. African Agrarian culture is today at its lowest ebb needs to seek nourishment from traditional African system to remain relevant and functional. The need of the moment therefore is to recalibrate African Agrarian Philosophy through African endogenous knowledge systems and critical heritage resource.

Land for the Egbira person is an equipoise that is akin to embodying enigma and digmatic staff of life. Land is thus acknowledged as an important factor in the construction of the social identity, the organization of religious life, and the production and reproduction of culture. For many Africans, cultivation of the soil is not only an equivalent of sustainable living, it creates ontological harmony and balance between humanity and nature. Therefore agrarian occupation offers the Egbira people total independence, self-actualization and self-sufficiency. In this context, it is fervently opposed to the busy technological urban life and capitalism that destroys

^{32.} Tangwa, *Bioethics*, 196

^{33.} Anyanwu, *The African Experience*, 109

inter-dependence and dignity of the human person. They are remarkable agents of social and economic changes by disseminating vital information of improved technology and techniques of food production and innovation in the traditional system of agriculture. Such techniques and innovations were evolved to cope with the agrarian realities of crop production and good land management.

Unequivocally, the Egbira ideas and ideals of wellbeing, wellness, economy, resilience and hard work explicates the meaning of subsistence in its broadest sense. Where here acknowledged is the evidence of food on the field, in the granary, in the pot, and in the belly entailing the essence of the stomach infrastructure regime. The land or farms that produce the food; the work that is required to plant, tend, and harvest concomitant with the whole range of activities that centre around physical nourishment and comfort remain indelible essence of the Egbira experimental experiential existence.

Furthermore, the technological urban life is seen as fostering vice and weakens the social system. This explains why agrarian practice rests on solid radar in African communities. Besides, it brings order and a sense of identity, historical and religious tradition, a feeling of belonging to a concrete family, place, and clan, which are psychologically and culturally beneficial. This instantiates harmony within his life and in turn, checks the encroachments of a fragmented alienated modern society. Our discussion thus far reveals that African Agrarian philosophy is a lens with which Africa can achieve transformational growth and sustainable development in integrated food security. Strengthening endogenous agricultural knowledge and practices would enable multiple pathways to create new knowledge, intelligence, science, and foresight capabilities.

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