

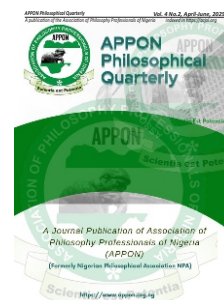
AFRICAN HERITAGE AS RESOURCE, POWER AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

By

ALLOYIHUAH, PhD
Professor of Philosophy
Department of Philosophy
Benue State University
Makurdi, Nigeria
Email: aihuah@bsum.edu.ng
Phone No.: +2348026242031



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)



Abstract

This paper argues that many of Africa's developmental challenges stem from the continent's troubled history and its complex relationship with Europe and the West. This problem is compounded by Africa's continued reliance on Western knowledge systems as the preferred and functional system of knowing. This mode of thinking has minimized and marginalized the African spirit of development and must be redressed if Africa's to realize its dream of self-reliance. Drawing from an Africanist perspective, the paper foregrounds African Spiritual Knowledge Systems (ASKS) as a critical heritage resource in the continent's transformation. Using a historical-critical approach, it interrogates the African educational system as a major impediment to the acceptance and integration of indigenous African spiritualities. It argues that sustainable development in Africa must be foregrounded on African heritage and epistemic resources, and that a transformational Africa is impossible without a home-grown educational system attuned to the African spirit and mind.

Keywords: Indigenous African Spiritualities, African Knowledge Systems, African Spiritual Heritage, Power, Sustainable Development, African Educational System

Introduction

I have heard people insist that there is some form of witchcraft at work in the country's seat of government. I am ordinarily not a superstitious person, but working in the Villa, I eventually became convinced that there must be something supernatural about power and closeness to it ... I was given an apartment to live in inside the Villa... But the man refused, claiming that the Villa was full of evil spirits and that there would soon be a fire

accident ... he turned out to be right ... Not long after, the President's physician living two compounds away had a fire accident in his home ... Around the Villa, while I was there, someone always died, or their relations died... every principal officer suffered one tragedy or the other... The ones who did not have such misfortune had one ailment or the other ... From cancer to brain and prostate surgery and whatever, the Villa was a hospital full of agonizing patients.¹

¹ Reuben Abati, "The Jonathan Years", 2015, cited in public commentary on Aso Villa.

This anecdote, recounted by a former occupant of Nigeria's seat of power, captures a persistent reality often silenced in development discourse: the centrality of spirituality to African conceptions of power, misfortune, and causality. It illustrates that African spiritualities are not relics of a pre-modern past but living frameworks through which power is interpreted, contested, and experienced.

That living framework, however, exists in paradox. Africa houses the largest potential for both human and natural resources. The continent is home to 12% of the world's population and is the second largest continent on earth, accounting for 46% of the world's chromium, 48% of its diamonds and platinum, and 29% of its gold.² It accounts for 30% of the world's languages, with a total count of 2,058 languages.³

For a variety of reasons, these potentials have not translated into meaningful development. The continent has the lowest life expectancy and is ravaged by preventable diseases such as malaria and cholera. Child mortality remains high, literacy rates are low, and health indicators are poor.⁴ While Africa produces high flyers across the globe, no African university ranks in the top 100 in the world. While the continent consumes about 12% of all books produced in the world, it contributes less than 3% of books read globally. The figures are humbling. Africa generates only 0.4% of global online content — 0.02% if we exclude South Africa, as Gundu notes. I found this difficult to believe at first.⁵ African scholarship remains isolated, lacking access to current research and leading to loss of intellectual self-confidence and the erosion

of African Knowledge Systems.⁶

Although Africa once had political beacons in the mould of Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Léopold Senghor, Sékou Touré, Ahmed Ben Bella, Habib Bourguiba, Kenneth Kaunda, Murtala Muhammed, and Nelson Mandela, the continent has today been overrun by kakistocrats.⁷ While efforts have been made to rethink a way forward, they have largely failed to address leadership failure and epistemic dependence. This paper submits that Africa is yet to appreciate the repertoire of its spiritual heritage resources and its contribution to human development. Until Africa foregrounds its development on this knowledge system, sustainable development will remain elusive.

The Corpus of African Spiritualities

African spiritualities are diverse, dynamic, and constantly evolving, reflecting the rich spiritual heritage of Africa. The corpus refers to the collective body of beliefs, practices, and traditions that comprise the spiritual landscape of the continent. It is not a single religion but a constellation of ways of being, knowing, and belonging. This corpus includes, among many others, the indigenous religions of ethnic nationalities such as the Tiv, Akan, Ngas, Birom, Yoruba, Mambila, Igbo, Zulu, Isoko, and Bini. It also includes African Diasporic religions that originated in Africa and developed in the diaspora, such as Vodou, Santería, and Candomblé. It finds expression in African traditional medicine and healing practices, various forms of divination and astrology such as Ishor among the Tiv and *Ifá* among the Yoruba, beliefs and practices surrounding ancestor reverence and

² Zacharys Gundu, "Endogenous Knowledge Systems: The Challenge of Salvaging a Strategic Heritage Resource in Nigeria," *Or-Che Uma: African Journal of Existential Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (2010): 115–26.

³ Zaline M. Roy-Campbell, "The State of African Languages and the Global Language Politics," in *Selected Proceedings of the 36th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, ed. Olaoba F. Arasanyin and Michael A. Pemberton (Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project, 2006): 1–13.

⁴ Gundu, "Endogenous Knowledge Systems," 116.

⁵ Gundu, "Endogenous Knowledge Systems," 117.

⁶ Donald L. Szanton and Manyika, eds., *African Universities and the Challenge of Globalization* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2002).

⁷ See Gundu, "Endogenous Knowledge Systems."

communication, practices related to spirit possession and mediumship, and various rituals and ceremonies such as initiation rites, weddings, and harvest festivals. The corpus further includes stories and legends that convey spiritual and cultural values, as well as symbolic objects, images, and gestures that convey spiritual meaning.⁸ To dismiss this corpus as fetish is to misunderstand its philosophical density, and, in essence, its ontology.

Interrogating Africa's Lost and Threatened Knowledges

What do we mean when we say African knowledge? The question itself is troubled. The field is contested. Some speak of African Endogenous Knowledge Systems (AEKS), others of African Knowledge Systems (AKS), still others of Local Knowledge, Traditional Knowledge, or Traditional Ecological Knowledge. The labels shift. That shift is not innocent.

I take AEKS to mean something more than folklore. Horsthemke describes it as an umbrella term for informal ways of knowing encapsulated in beliefs, practices, and worldviews.⁹ That is useful, but too thin. Odera Hoppers is closer to my position when she frames endogenous knowledge as a resource for managing environmental, spiritual, and socio-economic crises.¹⁰ Yet I depart from both. For Horsthemke, knowledge remains epistemic. For the Tiv, it is ontological. *Ishor* is not a belief about snakes; it is a way of being with snakes. Semali and Kincheloe define Indigenous Knowledge as folk knowledge of plants, animals, and histories that sustain life.¹¹ The International Council for Science offers a more comprehensive formulation:

cumulative know-how, practices, and representations maintained by peoples with long histories of interaction with their environments, encompassing classification systems, resource use, ritual, spirituality, and worldview.¹² This I accept. Knowledge here is not stored. It is lived. It is created, decoded, and protected through language and through the body.

Why then is it lost? Colonial contact did not merely misunderstand this corpus. Systematically, it attacked it through theft, distortion, contempt, and stigmatization. The motive was not purely epistemic. It was material. Raw materials were needed in Europe. To take them, the knower had to be discredited. The colonial archive insisted that African societies were primitive, simple, static. That fiction made exploitation rational. African colonies became laboratories. Anthropology was produced there to serve administration.¹³ Rituals and objects that the colonial officer could not read were labelled myth, superstition, idolatry. Healing practices that challenged Western mind-body dualism were suppressed as dangerous.

Christianity, as the spiritual arm of that enterprise, reinforced the stigma. It did not merely evangelize. It substituted one worldview for another. In that sense, it is no exaggeration to say that colonialism suppressed, erased, and appropriated African spiritualities at once. It displaced peoples from ancestral lands and thus from shrines and groves where spirit dwells. It imposed forced conversion. It demonized what it could not convert, calling it primitive, heathen, devilish. It appropriated symbols and commercialized them without consent. It destroyed sacred sites and texts.

⁸ See James L. Cox, *From Primitive to Indigenous: The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

⁹ Kai Horsthemke, "The Idea of Indigenous Knowledge," *Archaeologies: Journal of the World Archaeological Congress* 4, no. 1 (2008): 129–43.

¹⁰ Catherine A. Odora Hoppers, ed., *Indigenous Knowledge and the Integration of Knowledge Systems* (Claremont: New Africa Books, 2002).

¹¹ Ladislaus M. Semali and Joe L. Kincheloe, eds., *What is Indigenous Knowledge? Voices from the Academy* (New York: Falmer Press, 1999).

¹² International Council for Science, *Science and Traditional Knowledge: Report for the ICSU Study Group on Science and Traditional Knowledge* (Paris: ICSU, 2002): 3.

¹³ Paulin J. Hountondji, ed., *Endogenous Knowledge: Research Trails* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1997).

It enforced assimilation, and in doing so left a legacy of trauma. That trauma is intergenerational. My students in Makurdi still whisper about *akombo* as if it were shameful. That whisper is colonial.

Take the Tiv. Amongst the Tiv of Central Nigeria, the family system itself incubated spiritual knowledge. The abolition of exchange marriage (*yamshe*) in 1927 broke that incubator. Missionaries found *yamshe* anathema; its logic of alliance, reciprocity, and ancestral balance offended Victorian morality.¹⁴ Bride price was imposed as more natural. What was lost was not merely a marriage form but a pedagogy. Tiv ritual objects that encoded this pedagogy were confiscated indiscriminately during the *Haakaa* movement. They were called idols. Yet those same idols now fill European museums. That fact betrays the motive. Gundu has documented this looting with precision: the British Museum holds over 90% of its collections from other lands; the Pitt Rivers Museum holds Nigerian treasures acquired through violence; the St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art houses 22 Nigerian objects; the Museum of Ethnology in Berlin holds 580; the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne holds 73 core objects, plus Wilhelm Joest's private collection.¹⁵ They were not destroyed because they were worthless. They were taken because they were powerful.

The final blow was linguistic. Once English, French, and Portuguese became the languages of formal education and of 'science,' other ways of knowing encoded in Tiv, Yoruba, Igbo, and Akan became systematically disparaged as antiquated. Africans grew up in denial. A powerful denial. European cloud seeding is taught as science. Tiv rainmaking is mocked as unchristian. I witnessed this contradiction in

2019 in Gboko. An elder who possessed the anti-snake vaccination — a preparation so efficacious that a snake, upon sighting a vaccinated person, dies immediately — could not transfer it. His own Christian sons refused it.¹⁶ The knowledge will die with him. That is how heritage ends. Not with a bang, but with shame. This denial has also delegitimized spiritual knowledge practitioners. Many cultural innovations remain undocumented, while initiates and holders of African Knowledge Systems continue to die, sometimes taking certain knowledge to their graves.

African Spiritualities and the Challenge of Development

The marginalization of African spirituality has a genealogy that precedes Africa. Before the Copernican Revolution and the Reformation, Western ways of knowing were rooted in the Ptolemaic geocentric model. This view reinforced teleological explanations of natural and social phenomena and was supported by the Catholic Church as the predominant producer of knowledge from its monasteries. Books that did not conform to Church thinking were placed on the Papal Index of forbidden books, and their authors suffered stigma, imprisonment, and even death.¹⁷

The collapse of the geocentric worldview through the Copernican Revolution and the heliocentric model produced a deductive-nomological science contingent on mathematics and formal logic.¹⁸ While this laid the basis for modern science, it also evolved a self-validating posture aimed at discrediting other systems, including African spiritual knowledge. The hegemony of the West, from colonization to globalization, skewed power relations in

¹⁴ Akiga Sai, *Akiga's Story*, trans. Rupert East (London: Oxford University Press, 1939); Eugene Rubingh, *Sons of Tiv* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1969).

¹⁵ Zacharys Gundu, "Looted Nigerian Heritage - An Interrogatory Discourse Around Repatriation," *Contemporary Journal of African Studies* 7, no. 1 (2020): 47–66.

¹⁶ Gundu, "Endogenous Knowledge Systems," 120.

¹⁷ Zachary Gundu, *Tiv Endogenous Knowledge System* (Makurdi, 2014).

¹⁸ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

knowledge production, making it difficult for proponents of Western education as an instrument of power to accept the legitimacy of endogenous knowledge.

The philosophical justification for this hegemony is found in the writings of David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who exemplified racist ideas that claimed the right to reason was exclusive to the West. Aristotle had earlier argued that only Europeans had the right to reason.¹⁹ Hume projected the Black person as without talent,²⁰ Kant argued that non-Europeans were incapable of reason and of the self-reflective project of Enlightenment,²¹ and Hegel, in his *Philosophy of History*, denied that Africa contributed to world history, stating that Africans existed in a state of 'undisturbed naivety' and were to be regarded as 'a nation of children.'²² The implication was that all ways of knowing in Africa outside 'science' were unjustifiable. African mentality was represented as primitive and irrational. Science thus became the sole universal valid system, claimed to be objective, rational, and transcending personal and Western interests.²³

In truth, Western science, like other ways of knowing, is socially constructed. The West has determined the growth of scientific ideas and practice. To the extent that it depends on particular ontologies, epistemologies, and value systems, its objectivity and neutrality are questionable. Hence, every science, no matter how successful, is in essence local knowledge.²⁴ This is what Africa must understand to rethink transformation.

Rethinking the African Educational System: Philosophy, History, and Language

That Africa must rethink its educational system is not debatable. How do we do this? Three paths seem to me urgent: Philosophy, History, and Language; not as subjects but as foundations.

The Love of Wisdom: Every educational system rests on philosophy, whether it admits it or not. Hume, Kant, and Hegel undergird Western education. They continue to guide its direction. Their power lies not in their truth but in their confidence. They gave the West a story about reason that made Western domination natural. I am not advocating rejection of Western education. That would be naive. What I am advocating is counter-philosophy. Africa needs its own philosophies of education that articulate the foundation of knowledge on the continent and give its people confidence to embrace authentic ways of knowing without seeking validation from Geneva or Cambridge. Presently, as Irele lamented, Western academia remains the sole source of validation for the African scholar.²⁵ In that condition, how can Africa be heard?

Such philosophies already exist in fragments. They include Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda*, Chimakonam's 'conversationalism', Ihuah's *Ayatutuism* and Ajei's work on 'humiliated consciousness', which attempt to release our conceptions of reality, knowledge, and truth as contributions to global thought.²⁶ This is precisely what Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni calls 'epistemic freedom'; the right of Africans to think, theorize, and interpret the world from their own centres, unburdened

¹⁹ Mogobe B. Ramose, *African Philosophy through Ubuntu* (Harare: Mond Books, 2002).

²⁰ Emmanuel C. Eze, ed., *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997): 12.

²¹ Emmanuel C. Eze, ed., *Postcolonial African Philosophy*, 13.

²² G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 93–98; cited in Gundu, *Tiv Endogenous Knowledge System*, 12.

²³ Sandra Harding, "Is Modern Science an Ethno-Science? Rethinking Epistemological Assumptions," in *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Eze, 45–56.

²⁴ Ladislaus Green, "'Indigenous Knowledge' and 'Science': Reframing the Debate on Knowledge Diversity," *Archaeologies* 4, no. 1 (2008): 144–63. *Transition* 51 (1991): 56–69

²⁵ Abiola Irele, "The African Scholar: Is Black Africa Entering the Dark Ages of Scholarship?"

²⁶ J. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization* (London: Routledge, 2018): 3–5.

by coloniality.²⁷ And as Jonathan Chimakonam argues, such freedom requires a method rooted in African logic and relationality, not borrowed validation.²⁸

What did philosophy do for Asia? Everything! Japan, the Asian Tigers, China, and India did not develop by copying. They developed by philosophizing their difference. As Huntington noted, they became confident enough to trumpet the superiority of their values.²⁹ India built seven Institutes of Technology whose entry is harder than Harvard or MIT.³⁰ That is not just policy. It is philosophy in action. The will to be distinct.

The Value of Historiography: History is at the core of all transformation. What we know and what we do not know about our past determines what we can imagine. What we know about African history until recently was written to justify Europe. It was slanted. It was also silent. Strategic silences covered up debt. Africa must therefore tell its authentic story and, crucially, know the other's story.

Africa is not only home to mankind. It has a history that is older than the history of Europe.³¹ Egyptian Pharaohs had sat on their thrones for two thousand years before the Trojan War around 1250 BCE.³² The point is not antiquarian pride. The point is epistemic. Diop has shown that Imhotep, a Black

African, was the father of medicine and architect of the pyramid; that Ahmes authored the first mathematics textbook; that Septimius Severus, who ruled Rome, was African.³³

Recent archaeology pushes this further. Chemistry did not begin in a European laboratory. A 100,000-year-old ochre-processing workshop has been found at Blombos Cave in South Africa.³⁴ Vaccination did not begin with Pasteur. The Maasai inoculated healthy animals with froth from diseased ones, centuries earlier.³⁵ In Tanzania, Peter Schmidt has demonstrated an indigenous science that solved technical problems within a mystical and ritualized setting, a setting that masked its scientific principles from colonial observers.³⁶ That masking was itself a method.

Europe's hegemony, then, was not superiority of ideas. As Huntington argues, it was superiority in applying organized violence.³⁷ Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* demonstrate this materially.³⁸ Logic, geometry, and mathematics - first known in Egypt, Nubia, India, and China - became foundations of modern science. That debt was hidden. Printing in China in the eighth century, movable type in the eleventh, paper in the second, gunpowder in the ninth — all reached Europe centuries later.³⁹ Knowing

²⁷ M. Ajei, "African's Contested Heritage," *Philosophia Africana* 10, no. 2 (2007): 23–40.

²⁸ Jonathan O. Chimakonam, *Ezumezu: A System of Logic for African Philosophy and Studies* (Cham: Springer, 2019): 1–12.

²⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996): 104

³⁰ Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Picador, 2007): 127.

³¹ Gundu, "Looted Nigerian Heritage," 50.

³² Richard Poe, *Black Spark, White Fire: Did African Explorers Civilize Ancient Europe?* (Rocklin: Prima Publishing, 1997): 5.

³³ Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, trans. Mercer Cook (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1974).

³⁴ Christopher S. Henshilwood et al., "A 100,000-Year-Old Ochre-Processing Workshop at Blombos Cave, South Africa," *Science* 334, no. 6053 (2011): 219–22.

³⁵ Gundu, *Tiv Endogenous Knowledge System*.

³⁶ Peter R. Schmidt, "Using Archaeology to Remake History in Africa," in *Making Alternative Histories*, ed. Peter R. Schmidt and Thomas C. Patterson (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1995): 119–48.

³⁷ Peter R. Schmidt, "Using Archaeology to Remake History in Africa," 135

³⁸ Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 51.

³⁹ Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997).

this matters. It demystifies Western science. It reveals it as one way, not the way.

The Gift of Language: Colonialism reduced African languages to writing. That was not a gift. It was a tool. Languages were studied insofar as they aided exploitation. Administrators needed interpreters and clerks. Missionaries needed translators. Traders needed messengers. Europeans became the first authorities on African languages, compiling dictionaries that reflected settler ideology.⁴⁰ The curriculum was then designed with European languages as media of instruction and modernization. Once that happened, knowledge encoded in African languages was disparaged as irrational. European languages became building blocks of competence. Endogenous knowledge was locked away.

The claim that African languages lack scientific vocabulary is false. Diop refuted it long ago.⁴¹ No language lacks technical vocabulary; it creates it. African pottery, metallurgy, textile manufacture, brewing, carving, herbal surgery, architecture — all required advanced technical lexicons.⁴² I have sat with Tiv potters who name thirty stages of firing with precision. That precision is theory.

Exclusion stagnated that lexicon. It also blocked translation. By 1980, out of 40,000 books translated annually worldwide, none was translated into an African language.⁴³ The situation has improved only marginally. Africa still cannot engage global knowledge

through translation, nor can it disseminate its own. This exclusion kills culture. Knowledge of rainmaking, of *Ivom-unden* — space contraction — of archery and apiary among the Tiv can only be recovered through oral tradition.⁴⁴ The most enduring representations of our spiritual past outside archaeology are stories, proverbs, and folklore.⁴⁵ Yet storytelling is no longer part of growing up in many African homes. Children in Lagos speak English to their parents. That is not progress. It is amnesia.

Societies that overcame underdevelopment used their languages throughout education.⁴⁶ Prah has shown this for Tanzania and South Africa.⁴⁷ The Asian Tigers freed local knowledge by teaching in them. Language is not a handicap. It is, as Roy-Campbell insists, a vehicle for producing, encoding, and transmitting knowledge.⁴⁸ When we do not use it, we lock that knowledge away. And as custodians die, it disappears.

Conclusion

While advances from Ancient Egypt, Nubia, and Carthage were recognized, they were dismissed as mere extensions from Asia and Europe. Sub-Saharan Africa, peopled by Black Africans, Pygmies, and Khoisan, was conceived as lacking capacity for rational thought in the mode of science. Consequently, all African Knowledge Systems and heritage resources were attacked, denigrated, and undermined

⁴⁰ Black Spark Poe, *White Fire*; Felix Chami, *The Unity of African Ancient History: 3000 BC to AD 500* (Mauritius: E & D Publishers, 2006); Diop, *African Origin*.

⁴¹ Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 52.

⁴² Roy-Campbell, "State of African Languages."

⁴³ Cheikh Anta Diop, *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology*, trans. Yaa-Lengi Meema Ngemi (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1991).

⁴⁴ Gundu, *Tiv Endogenous Knowledge System*.

⁴⁵ Kahombo C. Mateene, "Failure in the Obligatory Use of European Languages in Africa and the Advantages of a Policy of Linguistic Independence," in *Reconsideration of African Linguistic Policies* (Kampala: OAU Bureau of Languages, 1980): 18–34.

⁴⁶ Gundu, *Tiv Endogenous Knowledge System*.

⁴⁷ Gundu, *Tiv Endogenous Knowledge System*.

⁴⁸ Kwesi K. Prah, "Going Native: Language of Instruction for Education, Development and African Emancipation," in *Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa*, ed. Birgit Brock-Utne, Zubeida Desai, and Martha Qorro (Dar es Salaam: E & D Limited, 2003): 14–34.

through structured stigma and strategic silences. Thriving medical practices involving herbal medicine, surgery, bone setting, and therapeutic occultism were stigmatized as “native concoctions.” Endogenous practitioners were labelled “witch doctors.” Great Zimbabwe, the largest ancient building in sub-Saharan Africa, was appropriated as non-African heritage. Strategic silences were woven around Mapungubwe in South Africa, Manekweni in Mozambique, and the carved churches of Lalibela in Ethiopia.⁴⁹

Many aspects of intangible heritage, namely rituals, stories, and oral traditions, were dismissed as myth and superstition. Christianity, as the religion of colonialism, reinforced this stigma, leading to wholesale substitution of cultural practices. Indigenous rituals became ‘fetish,’ religious objects became ‘idols,’ and custodians of ancient wisdom were denounced as pagans.⁵⁰ In instances where components of African Knowledge Systems were recognized, they were targeted for exploitation for metropolitan interests.⁵¹ A related masterstroke was turning English, French, Portuguese, and other European languages into languages of formal education, undermining African languages as vehicles for knowledge production. Though central to African culture, African languages are today seen as handicaps rather than resources.⁵² The disuse of Tiv, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Isoko, Kiswahili, Amharic, Zulu, Shona, Twi, and others in formal education has devalued embodied knowledges and turned Africa into a receiver rather than contributor of knowledge, as their potential as transmitters of high-status knowledge is doubted.⁵³

As Roy-Campbell notes, “African

languages are vehicles for producing knowledge for creating, encoding, sustaining and ultimately transmitting indigenous knowledge... Through the lack of use of African languages in the educational domain, a wealth of indigenous knowledge is being locked away in these languages and is gradually being lost as the custodians of this knowledge pass on.”⁵⁴ Through the power of language, Chinua Achebe redefined the continent and changed perceptions of a people whose rape helped reduce Africa to a dark continent. He did this through education, addressing the white man in the language he understands. Africa can transform, but this transformation must be on a new path defined by African interests, foregrounded on African ways of knowing integrated into an educational system not caged within a “received order of life and values.”⁵⁵ As Achebe reminds us, “until the lion learns how to write, every story will glorify the hunter.”

Bibliography

- Abati, Reuben. *The Jonathan Years*. Lagos, 2015.
- Ajei, M. “African’s Contested Heritage.” *Philosophia Africana* 10, no. 2 (2007): 23–40.
- Brock-Utne, Birgit. *Whose Education for All? The Recolonization of the African Mind*. New York: Falmer Press, 2000.
- Chami, Felix. *The Unity of African Ancient History: 3000 BC to AD 500*. Mauritius: E & D Publishers, 2006.

⁴⁹ Roy-Campbell, “State of African Languages,” 5.

⁵⁰ Joseph Mapara, “Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Zimbabwe: Juxtaposing Postcolonial Theory,” *Journal of Pan African Studies* 3, no. 1 (2009): 139–55.

⁵¹ Gundu, “Endogenous Knowledge Systems,” 118.

⁵² Hountondji, *Endogenous Knowledge*.

⁵³ Birgit Brock-Utne, *Whose Education for All? The Recolonization of the African Mind* (New York: Falmer Press, 2000).

⁵⁴ Roy-Campbell, “State of African Languages,” 2.

⁵⁵ Roy-Campbell, “State of African Languages,” 2.

- Chimakum, Jonathan O. *Ezumezu: A System of Logic for African Philosophy and Studies*. Cham: Springer, 2019.
- Diamond, Jared. *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1997.
- Diop, Cheikh Anta. *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*. Translated by Mercer Cook. New York: Lawrence Hill, 1974.
- . *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology*. Translated by Yaa-Lengi Meema Ngemi. New York: Lawrence Hill, 1991.
- Eze, Emmanuel C., ed. *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.
- Friedman, Thomas L. *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Picador, 2007.
- Green, Ladislaus. “‘Indigenous Knowledge’ and ‘Science’: Reframing the Debate on Knowledge Diversity.” *Archaeologies* 4, no. 1 (2008): 144–63.
- Gundu, Zachary. “Endogenous Knowledge Systems: The Challenge of Salvaging a Strategic Heritage Resource in Nigeria.” *Or-Che Uma: African Journal of Existential Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (2010): 115–26.
- . *Tiv Endogenous Knowledge System*. Makurdi, 2014.
- . “Looted Nigerian Heritage — An Interrogatory Discourse Around Repatriation.” *Contemporary Journal of African Studies* 7, no. 1 (2020): 47–66.
- Harding, Sandra. “Is Modern Science an Ethno-Science? Rethinking Epistemological Assumptions.” In *Postcolonial African Philosophy: A Critical Reader*, edited by Emmanuel C. Eze, 45–56. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.
- Hegel, G. W. F. *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. Translated by J. Sibree. New York: Dover, 1956.
- Henshilwood, Christopher S., et al. “A 100,000-Year-Old Ochre-Processing Workshop at Blombos Cave, South Africa.” *Science* 334, no. 6053 (2011): 219–22.
- Horsthemke, Kai. “The Idea of Indigenous Knowledge.” *Archaeologies* 4, no. 1 (2008): 129–43.
- Hountondji, Paulin J., ed. *Endogenous Knowledge: Research Trails*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 1997.
- Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.
- International Council for Science. *Science and Traditional Knowledge: Report for the ICSU Study Group on Science and Traditional Knowledge*. Paris: ICSU, 2002.
- Irele, Abiola. “The African Scholar: Is Black Africa Entering the Dark Ages of Scholarship?” *Transition* 51 (1991): 56–69.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 3rd Ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Mapara, Joseph. “Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Zimbabwe: Juxtaposing Postcolonial Theory.” *Journal of Pan African Studies* 3, no. 1 (2009): 139–55.
- Mateene, Kahombo C. “Failure in the Obligatory Use of European Languages in Africa and the Advantages of a Policy of Linguistic Independence.” In *Reconsideration of African Linguistic Policies*, 18–34. Kampala: OAU Bureau of Languages, 1980.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo J. *Epistemic Freedom in Africa: Deprovincialization and Decolonization*. London: Routledge, 2018.

- Poe, Richard. *Black Spark, White Fire: Did African Explorers Civilize Ancient Europe?* Rocklin: Prima Publishing, 1997.
- Prah, Kwesi K. "Going Native: Language of Instruction for Education, Development and African Emancipation." In *Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa*, edited by Birgit Brock-Utne, Zubeida Desai, and Martha Qorro, 14–34. Dar es Salaam: E & D Limited, 2003.
- Ramose, Mogobe B. *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*. Harare: Mond Books, 2002.
- Roy-Campbell, Zaline M. "The State of African Languages and the Global Language Politics." In *Selected Proceedings of the 36th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, edited by Olaoba F. Arasanyin and Michael A. Pemberton, 1–13. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project, 2006.
- Schmidt, Peter R. "Using Archaeology to Remake History in Africa." In *Making Alternative Histories*, edited by Peter R. Schmidt and Thomas C. Patterson, 119–48. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1995.
- Semali, Ladislaus M., and Joe L. Kincheloe, eds. *What is Indigenous Knowledge? - Voices from the Academy*. New York: Falmer Press, 1999.
- Szanton, Donald L., and Manyika, eds. *African Universities and the Challenge of Globalization*. New York: Social Science Research Council, 2002.