

**(TOPIC: TRADITIONAL AFRICAN COMMUNALISM
AND THE NEO-COMMUNAL SPIRIT IN AFRICA:
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE BUKUSU
COMMUNITY OF KENYA**

BY

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DECLARATION

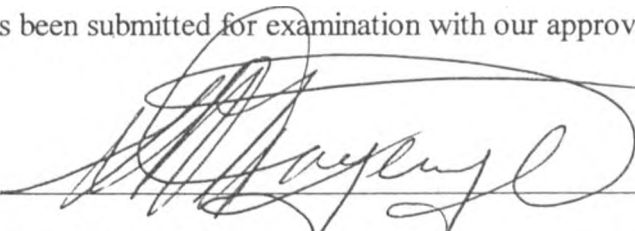
This Thesis is my own original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late father, Kinyosi Muyila Sirengo, who passed away on the 25th July, 2002 at around 5 P.M, just before I could finish writing this thesis Mzee Muyila Sirengo was born in 1910 at Bunang'eni village, Misikhu location, Bungoma district. He was laid to rest on 30th July, 2002 at 2.30 p.m.

It is difficult to imagine that we will never see you again. Father, but we promise not to weaken the foundation you left behind.

Rest in peace father and thank you for everything!

ABSTRACT

Communalism in traditional African Societies has become a common theme in most discourses on African Philosophy. This has made it crucial that detailed studies be done on this way of life to establish its underlying philosophical tenets and its impact on the people and societies in Africa.

This study, therefore, has attempted an examination of the reality and Ontology of communalism in traditional African societies, the underlying philosophical issues, and the influence that it has continued to exert on the continent since the end of colonialism.

In order to do this, the study begins with an examination of the Ontology and Phenomenology of communalism as a form of social organization in traditional African societies. A case study of a specific traditional society is used for the purposes of unveiling and understanding the specific features, norms, practices and institutions that served as means to communalism.

It is established that the society, developed deliberate institutions and practices that ensured a communal and harmonious society. The case society also enables us to understand certain underlying issues in traditional communalism.

The study goes on to show that the sustenance of communalism in traditional African societies was greatly enhanced by the people's apparent orientation towards the past, which is herein referred to as a *past-word* looking philosophy. The ideal for most African societies, it appears, lay in the past while the future was shunned and associated with uncertainties and dangers.

In addition to this philosophy, the existence and belief in a mystic force, the use of customary morality and the subjection of these societies under the authority of elders and ancestors ensured the institutionalization and intensification of communalism in traditional Africa. The study shows that communalism was a deliberately desired social structure which was established and zealously sustained by a people's Will and desire to survive under the most certain and tried conditions.

At independence, the colonial era in Africa was seen to have eroded and corrupted the African culture, way of life and therefore identity. The period at and after independence was therefore dominated by a neo-communal spirit as an attempt by Africans to restore their traditional values and ways of life, their dignity and as a way of facing up to the challenges of the post independent era.

In our study, neo-communalism testifies to the lasting impact that communalism had had on the African people and their societies. The study shows that this impact has made communalism and its inherent features and characteristics to continue manifesting themselves in the continent, unfortunately and largely in a negative way.

The study concludes that communalism was a reality in traditional African societies and had a far-reaching impact on the African people and their societies, so much so that it continues to manifest itself in various forms in contemporary Africa. A number of contemporary African problems appear to have their roots in traditional communal ways of life.

And finally, the reality of communalism in Africa, as it appears, lies not in its existence but in the fact that it was institutionalized, intensified and lasted longer in Africa than anywhere else

and, thus, the impact it has had on the continent.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Neo-Communalism: This term is used to refer to the desire and attempts to restore traditional African Communalism in Post Independent Africa. These desire and attempts evolved after colonialism when the African began to realize that colonialism had caused a major erosion of the African values and ways of life. The attempt after colonialism was to try and restore traditional values and ways of life.

Phenomenology: The term is used to refer to any study or description of the way things appear to us. It is a direct description of our experience as it is in itself without taking into account our psychological influences. This term, however, is usually identified with a school of philosophy started by Edmund Husserl, which sees truth as grounded in our direct awareness of how the world or reality appears to us.

Ontology: This term is used here to refer to the study of Being or existence as distinct from non-Being or non-existence.

INTRODUCTION

It was Aristotle who first stated that man is a social animal and since then, many philosophers have noted that man is actually a social animal. Social scientists have confirmed this, observing that it is usually through co-operative behaviour that mankind survives and surmounts the problems encountered in particular settings. These observations are neither more nor less true for Africans than they are for many other peoples of the world, but Africans, it is contended, were organised sometimes in ways which were unfamiliar to others and unwitnessed anywhere else.¹

Although all human beings are said to be social, there seem to be some unanimity among African philosophers, that Africans exhibited some sort of sociality that was both unique and more than the normal expected level of sociality. In fact, for Nyasani, this level of sociality was both unique and transcendental.²

Edwin Smith, captured this form of sociality when he wrote:

The Africans have hitherto lived in the collective stage; the community has been the unit, every individual interest has been subordinated to the general welfare. In many respects, this excites our admiration, even envy. There is a solidarity that civilised communities find it hard to attain.³

Smith finds traditional African solidarity admirable and unwitnessed anywhere else. It was in a way, a system of sociality that other societies, even civilised ones, could not evolve.

Traditional African societies are said to have been communalistic, whereby emphasis was given to the group or community rather than to the individual. The community was the centre of focus

and its interests and welfare were paramount to those of an individual. Communalism held significant place in traditional Africa.

The discussion on traditional African communalism became more pronounced following the growing cultural nationalism among the African elite during and after colonialism. It was argued that colonialism had caused a major cultural and spiritual disorientation on the part of the African people. In the attempt to rediscover their orientation, Africans adopted a sort of romantic view of their pre-colonial days, as having been a period of harmony and cohesiveness. Faced with the challenges of modernisation and reorganisation at independence, African leaders and thinkers saw traditional communality as a cultural tract that would be transformed to enhance the symbolism of 'Africanness' and their separation from colonialists. Senghor and Nyerere saw that traditional African communal values could serve as a good basis for a form of modern socialism that could be distinctly African. Friedland and Rosberg confirm this wish when they write:

In pre-European times, Africans were tied to collectivities such as extended kinship group, and made sacrifices to these groups. There is currently an attempt to carry forward this existence and transform the collectivity from the parochial kinship unit to the nations.⁴

According to Igor Kopytoff, this desire was necessary in the sense that profound social and political reorganization was probably impossible without a body of mythology, about the past and the desired future. The process, which he calls the inventory of African civilisation, was necessary due to the impact that colonialism had had on the people of Africa. The Africans, fresh from the horrors of colonialism, were out in search of an ideology that would provide a continuation of their traditional way of life. This search singled out traditional communality as a social structure worth adopting.

The Africans realised that colonialism had deprived them of their true selves, alienated them from their culture and broken their continuity in development. Africans were, therefore, urged to turn back to their past, to their traditional values and communality. Communal way of life that Africans had been accustomed to had had a far reaching impression on the people, so much so that, after colonialism, they were still ready to turn to it.

1.1 Statement of the problem

Africa's traditional past is a past of strong primordial groupings and attachment. Traditional societies were heavily communal with a type of solidarity that was, however, ethnic; a solidarity or brotherhood that was strong and has been said to have been unique. It is this traditional value that African statesmen and thinkers wanted to restore and use as a resource for the reconstruction of post-colonial Africa. This resource or past reference was to serve, in the sense in which Malinowski gave the word, a 'Charter' for contemporary action, whose legitimacy was in its being part of our traditional culture. This was to confer rightness and acceptance on the course of action by extending to it the sanctity, which enshrouds traditions.

According to Onuoha (1965), the objective of neocommunalists was

to set these values and principles, assimilate and inculcate them and devise the best techniques, the best institutions and processes for incorporating and perpetuating them under modern conditions.⁵

The neo-socialists may have failed to appreciate the obstacles that were later on to frustrate the whole attempt. Inherent in traditional communalisms were a number of problems that could easily make its restoration difficult and unsuitable for post-colonial Africa. Traditional African communality or brotherhood did not extend beyond the tribe. It was, however, thought that it

could be possible to extend this brotherhood from its traditional focus to the new independent states. This was, however, not going to be easy. Yet, despite this, traditional communalism was seen as a golden value that post-colonial Africa had to revive.

The centrality of communalism in Africa came to the fore at and after independence when most of African leaders of the time urged their people and governments to restore it in post independent Africa. The neo-communal spirit at this period was strong and, has not completely disappeared to-date. It appears that this traditional form of organization held a very significant place in the lives of the people of Africa. Its influence on their lives and the politics of the continent cannot, therefore, be underestimated.

It was, in the minds of the African people, an ideal form of social organization that has served as a “past reference or charter” for reinvention of Africa after colonialism. This process of reinvention reveals a major trend in the thought system of the African people – the tendency to look pastwards both in act and thought. This trend is key to neo-communalism and forms a major problem of study.

Despite this centrality, a comprehensive study of this traditional form of social organization is lacking. This study attempts a comprehensive examination of this structure and shows how it has influenced both pre and post-independent Africa.

The existence of a unique form of communality in traditional Africa, and the strong neo-communal feelings at independence is a major concern for this study. Why was this communal way of life or brotherhood so strong and unique? And why was there a strong neo-communal

feelings during and after colonialism? And having occupied such a central role in the life of the African people, what are some of its legacies in post-colonial Africa? This study attempts to find answers to these questions.

1.2 Research objectives

This study will examine the existence of communality in traditional Africa and its underlying philosophical bases that may have contributed to its centrality in traditional Africa. To do this, the study picks on one traditional African society as a case study in establishing the existence of communality and how it was actually nurtured and sustained. Special attention is also given to the sustenance of the communal spirit among the African people. Underlying philosophical explanations are examined.

The study also examines and analyses the idea of neo-communalism as an offshoot of traditional communalism at independence. The study finally looks at the possible legacies of traditional communality in post-colonial Africa.

1.3 Justification and significance of the study

This study is not just another addition to the literature on traditional African communalism but an attempt to establish the reality, nature and extent of communality in traditional Africa. In addition, this study goes further than other available literature to unveil the underlying philosophical explanations for the centrality of communalism in traditional Africa and the neo-communal spirit that emerged at independence.

This study also presents an in-depth critical analysis of the attendant problems inherent in traditional communalism; problems which, the neo-communalists may not have contended with.

The study goes further to trace the legacies of traditional communalism in post-colonial Africa as a way of diagnosing some of the problems that have faced post-colonial Africa. The study addresses some of the lived life concerns that Africa has gone through. In this way, the study is an effort, at the level of theory, to explore the problem reflectively so as to supplement the concrete efforts aimed at the reconstruction of post-independent Africa. This study is a necessary step towards the reconstruction of Africa since it deals with the specific question of the transition between the traditional and the modern in terms of social organisation.

Finally, this study adds more light and knowledge to the discussions on traditional African communality and the possibility of its restoration in post-colonial Africa.

1.4 Literature review

Since independence Africa has, been in the process of recovering and establishing its own cultural-historical existence, after almost a century of colonial rule. The recovery requires both a rethinking of much that we inherited from the colonialists and the revitalisation of the broken and suppressed indigenous African heritage. It is in this context that Dorothy Nelkin argues that traditional African socialism was a reality, which was subjected to the shock of colonialism, and the attempt at independence was to rethink it in its new context. The Africans were frightened by the spectre of western individualism and now preferred to retain the community aspects of their civilization.⁶

Africans began to look to their past as having been a paradise of communal life full of hospitality,

harmony, humanism and other communal values. They wanted post-independent Africa to recapture these social systems and to continue being guided by the supreme principle of common good as opposed to western individualism. This, according to Onuoha, was due to the realization that colonialism and western influence,

had almost completely voided the African of his own culture and broken the continuity of his development; and ... a belief that it is possible for him to recapture the traditional values and to adopt these to the needs of the 20th century, namely, the need for scientific progress and international cooperation.⁷

Friedland and Rosberg contend that Africa had for a long time been socialistic and the restoration of this mode of social set-up after independence was necessary. They acknowledge the existence of sociality in what they call pre-European times where Africans were tied to collectivities such as kinship and tribal groups. Some of the elements of sociality included among others, communal ownership of land, the egalitarian character of society and the extensive network of social obligations that led to considerable cooperation.⁸

According to Igor Kopytoff, the existence of this social structure in traditional African societies is now so well established that no extra effort need to be expended towards this exercise. For Kopytoff, the fact that our traditional societies were communalistic and that they exhibited a strong kinship and tribal brotherhood is not in doubt.⁹

Onuoha supports this assertion when he says:

it is beyond doubt that traditional African society was based on a profoundly socialist attitude of mind, and governed by indigenous socialistic rules, customs and institutions.¹⁰

This communality, according to Onuoha, was exhibited in communal ownership of land and

related property, community development work, communal living and a high level of collective obligations. Onuoha further stresses the existence of this communal structure in traditional African political systems when he says:

In African political society, there was an unwritten constitution consisting of one word: Solidarity. Everyone understood it and no one dared infringe it. No one thought of himself apart from society; one might conflict with another member of the society but never with his, community itself.¹¹

It was as he puts it “a massive system of social security, not bargained for, not legislated and not taught”.¹² For Onuoha, traditional African societies were communalistic and in his analysis, he leaves no doubt about this.

And Charles Adrain, asserts that there was a great feeling of co-operation, solidarity and altruism which led to unprecedented harmony between the individual and the general interest. In any given groups particularly kinships and tribes, the interest of each agreed with the interest of all. Adrain’s assertions lend credence to the reality of communality in traditional Africa, a type of communality that required the total conformity of the individual to the group. The individual was required to reconcile his/her interests with those of the group to enhance group solidarity, for herein lay the existence and well-being of the group and the individual.¹³

Leopold Senghor is no stranger to the issue of African communality. It is upon this communality that Senghor wanted post-independent African socialism to be based. According to him:

Negro Africa puts more stress on the group than on the individual, more on solidarity than on the activity and needs of the individual, more on the communion of persons than on their autonomy. Ours is a communal society.¹⁴

Ruch and Anyanwu also emphasize communal life in traditional Africa when they write:

The community is a self-world and it demands an individual union with others. Existence apart from the community or the universe of life force is unthinkable... Because communal problems are shared collectively, the problems of survival are overcome with great success... the African concept of man is inadequate without the idea of shared existence. An African would say that he exists because others exist. The awareness of himself is not in isolation but in company of others.¹⁵

The above mode of life permeated every aspect of an African life. According to Ruch and Anyanwu, the African sociality was very bewildering to foreigners, yet, natural to Africans. This communality was tightly knotted with taboos, interdicts and cross-checks. These writers state that this sociality involved both the living and the dead. Individuals remained linked to their societies even after death. This sociality went beyond death and purely human sphere to involve the plants, animals and the soil. The whole society including the dead, the living, the plants, the animals and the soil were tightly knotted together like, as they put it, "the parts of an organism".¹⁶

To reinforce the above views is Nyasani's identification of sociality as one of the most distinctive features of traditional African life. He quotes a Zairean philosopher, Tshiamalenga Ntumba as asserting that the high level of communality makes it possible for Africans to speak in a puzzling language of communal involvement:

Thus, for example, where in western civilisation one would ask questions; How was your trip to Holland?, the African tradition would ask: How was our trip to Holland? Where the English would say, 'I shall accompany you, the Bisoite society would say, 'We shall accompany you on your trip... Indeed even, a simple statement like; 'I am sick' the communalistic tradition would put it this way: 'We are suffering'.¹⁷

Nyasani's analysis presents a type of sociality where individuals saw themselves not as individuals but as a collection of persons and when one person suffers or enjoys the rest who are part and

parcel of him suffers or enjoys with him. It was a mode of existence where an individual wholly surrenders the self to the group or the community, a situation that Nyasani calls 'the surrender of the 'I' to the We'. It was the group that creates the individual and makes his existence possible.¹⁸

Scholars do acknowledge the fact that traditional African societies were communalistic, but that this communality was usually restricted to small units especially to kinships and tribes. Many of these scholars contend that this traditional spirit of brotherhood and solidarity can be restored with perfection in post-independent Africa to help curb the problem of ethnic tensions. Past knowledge or practices can be useful and readily acceptable if they are perfected and manipulated to fit in the changed circumstances. What the Africans felt about his kinsmen and tribesmen was strong and real. The African had a strong sense of social responsibility and solidarity with his fellow men.

It should, however, be mentioned here that the African past was not a heaven of perfections. It had its own problems and limitations. Traditional Africa was also wrought with problems.

Parrinder captures this point very well when he writes:

It is easy to idealise the past and sign for an imaginary golden age away from the disturbing present with its rapacious commerce, oppressive politics and bitter warfare. The facts are that even in the past there were unpleasant customs, tyrannical rulers, sudden deaths and human sacrifices.¹⁹

The Africans may have led a communal life but the fact is that even then there were problems that they were facing. Communalism may be attractive but the fact that it was limited within small units usually tribes, makes it a suspect cause of ethnic animosities in Africa. According to Ali Mazrui, the fact that Africans have a highly developed sense of responsibility towards their own kinsmen, has reduced their capacity to empathise with those that are not their own. The fact here

is that strong tribal brotherhood may easily result in isolationism among different ethnic groups.²⁰ The solution, if possible, lies in spreading this brotherhood to cover all tribes other than being limited to one tribe only. Onuoha cites tribalism as one of the biggest forces militating against collective brotherhood in Africa. He implicitly links the current problem to tribal communalism in traditional Africa. He puts it bluntly:

Traditional African brotherhood did not extend beyond the tribe. It is the first task of African socialism to form one nation of the many warring tribes.²¹

In fact, Onuoha's advice is that continental unity cannot be attained by legislation and organization alone. Only an interior spiritual awakening on the part of every African can perhaps break the bonds of clannism, tribalism, and nationalism. If Africans can be made to look at members of other tribes the same way they look at their tribesmen, then continental unity will be attained. The traditional brotherhood spirit should be broadened to cover others, other than ones own tribesmen only. Therefore, one of the major tasks faced by the neo-socialists is to reawaken this traditional spirit and broaden it to cover large units, especially states and the continent.

Another difficulty to reckon with is the fact that the changes that have so far occurred since pre-colonial days make it difficult to restore traditionalism in Africa. Cotlow affirms this point when he writes:

It is pointless to plead for the survival of primitive life on the African continent; roads, airports, hotels, universities, television sets, machine guns, doctors and missionaries will soon put an end to that.²²

In a nutshell, these changes are bound to obliterate traditionalism in the continent. Neo-communalists have to contend with this fact. Taban Lo Liyong castigates those advocating the revival of traditionalism in contemporary Africa as 'men crying over spilt milk' and dreamers who

languish in the remembrance of times lost'. He urges such men to dream ahead and model utopias.²³

There are a number of traditional African values that are still relevant and perhaps important for the survival of this continent. We cannot dismiss them simply because they were present in our traditional societies. African traditionalism can easily serve as the best form of integration. According to Aristide Zolberg, the neo-socialists were in search of the best of the old and the new. The old was to provide integration and social cohesion, while the new establishes modern productive apparatus leading to higher standards of living. It is in line with this contention that we acknowledge the attempt to restore certain values lost during the period of colonialism.²⁴ Although communalism was limited to kinships and tribes, the attempt is to restore it and broaden its focus.

Kwame Gyekye asserts that Africa has had problems in trying to situate itself most satisfactorily in the social, political and intellectual formation of the contemporary world. Africa, he argues has gone through a number of political and economic problems, some of which relates to the choice of a post-independent ideology. Once independence was won, a number of African leaders began to look around for an ideology that would help them to rally their people behind them.²⁵

The search for a post-colonial ideology appears to have settled on what the new leaders called African socialism. It was an ideology sought to be purely based on African traditional communalism. In Gyekye's view the adoption of this ideology was done without due regard to the need to modify the ideology to suit contemporary requirements. Gyekye feels that African socialism should have been made to incorporate new ideas to enrich its potential to serve as an

encompassing ideology. He sees a number of characteristics for features in traditional communalism as obstacles to development, and if adopted in post-colonial Africa, they could serve to work against the continent's attempts to develop.²⁶

One such an impediment is the attendant natural sentiments of loyalty and communal identities and consciousness that characterise the social ethical thought and action of members of a given community. These sentiments and consciousness have made postcolonial nation building difficult.

Gyekye, however, is optimistic that this can easily be overcome, since people can easily be bound together by a sense of shared goals, values and mutual sympathies and understanding, rather than the parochial natural ties.²⁷

Gyekye's argument is that elements of traditional communalism still linger on in post independent Africa. Due to its nature in traditional Africa, particularly due to the fact that it was usually limited to ethnic communities, it has served, in postcolonial Africa, to fuel isolationism among different ethnic groups within states. This attachments, however can be overcome by postcolonial African states through deliberate attempts to build national cultures that will make ethnic loyalty irrelevant.

Gyekye categorises the neo-communal spirit among postcolonial African leaders and people to the wider tendency among human beings to look to their cultural past whenever present forms of life have problems or are uncertain. The frustrations in the attempts to make progress and acquire nationhood made most African leaders begin looking pastward for an ideal blueprint.²⁸

For Gyekye such revivalism, as long as it is not extreme, has historical backing. It does happen only that it must incorporate new ideas.

Eghosa Osaghae identifies ethnicity as a major problem in African political development. The continuation of ethnicity in postcolonial Africa results from, what Osaghae calls 'dislocated state-society relations. The modern state did not evolve from within the communities. It was instead an amalgamation of communities into a forced form of statehood. For a traditional African, it was his/her community that matters, he devoted his energies to it and the community in turn protected and valued him.²⁹ The new states did not carry with them their people's commitments, as it was the case in traditional communal societies. There was even a form of competition for an individual's loyalty between the state and his community. The individual was therefore torn between his immediate society and the large state, which strictly speaking was foreign.

This problem, according to Osaghae presented postcolonial Africa with a number of problems which we will examine later on in the thesis.

For Molema, traditional African communalism and inherent drawbacks such as the limited utilitarianism whereby Africans had narrow sympathies that extended no further than their fellow tribesmen.³⁰

In addition to this, was the evident lack of creativity, innovativeness and the spirit of inquiry. The Africans, in their communities accepted the common opinion and dared not question established tenets.

It is such drawbacks that began to manifest themselves in postcolonial Africa in different ways. Molema, however, lauds the communal ownership of land, the communal protection of the

individual and societal morality and the unselfishness of the people in traditional communalism, as elements that were positive in the social structure.³¹

Perhaps it is these elements that attracted postcolonial African leaders to look pastward towards reviving traditional communalism. This revivalism, was, according to Apter, also necessitated by the challenges and problems that new African leaders faced immediately after colonialism. Any revival however, had to involve a lot of blending of both traditional and new emerging values. Apter thinks that values such as the emphasis on age, kinship and chieftaincy had to give way.³²

In a similar way, Elder argues that it was necessary for postcolonial Africa to abandon loyalties to lineages, tribes, villages and ethnic groups in order to redirect it to the nation-states.³³ This problem, was however, later on to present a major challenge to the new post-colonial African leaders. The problem of loyalty to ones ethnic group and to ones state presented a big challenge and has accounted for a number of problems in postcolonial Africa. The problem of ethnicity and civil wars in postcolonial Africa can be partly traced to this question of loyalty.

Traditional African communalism therefore provided a form of human sociality that has continued to manifest itself in postcolonial Africa. It was a form of human sociality that superseded the usual sociality arising from the nature of man. It was a form of sociality that has not been well defined and explained.

Scholars have also attempted to offer explanations for man's sociality especially the African unique form of sociality. For Dario Composta, to trace the origin of community and society and in general of sociality, one needs to distinguish between the contingent factors and intrinsic

principles. The contingent factors include historical events of temporary cohesion such as geographical, location, climate, sentiment and urgent needs. The intrinsic principles allude to the human nature as being necessarily social.³⁴

Composta's factors to sociality are applaudable in the sense that they are universal explanations for human sociality. The African situation, being unique, may be explained by some unique contingent factors whose unique presence or application explains the African unique sociality. Whichever these factors were, it is important to note that once sociality was institutionalised in traditional African societies, socialisation was used to expose children to the virtues of communal life. They were socialised to regard themselves as a collectivity and to shun individualism.

Nyasani has attempted to offer an explanation for the African nature of sociality. According to him some of the explanations can be found in the fact that man is a social animal, the need for individual security and the demand by and the watchful eyes of the ancestral spirits.³⁵

So far much has been said about the peaceful co-existence in traditional African societies thanks to the communal way of life. In a nutshell, the contention is that these societies were communal and that this social system contained values, which post-independent Africa can still borrow in the attempt to build a stable and peaceful continent. A number of African statesmen and philosophers have expressed this wish. The question now is what was the nature of this communality and what were the inherent problems that may have filtered into post-colonial Africa?

1.5 Hypotheses

1. Traditional African communalism and the neo-communal spirit were nurtured by the

African people's orientation towards the past.

2. Traditional African past continues to influence post-colonial Africa.

1.6 The scope and Limitation of the study

In order to allow an in-depth examination and analysis of traditional African communality and to avoid unnecessary generalisations, this research draws its examples as much as possible from the Bukusu traditional society. The Bukusu is one of the sub-tribes that make up the Abaluhya community of western Kenya. The Bukusu traditional society was stateless with no common elaborate political organisation. It was a society that exhibited a high degree of solidarity and cohesion. This and the fact that there is enough literature on this society makes it an ideal choice for a case studies in this research. This will serve as a basis of our consequent analysis. It enables us to determine the existence of communality, how it was nurtured and maintained. In addition, it should enable us to establish the inherent values and evils in communalism.

Among the limitations of this study is that it had to be limited to only one traditional African Community, which made it necessary for care to be taken in reaching certain generalizations about traditional African Communities.

Available literature on traditional African communities, especially the Bukusu Community, was scarce and some difficult to get. A lot of effort therefore, had to be put in the struggle to get enough literature. When available, a lot of this literature was not analytic but rather descriptive.

1.7 Theoretical framework

This study is guided by the social contract theories where man's ability to establish appropriate social structures is affirmed.

Man is both a social and rational creature. Unlike his sociality, his rationality is not shared by any other animal. He is a creature who enacts laws, establishes rules of conduct and is increasingly learning to co-operate in larger and larger units. Human progress appears to depend, to a large extent, on the ability of people to co-operate and live in harmony without parochial differences. This is a necessary condition towards the attainment of good life.

According to Titus, only man is conscious of history and can look into the past and the present and make plans for the future. He participates in the making of history by his decisions and actions, whether these are responsible and intelligent or irresponsible and impulsive. The development of an existence appropriate to the dignity of human beings is the work of man himself.³⁶

Man's rationality is praised for its creative capacity to extend the limits of man's social sense and to create order out of the chaos caused by his conflicting impulses and preferences. He is able to break the tight parochial attachments, to project ends beyond the limits of natural impulse for survival, which he shares with all creatures into different forms of self-realisation, embodying the pride, vanity and will-to-power of the human ego. This power over the natural impulse makes man, who is a creature of nature, into a creator and agent in History. No wonder human societies are subject to endless variations while the animal communities are non-historical in the ageless identity of the form and substance of their social existence.³⁷

Three great western philosophers, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau showed how human beings can be creators and agents of history. They came up with a mystical state of nature which, for Hobbes, is a state of social anarchy of war of all against all; for Locke, it is a state of inconvenience because men are judges in their own case, while in Rousseau, it was a state in which man feels free, equal, independent and contented but is guided by self interest rather than reason.

For Hobbes, the condition in the state of nature is wild, savage and dangerous, and the main danger is from other people. He paints the state of nature as one where there is war of everyone against everyone and where 'life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'.

Due to these harsh conditions of existence, especially fear of death, men come together to create a state in order to escape from the horrors of their natural way of life. The state is a symbol of mankind's desire to survive and escape from the Hobbesian fear of death.

The Hobbesian social contract is made between subjects and subjects, not between subjects and the sovereign. The sovereign is not a party to the contract. The people are the authors of the roles of the state and the sovereign. Hobbes is strongly convinced of the need to maintain social cohesion that he cannot envisage society without a government. The breakdown of such a government would mark the end of all order and restraint, the cessation of civilised living, and the return to the barbarous state of nature.

Unlike Hobbes, whose state of nature is like a jungle in which force and fraud reign supreme,

Locke has a softer view of the state of nature. Locke's state of nature is not radically different from that of organised societies. He cannot imagine that human beings can live together without some sort of law and order, even in the state of nature. Locke notes that in the state of nature, the law of nature rules but it is guided by reason.

According to Gernesheim, man, being a rational animal, is not programmed in advance by his needs and his tendencies but is able to determine his will by reason alone, and free to act in accordance with his will.³⁸

Whenever human beings chart out a new form of social organisation like the one advocated by the contractarian philosophers, there is always a compelling reason for it. In societies where such a reason is not apparent, and where people believe that their current form of social organisation is best for their survival, there should be an evident attempt to cling to such a social organisation. This still show man's capacity to create or sustain a form of organisation that best suits his needs and wants.

It is within this framework, that the researcher bases his study believing in the fact that human beings have the power to chart out a mode of existence that is appropriate to their existence. This can be in the form of creating new organisations or clinging conservatively onto the already established forms of existence. Human societies institutionalise modes of existence that best meet their needs.

Traditional African societies clung conservatively onto their traditional forms of organisation, which may have been seen to be best suited to meet their needs. The future and new structures

for them was fraught with dangers and everything was done or lived as the ancestors lived. This was man's decision to live as they lived in the past and reasons were provided for this. The unique human freedom and the power of rationality which distinguishes human beings from other creatures, is truly the source of the various forms of organisation in human societies.

1.8 Methodology

This study is based entirely on library research. The research involved a collection of data from anthropological, sociological, Historical and Philosophical works from the library.

The study focused on traditional African communalism and its legacy in post Independent Africa. In order to present a precise reality of communalism in traditional Africa, the study focused on one selected traditional African society, the Bukusu society. The Bukusu is one of the sub-tribes that make up the Abaluhya community of Western Kenya.

The choice of this community was based on the apparent fact that it happens to be one of the most homogenous communities in western Kenya mostly due to the common traditional practices, beliefs and institutions that the society continues to hold onto. There was also another reason for selecting this community, though. The researcher is a Bukusu and his personal experience in the community may be an invaluable resource for the study.

In the process of carrying out this study, the researcher did consult albeit informally, one prominent Bukusu sage, Wanyonyi Manguliechi. This became necessary whenever there was need to confirm certain contradictory or vague library data on the Bukusu traditional society. The researcher's knowledge of the local language was resourceful especially when such consultations were held.

Through library research and some limited field consultations mentioned above, relevant information was obtained which enormously influenced the course of this study. With relevant data at hand, the researcher employed the philosophical methods of Inductive and Deductive analysis with the aim of working out some general, systematic, coherent and consistent picture of the area of study.

An intensive critical examination of the data was done in order to unveil underpinning philosophical principles and issues that this study has come up with.

This was in line with the nature of philosophy as a “thought about thought about the world.” This requires that a philosopher should be able to use what other disciplines have established to go beyond them and establish ultimate and philosophical explanations about society and the world at large.

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2.0 CHAPTER TWO

THE NATURE AND PHENOMENOLOGY OF COMMUNALISM

We do not know for certain when or where man first appeared on the earth. From evidence so far gathered, however, it looks probable that it was in Eastern Africa or in the Caucasus. In the same breadth, it is not exactly known when human history began. This is still a question of debate among historians and archaeologists. There is, however, a tendency to agree that man became differentiated from his primate cousins and the rest of the animal world by a process that must have extended over a million years or over.

In the Ocean of history, it is only recently that advanced organization beyond the stage of the tribe began. The first major development in the history of man was the emergence of tool-making primates. This was followed by the emergence of symbols and language, and then the evolutionary emergence of man was attained when socio-cultural adaptation replaced genetic adaptation as a dominant mode of human adaptation. Human beings share a number of characteristics with other living things. Human beings, however, are the only animals with a rational principle, called 'logos' which understands the end and directs man's acts to it.

To understand man, and generally all other beings, one must examine the energies, drives and impulses which we find at work in them. Some of these are common to all beings while others may be exclusive to certain categories of beings. In man, we can observe the instincts of self-preservation, of feeding; the impulse to secure a livelihood, to make provisions for the future; the sexual and parental instinct; the impulses towards family life and social fellowship; the impulses to enlarge experience and knowledge, the desire to respect others, the instinct to maintain a

certain order with the supernatural and the ultimate instinct to avoid pain and attain happiness, which is the end of all the above drives.¹

Many of these instincts and drives are common among all animals but only man has the capacity of being conscious about his impulses and of grasping the connection between them and their inherent ends. Man's awareness of his inner urge enables him submit to the command of duty, and to act in accord with responsibility. He develops a sense of right and wrong and a series of values that sets him apart from other animals. Man therefore has a moral conscience and in the light of what is, he has the capacity to ask and attain what ought to be.

Whenever humans group together, the moral element emerges and there develops standards or norms of conduct incumbent upon its members to adhere to. The moral element places some constraints on individual conduct. The emergence of moral norms spring from the necessities of social life while the nature of norms spring partly from social life, the environment and partly from reflection.

Man attains his full reality through the use of his rational capacity. Other animals are always determined to be what they are. Human beings especially with regard to their conduct are not determined by blind forces with the inevitability which is inherent in animal instinct. Human beings are active agents in much of their social life. They have the ability to initiate their own actions after careful deliberation and with a certain end in view. They are efficient causes of their own actions.

As John Dewey once wrote, man is an adjustive being. He is a being who can reflect and who is

aware of his needs and the possible means of achieving them.²

Some of these needs can be satisfied by individuals with little or no effort, and acting entirely on their own. Other needs, however, require effort on the part of the individual and others. Such needs force man into sociality as one of his main means of realizing his full humanity.

All human endeavour aim at an end, but in order to attain this end man must develop certain means. These means are however, only both immediate and intermediate ends, whose real significance cannot be discovered except in terms of the ends to which they aim. In these series of ends and means one establishes man's capacity to plan (intention) and the capacity to execute the plans. All these are determined by an ultimate end which is the attractive good to man as the agent. It is this ultimate end that initiates every other subordinate end in the series of meaningfully connected ends, without which there could be no series at all. If there were no last one, there could be no first one.

It was the British philosopher, Jeremy Bentham (1748 –1832) who argued that mankind is controlled by two forces – pain and pleasure. It is this two forces that determine man's activities in his environment.³ Individual happiness is based on man's capacity to feel pleasure and pain, in such a way that increased pleasure and decreased pain bring happiness while increased pain and decreased pleasure bring unhappiness.- Man is seen as a pleasure seeking and pain-avoiding creature whose entire activities are geared at avoiding pain and attaining happiness. Men therefore develop means and ends that target greater pleasure and minimum or no pain at all.

Man's nature inclines him to one of his main means in the pursuit for self-realization and the

attainment of a series of ends. This is his inclination towards sociality. This fact is shown by man's physical constitution which is incomparably more dependant on the family than other animals, which due to their natural equipment of instinct, protective covering, and means of defense, are more fully capable of maintaining and developing themselves from babyhood. For Aristotle, man cannot survive outside society, as he, by nature is social. The stoics modified this assertion to the postulate that human beings are actually community animals by nature. Except in a very subtle way, human beings do not acquire claws, or fur or a proboscis or protective colouration. Man has to adjust to the enviroing conditions by banding himself together and slowly selecting out ways of life that prove more agreeable to his requirements and abilities. Social phenomena are therefore devices born of attempts to adjust to the given plan of life in the typical human way.⁴

Man also requires sociality by reason of his mental nature. The awakening and educating of his spiritual powers and faculties depend entirely upon his association with others, especially, the family, tribe and nation. The development of an individual's mind requires society especially in the realm of morality.⁵

We should also mention here that man's nature is not only a social nature but also an individual nature, making the social nature one of the fundamental existential ends. According to Messner, these sides of human nature are inseparably bound up i.e. individual nature cannot develop without social fellowship neither can social fellowship develop without individual nature.⁶

Social fellowship is based upon the need and capacity of the individual nature for completion. Mutuality brings to man's combined endeavours a substantially greater effectiveness than the sum

of their individual efforts could achieve. This brings something new, in which all participate in the fulfillment of their purposes in life.

It was Martin Buber who postulated in his dialogic method how sociality evolves among mankind. In the first case is that between subject and subject or self and other selves. The initial relationship is that between a child and the mother. Out of this consciousness 'I' and the 'thou' between oneself and the mother. This is the first relationship where the recognition of the other person or another 'I' in his or her own right occurs. This recognition involves an invitation of reciprocity from the other person. The I – thou relationship involves a genuine meeting or encounter where each subject discloses something of his or her being to the other.

The first I – thou relationship develops between a child and its mother and then the 'I' extends this acquaintances to other selves beginning with those that the 'I' has a particular kind of relationship with. This fixes the 'I' within a constellation of familial relationships. The relatedness is extended still further into the whole of society.

In any given society, however, there are other things that the 'I' comes into contact with. This is the individual's environment, seen as an 'it' or object. This object occupies a position in space and time and is subject to the natural laws.⁷

From the 'I – thou' relationship, we move to the 'I – it' relationship which begins with the immediate environment or objects to the 'I'. This relationship develops to a level where the 'I' attempts to understand the it more and more for purposes of controlling and manipulating it. The 'it' also exerts some influence on the nature of sociality that the individual develops with others.

The 'I – thou' and 'I – it' relationship are essential to man's realization of his true self. We become genuine selves only as we respond and enter into intimate relationship with others. Through the 'thou' a person becomes an 'I'. The 'I – thou' relationship is characterized by mutuality and love.⁸

The 'I – thou' relationship leads to the universal notion of sociality where man is seen to be a social animal. This is a universal phenomenon for man everywhere.

However, the 'I – it' relationship brings with it varying influences that lead to different levels of sociality. The varying forms of sociality among the human persons like the traditional African communalism can largely be explained by the dual influence operating between the 'I' and the 'it'.

Similar thinking about human sociality was postulated by Composta when he argued that sociality is the experience of the self with other selves. It is that that happens between selves.⁹ To locate the origin of community and society, we need to distinguish between the contingent factors from intrinsic principles. Contingent factors are historical events of temporary cohesion such as geographical space, climate, environment, sentiment, urgent needs and descent. These are equivalent to the metaphysical accidents rather than the universals.

The intrinsic factor, the universals, refers to man's natural tendency to sociality. This is sociality made necessary by man's nature which pushes man to join others in an impersonal way through coordination and collaborations. The contingent factors tend to lead to sociality of communion based on the postulate that under pressure from contingent factors, every individual begins to see

in another individual his/her 'alter-ego' leading to the development of affectual relationship with the 'alter-ego'. Intervening contingent factors in this affectual relationship can either serve to weaken or strengthen the union or sociality of the people concerned.¹⁰

We would like here to argue that the contingent factors arise at the level of the 'I – it' relationship. A number of these factors are a demonstration of how the 'it' exerts pressure on the individual thus forcing the 'I' to devise appropriate responses.

The uniqueness of traditional African communality is no doubt explainable at the level of the 'I – it' relationship with contingent factors being unique to the continent serving as intervening factors, the accidents.

Indeed the impulse towards sociality is universal, and therefore applicable to all men everywhere.

The extent or level of sociality however, may differ from one society to another. But how does this arise?

We postulate that population growth in man's earliest habitat necessitated migration of some members to other unoccupied and habitable lands that were then readily available. This made people to spread out over a wide area encountering a variety of new environments to which they were forced to adapt. Each society had to make to do with the resources and contingent factors found in its own immediate area.

Consequently groups of individuals under different environments developed different adaptive measures leading to different cultural patterns.

The increased geographical separation of societies also contributed to societal differentiation. Contingent features such as oceans, deserts, mountains, and other barriers to transportation and communication created basic socio-cultural cleavages. As such forms of social organization found in Africa are different from those in Europe or America.

For Africa, geography helped to separate most of its people from the rest of the world. Difficulties of travel in Africa were only mastered during the last hundred years. For many years most of Africa south of the Sahara was difficult to reach from the rest of the world due to the deserts, sea, swamps, forests and mountains. Thus the people of Africa had little chance to learn from others outside the continent.

Men, it has been said, change their ways of life easily when they are in constant touch with others who live differently. In fact, much of Africa's ways of life remained unchanged for a long time until the coming of colonialism. This isolationism that the continent went through helped in preserving and entrenching a way of life that the African ancestors had initially put in place in their relationship with environment, in the 'I – it' relationship.

In the early days of our ancestors, they were forced to band themselves together to withstand the harsh environmental conditions of the time. There are reasons why the 'I' choose to bind itself to the others, and this fundamentally has to do with the inability of the 'I' to stand and survive alone. Harsh environmental conditions, endless forests, marauding wild animals, heavy rains, mountainous terrains, etc, decreases an individual ability to survive alone. It leads to a tendency to for the self to move towards group dependence and reliance. The intensity of the individual's

relatedness to the group is determined by the level and consciousness of the inability to survive outside the group. The more this is the case, the more the centre of life is shifted from one's self to the group or "usness."

The central question and concern of life is no longer about how to live as individuals but as groups. This shift is comparable to the protective colouring that some animals assume to disguise their true selves. They change their colours to become so similar to their surrounding that they are hardly distinguishable from it.¹¹ In this case the surrounding environment becomes key to the survival of the animal concerned.

The life of our forefathers, the ancestors, required such mechanism, which was gradually passed onto their descendants. The very survivals of the descendants' societies were made dependent on living as the ancestors lived. It required conformity to the old tried ways. Traditional African people were brought up in this reality of existence and thus the tendency to build unique forms of social groupings.

According to Nyasani, there must have been many reasons that forced our forefathers into group solidarity. He singles out the need for security as having been one of the main reasons that forced them to seek their personal security through integration with others.

The Africans self-surrender to the 'we' is the result of an inveterate psychological disposition largely born out of a hostile environment in which he finds himself. Traditionally Africans found themselves occupying a territory fraught with all kinds of dangers and enemies, physical and psychological. The jungles of Africa and their terrifying natural hazards were themselves enough to inspire fear compelling individuals to draw together in order to combat them in a united front. The individuals looked to each other for security against marauding wildlife or

against tempestuous wild down pours or against inter-tribal wars. Thus a sense of collective security had to be developed in order to cope with the hostile environment. Gradually this inevitable attitude that I cannot exist or I cannot make it all on my own without committing myself to the other or others had to grow naturally.¹²

For Nyasani, it is the African environment and its hostility to exclusive individualism that served as the root cause of the unique solidarity that was witnessed in Africa.

From a purely accidental hostile situation, an element of mutual concern in the form of solidarity, togetherness, brotherhood and extended family structures began to take concrete shapes.¹³

The hostile environment was packed by the mutual ties of blood relationship and the metaphysical link with the world of ancestors in traditional African societies.

The African worldview has some ontological and metaphysical beliefs that helped in cementing solidarity among the members of any given society. The belief, see society as consisting of both the living and the living dead. The dead continued to be not only members but active participants of their societies. Death was merely a transformation of an individual to a higher form of existence; an existence that was invested with superior power over the living. The living dead constituted the ancestors who were the guardians of the living, the traditions and practices of their societies. They influenced the living to live almost in the same way as they lived.

The old tried ways, so the thinking went, are the best proved means to social harmony and good which the descendants should religiously adhere to, to avoid plunging their societies into problems.

African societies in their traditional settings were therefore cooperative, collectivist, communalist

or socialist in form. There was a vivid feeling and demonstration of solidarity, which was exemplified in traditional culture by the harmony between the individual and the group. Individuals were seen in terms of groups or collectivity from the family level, the clan, the village to the tribe. The family was the most basic social unit and exhibited the strongest sense of solidarity. The family was the extended one, which brought quite a large group of individuals closely, related by blood. The living dead were also considered to be active members of such extended families.

It is this extended family structure that was the foundation of traditional African communalism. The structure extended a web of relatedness among different extended families ensuring a fibre of relatedness among all the families of the ethnic group. This union was extended to the living dead, fauna and flora.¹⁴ The larger units, the clan and tribe had a string of relatedness that bound the members of each towards the others. The units were held together by the biological bond of kinship and the immanent spirit of the tribe. Towards ones family, clan or tribe, there was deep sentiment, affection and loyalty.

According to Nyasani, in the extended family set up no person can starve if neighbours have food neither can a child be orphaned since children belong to the community. The child's welfare is not just an obligation of its family but every member of the community. In actual fact, everybody was responsible for the other.¹⁵

Communalism was a social structure where all individuals formed a community with their fellow men and women and their actions were conditioned by this fact. It saw the individual as an inherently communal being, and never as an isolated atomic individual. The individual was a

member of a genuine community of brotherhood. The individual acquired a new form of life and meaning. In the 'I – thou' relationship, the force of the 'alter – ego' is reinforced by the forces of love, sentiments, blood relations, a common descent and language. Communalism points to something extra, that binding force among human beings in the 'we' relationships, a kind of subjective feeling of the members in a society usually affectual and traditional.

Communalism insists that the good of all determines the good of each, or the welfare of each is dependent on the welfare of all. In communalism the group is the centre of focus of the lives of individuals and the measure of an individual's worth is dependent on the extent of his/her association and conformity with the group's interests and aspirations.¹⁶

Implied in communalism is the belief that an individual's being depends on the being of others. An individual "is because others are". The 'I' exists only because of the existence of the 'other' or 'thou'. The existence of the 'I' is therefore irrevocably dependent on the existence of the 'other' or the 'thou'.

Each individual then seems to lead the life of others while leading his own. He can never be himself except in as far as others are. Consequently the existential significance of any one individual seems to derive its ontological value from the collective lifeblood of the community. The community ethic, therefore emerges as supreme and overriding where individual whims might inspire individualistic and selfish pursuits.¹⁷

This arrangement enjoins upon an individual the obligation to always act for the good of the group since his/her very being is dependent on it.

It is this that made traditional African communalism, a social structure.

In which every member voluntarily cooperates, is proud and much obliged to help any other member of his/her community. It is a value that Africans attached to group life, the readiness to help and share.¹⁸

The idea of communalism is based on the fact that human beings form a community of related persons and that their actions must always be conditioned by this fact, and each should contribute to the well being of all. Such a social structure was a shared way of living, and was opposed to inequality, privilege and monopoly. It formed a group spirit and a community of interests giving the individuals security and a sense of belonging to the group. It is characterized by the principle that a human person blossoms in a group, and the person internalizes the group in such a way that he ties his or her own well being to the well being of the group.

African societies prior to European colonialism were basically classless and communal. There was no private ownership of property, and the community was treated as being paramount to the individual. Within pre-colonial societies, there was generally no exploitation of one group by the other.

African tribal society was quite literally one big harmonious family in which all members contributed to the general welfare and were in turn taken care of by the community in case of need. In effect, before the arrival of the European colonizers, there existed an African welfare state based on the principle of communalism.¹⁹

Traditional African communalism was thus driven by some form of familyhood or brotherhood which was key in cementing the mass of individuals into a communion of relatives, each tied in one way or the other, to other members of society. Members in such communities live together in the same territory for long without meeting other cultures that are radically different from their own. Even among nomadic communities, they were moving about physically in vast terrain

without meeting or mixing with others from different communities.

This usually results in a kind of intimacy, a form of single biological relationship, creating a kind of somatic homogeneity of local, inbred population. Under such circumstances, there is also some kind of epistemological principles involved. When people live in a territory for long, they come to know each other, to a large extent even, physically, thus the 'I' brings into his/her epistemological realm, most of the 'others'. The 'other' is therefore within the episteme of the 'I'. This is bound to enhance understanding, brotherhood and uniformity between the 'I' and the 'other' thus a strong sense of communalism.

It leads to a kind of sociality that is intimate and based on sentiments as compared to that that is based on self-interests. It is based on the way individuals feel about each other and their obligations to one another.²⁰

These obligations are ethical in character. Members in such a community have individual interests but they are integrated as part of the ultimate values of the entire community. This creates a bond or feeling of belonging and oneness among the members forming a communion of individuals tied to each other sentimentally.

This mode of social structuring is in effect different from the existential type found in western countries. In the western world, the individual is given prominence as opposed to the community.

The structure emphasizes individuality and individual freedom as the essence of mankind.

They subscribe to the view that human nature is not a machine to be build after a model, and set

to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inner forces. They discourage mechanical adherence to traditions in communalism, such adherence was encouraged and built into the individual.

Based on the above comparison, we would like to argue that it is not true to postulate the idea that every human society has progressed continuously or that all societies have taken the same evolutionary path.

It is the Marxian interpretation that places the evolution of society on some kind of social determinism. It is the mode of production that determines the social, political and even intellectual processes of mankind. Man is not viewed as an active agent and determinant of the above. It is not his consciousness, his existential means and ends that are determinant forces. Instead man's ends and means are wholly at the mercy of economies.

The final causes, according to Engels, all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in men's better insight into eternal truths and justice but in changes of the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the philosophy, but in the economics of each particular epoch.²¹ Although one would argue that even the economics we are referring to is a creation of man, it does not suffice to argue that a section of man's creation can turn man into a helpless being at its mercy.

We would like to postulate that man is an actor and not a helpless spectator carried along on the floodtide of the forces of production. It is difficult to apply to man the Humean kind of determinism or causality. Hume's theory of causality is associated with a deterministic and indeed

mechanic view of human responses. An analysis of Hume's concept will show that causation is essentially a statistical relation between independent events, a kind of regular sequence of one kind of event and another of the kind which usually follows.

It is true that whatever phenomenon presents itself to our view, we may have to seek for a cause. But there are usually many different things, conditions or circumstances necessary to the production of an effect and all of them must be considered causes or necessary parts of the cause.²²

To pick on the mode of production, as a Humean kind of cause of societal development, is to disregard probably the most important causes or explanation.

Human perceptions, desires, interests, motives, needs, have influenced the way human beings relate with each other and the environment i.e. the 'I' – 'thou' and the 'I' – 'it' relations. Human beings are not helpless agents who wait for things to happen to them. Instead, around mankind one can see things that people have made happen for various reasons. Man is conscious of history and thus has intentions and purposes for the future. He participates in the making of history by his decisions, whether these are responsible or not.

Historical facts, in fact, do not support the Marxian interpretation of human society. The transition from ancient-Graco-Roman economic and social structure (ancient) to that of the Middle Ages (feudal) was not revolutionary but gradual, purposive and continuous. Similarly the transition from the middles ages (feudal) to modern capitalism was not revolutionary but brought out the fact that man is an active player in the process.

Then there was Engels prediction of an inevitable social revolution in England, based on Marxism which to date has not taken place. The transition from socialism to communism, as propounded by Marx , Engels, and others, to date only sounds utopian.

All this is due to the failure to recognize that modes of production could only be one among more important social wheels. The recognition of other factors or causes such as environmental, intellectual and religious forces help to explain the inevitable fact that human societies have not taken the same evolutionary routes. This is due to the fact that there are numerous accidental causes and their interrelationships. At the universal level, they involve the most basic elements in human nature, but at the accidental level they involve many more elements in human nature and their responses to the environment.

Hunting and gathering societies for example have managed to span the whole course of human history. From the emergence of the first man down to the present, they have always been societies obtaining their livelihood in this way.²³ Traditional African societies managed to hung on their social forms for quite a long period as compared to western regions.

The fact then is that the explanation for this lies in certain accidental causes that arise between the 'I' – 'thou' and 'I' – 'it' relationships. These causes are not universal but may vary from region to region.

The universal causes points to the associative nature of man. The accidental to the communitarian nature of man. A group relationship is communal when the orientation of social action is based

on affectual or emotive relatedness. In the African case, communality was characterized by a kind of real and imagined consanguinity where each and every individual believed in some form of blood and descent relationship with others.

A group relationship is associative if the orientation of social action within it is based on rationally motivated adjustments and arrangements to the common good. It is the result of the group's attempts to seek workable and comfortable arrangements in society.

Traditional African social structure was based on this dual ethic of organization. It was a combination of the associative and communitarian nature of social organization. This organization necessitated a variety of values that were essential to its existence and survival.

Out of the associative nature of man, in the African case, came a strong communitarian nature of man, which had its own attendant consequences. Among these are the values such as communal ownership of land, egalitarianism, and extensive network of social obligations and duties that led to considerable cooperation.²⁴

According to Gyekye, traditional communal order was participatory and characterized by a number of social and ethical values such as brotherhood, interdependence, cooperation, reciprocal obligations, social justice, hospitality, mutual neighbourliness, compassion, generosity, self-sacrifice and control.²⁵

These values arise in abundance whenever the communitarian nature of man comes out vividly. They ensure that enmity is kept at bay with mutual helpfulness, interdependence and a feeling of

brotherly love and understanding among the people. A deep feeling of responsibility for the welfare of others was the chief guiding factor. In traditional African setting,

Man never does anything, receives anything or suffers anything alone – this ensures a warm fraternity, hospitality and togetherness, which could be the envy of individualistic cultures.²⁶

Everybody was therefore socialized and expected to be his brother's keeper and protector. This reality of communalism is also vivid in the African language where expressions used exclude to a large extent, the individualistic terminologies and instead use collective ones. There is a tendency to avoid terms such as 'I' and 'you' and embrace terms such as 'us' or 'we'.

A glance at the literary world attests to the extent that communalism had taken root in our societies and influenced the people's expression and thought – Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, and *No Longer at Ease*, Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *The River Between*, Camara Laye's, *The African Child*, and many more works do evoke a sense of communalism, fellow feelings and neighbourliness in traditional African societies.

In Chinua's *No Longer at Ease*, in a welcoming address to Obi Okonkwo on his return from further studies, his community's union secretary leaves no doubt that the entire community considers Okonkwo as their own son.

The importance of having one of our sons in the vanguard of this march of progress is nothing short of axiomatic... we are happy that today we have such an invaluable possession in the person of our illustrious son and guest of honour.²⁷

They show how the individuals are tied to their groups, how their actions and behaviour and their

well-being are a concern not just to the immediate family but to the whole community. They are a clear reflection of how traditional communalism was actually lived in our societies.

A close examination of communality shows that its main end was the promotion of what society thought was the common good, from which each can attain the end, 'eudaemonia' or happiness. It required and ensured that each individual member acted in conformity with and worked for the good of all.

The social structure was therefore teleologically structured as an elaborate series of means, all aimed at certain immediate ends, which in themselves turn out to be means to the final or ultimate end, towards which all human activities are targeted – happiness. The high level of social fraternity, the prominence of group interests over the private ones, and the high sense of common responsibilities helped to cultivate a sense of collectivism among the people, as a means of the ultimate end but also as an end before which there were a series of means.

Under traditional communal structures, high premium was placed on the marriage of individual's interests to the common interests, will and thought. Every member of society was tailored to consider himself or herself as part and parcel of the whole and to play appropriate roles to enhance the good of all.²⁸

The individual is brought up to think of himself (herself) in relation to his group and to behave always in such a way as to bring honour and not disgrace to its members. The ideal set before him (her) is that of mutual helpfulness and cooperation within the group of kinsfolk.²⁹

In exchange, the individual was assured of his/her security and knew that his/her community could

not disown him/her as long as he/she acted in conformity with the common good.

Utilitarianism was the guiding principle of the Bantu morals and it governed the relationship of individuals with their fellow tribesmen. The greatest happiness and good of the society was the central focus of communality, although this was limited to members of a specific ethnic group. Individuals were required to act in accordance with those rules whose general following would lead to the greatest happiness of their community. The failure to do this gave the society the right to reprimand or force the individual into conformity.

An individual's social status was mostly measured by one's altruism, one's contribution to the common good. It was determined by one's utility to one's community. Every individual had to manifest the community in him or her by sharing from and contributing to the common good. Traditional communality received from all and gave to all.

Communalism represents a collective human endeavour aimed at some end, but as we have said earlier on, before reaching this end, the group devises means that would help it reach immediate ends which in turn are also means to the ultimate end.

The ultimate end for all human endeavour is happiness, but before reaching this end there are a series of means and ends. In these series, communalism is both in some way a means and in other ways an end.

In traditional African societies, a series of means in form of traditional beliefs and practices, political social and economic institutions were designed to ensure a solid form of brotherhood of

each of these societies. At this level, these beliefs, practices and institutions served as means aimed at attaining a certain end-communality. Communality, however, is not the ultimate end, and it in turn served as a means to some common good from which all members draw their benefits.

At the very end of the series, all human endeavour and designs aim at happiness for each member of the society. The ultimate end consists of a state of complete general satisfactoriness. It is a well-lived life which includes security, pleasure, health, longevity, moral excellence, wisdom, peace with the supernatural and other positive qualities. This is the ultimate human purpose towards which all forms of social organizations, using different means, aim. Only human beings can reflect on their state, their needs and their immediate environment and consciously devise appropriate ways towards the above general satisfactoriness. In all human beings there exists a desire, a consciousness and the yearn for happiness. Happiness generally is only a name for our self-conscious realization that our desires have been or are being satisfied. It is the basic motive for everything that human beings do. Their every act is motivated by some desire, the satisfaction of which can lead to happiness. Once they have attained happiness, they do not look for anything else. It is an end and not a means to anything else.

In this chapter we have seen that man's tendency to sociality and communalism can be explained by both the universal and accidental factors. Whereas the universal factors explain man's tendency to sociality among all Human beings, the accidental factors explain the strong communal tendencies among Human beings in certain geographical regions of the world including Africa. It is the accidental factors or the so-called contingent factors that, therefore, account for Africans' strong sense of communalism.

In order to be able to understand the series of ends and means leading to the ultimate human

purpose, we, in the next chapter examine a traditional African community, the Bukusu community of western Kenya. The purpose is to see the order of planning and performance in terms of beliefs, practices and institutions that served as a series of means to communalism.

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3.0 CHAPTER THREE

THE SERIES OF MEANS TO COMMUNALISM IN A SELECTED AFRICAN COMMUNITY

In any human society, there can be no human endeavour or activities without an end in view. There can be no beliefs, practices, institutions and other human values without an end as the target. The end is the point of attraction, it is that that all human planning (intention) and performance (execution) are aimed at.

In this chapter we look at communalism in traditional African communities as an end which can enable us to identify the means that communities put in place to attain this end. These means can be seen in the deliberate practices, beliefs and social institutions that these communities put in place so as to be able to form a corporate body of members under a strong bond of brotherhood.

In this study we have picked on the Bukusu traditional society as our case study so that we can be able to pick out specific means that the society put in place. This it is hoped will be representative enough for the purposes and nature of this study.

3.1 The Social-Political Organization

The Bukusu community is one of the sub-tribes that make up the populous Luhya community of western Kenya. Other sub-tribes include the Maragoli, Tachoni, Kabarasi, Tsotso, Isukha, Idakho, Tiriki, Marama, Kisa, Nyala, Marachi, Samia, Nyore, Wanga and the Khayo. The Bukusu, together with the Tachoni, occupy Bungoma district of western Kenya. The Bukusu

occupy the largest area of the district, particularly the southern, central and eastern parts of the district. A large number of the Bukusu people have since independence, spread into many parts of the neighbouring Trans-Nzoia district in the Rift Valley Province.

The Bukusu community is generally a homogeneous society which enjoys close affinity with the Bagisu society of Eastern Uganda. This homogeneity is defined in terms of a consciousness of unity and interdependence rather than in terms of submission to a central authority. The Bukusu traditional society was stateless without a well institutionalized political framework or structure. The basic political unit in this society was the clan which occupied in most cases a single village. The clan consisted of lineage groups which were made up of different families.

Babukusu lived in walled villages. The walls were built of clay mud and murram. The walled villages or forts consisted of circular or oval walls and were about 3 metres high and 1 metre thick. A walled village was made up of several joint families with each occupying a distinct ward or division. Each ward consisted of a homestead in which there were houses, cattle kraals, granaries and sacrificial areas. The houses were built facing the main gate.¹ The fortified villages must have been built as a security measure to counter the constant wars with the neighbouring Nilotic communities. The fortification of villages also enhanced unity among the families in the villages. The walled villages served an important function of cementing the relatedness of the occupants. It was in addition, a show of the communal spirit among the members. It was, in a way, a deliberate means of keeping people together under each other's epistemological realm to enhance brotherhood among them.

At the family level, the fathers were at the helm, keeping order and had authority over everybody

in their families. At the lineage or extended family level, the eldest member was the head of the group. Every lineage group had a lineage elder called *Omukayi* who dealt with the disputes within his lineage group. A number of these lineage groups formed a clan.

According to Wagner the clan was a patrilineal exogenous territorial unit. It consisted of all persons who trace their descent in paternal line to a common ancestor and, on that ground form a community of interests, refrain from intermarriages and inhabit a common stretch of land or village. This communality, together with a common clan name, helped to solder the clan members together. The focus of political power in the Bukusu traditional society was at the clan level. The clan leadership was based on one's age, sociality and wisdom. This position was assumed informally by an elder whose personality and qualities stood out among his age-mates and who, proved himself capable of taking the lead in all matters and on all occasions where the interests of the clan as a whole were concerned.²

Another important qualification to clan headship was economic wealth which was measured in terms of the number of herds of cattle, granaries that were always filled, family size and one that brews beer and hosts members of the clan and even outsiders. In Wagner's own words,

the wealthy person, has the duty of being generous and helpful to the needy, but in return his homestead and thereby himself become the centre of the social life of the neighbourhood or even of the entire clan community.³

Among the Babukusu, in every group, be it the family, the lineage, and the clan or the tribe, the principle of seniority in age applied when it came to leadership. It was always the oldest member of a group whose word carried the greatest weight on matters concerning that group. Leadership in all areas of life among the Babukusu required elderly people whose minds are free from earthly

desire and possess other qualities such as wisdom, gentleness, and are free from greed and jealousy. Only people with such characteristics could be relied on by members of the Bukusu society as leaders. The possession of such qualities ensured efficient and impartial execution of public duties, towards the collective will of the members of society.

This is almost comparable to Plato's insistence on the role of philosopher King, whose knowledge and wisdom would be useful in the running of the state. For Plato, the philosopher King is a man who is capable of a high degree of conceptual thought and who is not wedded exclusively to the empirical information about the actual world. He is a man who is above the level of acquired taste and prejudice. In all his actions, private or public, he is a man who keeps before him the idea of goodness. He is a lover of truthfulness, intelligence and impartiality. It is such a man, who, for Plato was most suited to deal with rigours of government.

In the Bukusu traditional society, a man of advanced age and wisdom was best suited to be at the helm of all the social units. It was only such a man who could handle the affairs of his unit impartially and in an informed way. Such people found themselves performing leadership roles without having asked or contested for it. The leadership of the elders was the society's deliberate attempt to ensure that the Bukusu society was guided well and in conformity with its established traditions.

Every walled village was headed by a clan elder usually referred to as '*Omukasa*'. According to Wanjala, the term '*Omukasa*' comes from some form of material culture - '*Kumukasa*' (a royal armllet). Wanjala describes *Omukasa* as a wise and gentleman, who has the ability to judge dispassionately. His word had to be taken seriously and, as Wanjala puts it, he had a tongue 'that herds people together'.⁴

Besides the *Omukasa*, there were other elders whose role was mostly concerned with the conduct of the people in their clan and tribe at large. These were '*Bakambisi*' and '*Baswala Kimese*'. The former was a counsellor while the latter served as a ritual leader, teacher and counsellor. *Bakambisi*'s duties were limited within their lineage and clan while the other elders performed their duties throughout the Bukusu society.

According to Wanjala '*Baswala Kimise*' are teachers and counsellors. They direct counsel to people of all ages on a wide variety of family, clan and tribal matters.⁵

'*Oswala Kumuse*' (Singular) in Wanjala's words,

Preaches solidarity and family unity in moments of crises and warn the youths against waywardness... *Baswala Kumuse*'s speeches are proverb-laden and evoke the conservatism of the tribe. They use proverbs which show that whoever seeks to change the status quo will come to no good. In teaching the youths, they do not only load them with morals but harp at the traditional notions of brotherhood and the essence of family life.⁶

'*Baswala Kumuse*' were a groups of an extremely conservative and wise elderly men in the Bukusu traditional society. They were well versed in the traditions and beliefs of the community and commanded a lot of respect, and therefore best suited to keep their communities adherence to the past ways.

Whenever there was a death of an elderly tribesman, they were invited to address the people on the need to avoid speculations about the cause of the death, the preservation of harmony within and between the clans and generally on the need to stick to the practices of the society. They played an important role in the presentation of the community's traditions and therefore, the

communitarian way of life.

·Bakambisi' were in charge of counseling their clans or villages whenever there were intra-clan conflicts. They could make pronouncements from hilltops at dawn, what was called "Khukhupa kumulasi". In the pronouncements they could denounce the conflicts and disunity to the harmony of the community and the wishes of the ancestors. Because of the respect they commanded, their word was enough to make people abandon conflicts among themselves.

Society was basically run on the basis of the traditions and beliefs passed on from previous generations. This society, like many other traditional African societies, feared change and new innovations in their social organization. The future was uncertain and the approach to it was to ensure that it is lived as much as possible, in almost the same way as the past was lived.

The age-factor therefore fits in very well in the traditional Bukusu social organization. The youths could not be entrusted with important roles or responsibilities in the society due to their ignorance about the past and the usual tendency of adventurism among young people. The young are usually receptive to new ideas and innovations. Added to this, the young were seen as people who were ignorant about the society's traditions, practices and beliefs. They were, in a way, still in the process of being fitted into the society's tank of knowledge, and could not therefore qualify to play important roles until they had been fully fitted into the society. The youths therefore did not enjoy high status in the society and were supposed to operate under the guidance of the elderly members of society.

The more somebody progressed in age, the more respect he gained and responsibilities he attained

as a member of the society. The eldest members of society enjoyed the most respect and played major roles and responsibilities in the running of their society.

The understanding here was that this were the most experienced and therefore knowledgeable about the society's traditions and beliefs. Since society was run on the basis of this, the more knowledgeable one was about the past, the more essential he was to his society. Those who had survived through generations were believed to have the most authentic and undiluted knowledge of the past, on the basis of which society should be run. When such people are given leadership roles, they were thought to be able to run their society purely on the knowledge they have about the past. The elderly were conservative and therefore best suited to preserve the society's traditions, practices and beliefs.

The principle of age was also based on the mystic power (covered elsewhere in this work) that one enjoyed. Among the human hierarchy, this power increased as one advanced in age. The living dead however enjoyed much more mystic power than all the living. This mystic power, so it was believed could be used to harm or benefit others who are lower in the hierarchy. A father, for example, could invoke this power against his child who does not toe the required line. This could usually be seen as a curse, which was believed could have disastrous consequences to the victim.

At a more general level, the eldest members of society could invoke such powers against those who are younger than them. This power, invested mostly in those with advanced age, gave the elders authority in their society.

It was therefore a combination of the acquired experiences; knowledge of the enormous mystic

power and the fact that with advanced age, one tended to outgrow petty jealousies and self-interest that made leadership based on age an important fact in the Bukusu traditional society.

It can be seen here a well-planned and deliberate attempt by the Bukusu community to have elderly leaders at every unit in its social structure. This was deliberate in order to have as leaders or elders, people who were well conversant with the community's traditions and practices. They were to ensure that the people under their mandate do not travel the forbidden routes against the wishes of the community and ancestors. And since the central feature in the old traditions and practices was solidarity, the elders were crucial in enhancing and sustaining communal structures.

The Bukusu societal unit was marked by the belief in a common ancestor - Mubukusu, the occupation of one territory, and common traditions, beliefs and language.

Another factor which enhanced harmony among the Bukusu was the existence of distinguished clan elders who were accepted beyond their clans. These clan leaders essentially became the community's leaders. These leaders possessed distinguished personality backed by some supernatural powers. Whenever there was a problem facing the entire community, these were the leaders who were consulted and who determined the direction that the community took. Babukusu therefore had a way of recognizing and rewarding their heroes and in turn they helped in molding a unified community. According to Makila, some of these leaders included, the following:⁷

Maina wa Nalukale; who belonged to the Bakitang'a clan. He was highly respected and revered as a great Bukusu prophet whose prophesies about the community's future and welfare was

sometimes startling and often stunned the tribe. As a sage, he was the recourse of the his people, whenever they had problems or wanted direction on what to do. According to Makila, even neighbouring tribes like the Teso and Elgon Masaais revered and respected him. His fame made him the undisputed leader of the Babukusu community. Maina is said to have just disappeared without notice and to-date nobody is sure where he went. Following his disappearance, there was unease among the Babukusu that threatened the harmony of the community.

Mukite wa Nameme, believed to have been born around 1790, came to the fore at a time when the Bukusu community was experiencing great setbacks in intertribal wars. Makila describes him as a man who had essential leadership qualities that enabled him to instill courage, enhance the military capacity and patriotism among the Bukusu people. He led the Bukusu military expeditions against the Banyala (a Luyia sub-tribe), the Luo, and the Teso, where they were successful. To reinforce their security, he led the Bukusu people in building forts to deter military incursions from their neighbours. His military prowess, political wisdom and counsel earned a lot of respect and reverence among the entire Bukusu community. He became the undisputed leader who managed to build a strong brotherhood among the various Bukusu clans.

Wachiye wa Naumbwa, said to have been born around 1810, is described as having been the most miraculous, prophetic and mysterious person that the Bukusu community has ever had. He was known to have performed very stunning miracles and mysteries, that to-date, the community is yet to forget. It is said that he could also use his supernatural powers to enable his people defeat their enemies easily without any resistance.

Makila mentions a number of mysteries and miracles that he was known for. Among others, they

included the following: causing fire on the roof of a house without the house burning, sitting on water in a river and roasting meat there, sitting and drinking beer on the surface of a flowing river without drowning, sitting on the sharp point of a spear and blinding the eyes of enemies making them easy prey for the Bukusu warriors. On his death, he is believed to have left his grave and gone to his final abode on the peak of Mt. Elgon.

Whether these things are true or not, may not matter here. What is important is that his people, given their theoretical thought framework, believed that these things were true and as such he was a great man that deserved respect and reverence from all. It was the way the community thought about him, that elevated him into an important leader of the community. Nobody could dare not follow the leadership of such a man, which was generally geared towards building a strong and harmonious Bukusu community.

Mukisu Lufwalula, born in 1830, is reputed as having been a heroic warrior who managed to organize the Bukusu warriors in their final defeat of the Teso. His expedition against the Tesos brought to an end the persistent attacks against the Bukusu. His military prowess and organizational ability encouraged all the Bukusu clans to unite strongly under his leadership.

Mutonyi wa Nabukelembe lived between 1820 and 1890 and was believed to have been the greatest prophets of the 19th century. Through his dreams and predictions he guided his community successfully through wars, uncertainties and problems. He is said to have predicted the coming of the white men, and his own death, and advised the community on how to deal with the white men.

Mango, Omukhurarwa by clan was said to have been a great grandson of Makutukutu, one of the earliest Bukusu leaders who led Babukusu in their early migrational movements. Mango's father was a village elder at Ebwayi. Mango later on moved to stay at a place called Mwiala, where his fame as a resolute and courageous Bukusu man began.

At Mwiala, Mango came face to face with a major problem that the people in the area had been facing helplessly. At this place, in a cave lived a ferocious serpent called "Endemu Yabebe" which had killed and eaten many people and their livestock. The serpent was feared and nobody dared think about eliminating it. Makila describes the serpent as

Monstrous, enormous in size and frighteningly vicious in appearance. It had deep set red eyes which flashed like a pair of flaming cinders and could see any object at night however tiny it was. Its jaws were overgrown with whiskers like a he-goat, and its throat was criss-crossed with red black and white stripes. Its head looked like a rough-hewn rock while its grotesque mouth concealed deadly venomous fangs. It moved about swiftly by crawling and half flying in the airlike an oversized raven. Wherever it moved, it caused a lot of commotion, hissing, bleating like a goat, rumbling like thunder and breaking down trees that stood in its way.⁸

This was the beast that one day struck and killed Mango's son, Malaba, upon which Mango vowed to kill it and avenge his son's death. To most people around, during Mango's vows, it was just another joke, for they knew no man can move near that serpent and live to tell the story.

Mango's neighbours who included some Elgon Maasais promised to give him one of their daughters as a wife if he managed to kill the serpent. In addition, they promised to circumcise him, if he successfully kills the serpent, for a man who kills such a monster cannot remain uncircumcised.

Although Babukusu had been practicing circumcision, their migrational movements had affected this rite so much so that they had reached a point where it was not a compulsory rite. Many people therefore, went on without going through the rite. Only leaders and military leaders were compelled to undergo the rite.

One day, Mango prepared his sword and went into the cave and hid in a certain corner and laid in wait for the serpent. The whole community waited and word swept through the entire community about Mango's assignment. When the serpent came, surveyed round without noticing Mango, it lay to rest, and with a lightening mighty blow with his sword, Mango cut off the head of the serpent. The serpent was dead.

When Mango finally came out of the cave with the good news, the whole area broke into celebrations. Mango became a hero, and every Bukusu wanted to see Mango himself to believe that he killed the serpent and came out alive.

Mango was given a second wife as promised, and then he requested that he be circumcised. Mango's circumcision and bravery rejuvenated the need for all Bukusu men to be circumcised. Once again a systematic circumcision sequence was introduced together with a format of creating age-sets. Mango was placed among the age-set of Bakolongolo, and was at the forefront of reawakening the need for all Bukusu men to under the circumcision rite.

According to Makila,

Politically, Mango's achievement inspired Babukusu, with fresh unity and a sense of purpose. Namely, that they now required a common approach to all their political issues. To attain a sense of

maturity one had to be circumcised like Mango. With regard to the military aspect, the Babukusu seem to have become much more militant, following Mango's inspiring feat at Mwiala.⁹

From Mango's initiation, circumcision among the Babukusu became a rite of showing in public ones bravery and courage. One had to go through the painful rite without showing any signs of cowardice or pain.

The age-set system, created by Mango, and the revitalized need for circumcision, has helped in building unity and solidarity among the Babukusu. Mango's heroic act at Mwiala propelled him to become a respected leader of the Babukusu people, and wherever he went, people streamed to see and hear him. His leadership and advises were religiously accepted and adhered to.

Mango, therefore, is among the few leaders that helped to give the Bukusu people a sense of pride in their cultural practices that have served to unite the community tying the people into a solidarity of communion.

Then there was, much later on Elijah Masinde Wa Nameme. Elijah Masinde is remembered for founding a religious sect in 1943, whose main purpose was a return to the pure Bukusu traditional beliefs and practices.

The sect, 'Dini ya Musambwa' (a religious sect of the ancestors) became a formidable force in urging the Bukusu to continue with the solidarity and brotherhood that had characterized the community. The main tenets of 'Dini ya Musambwa' were to urge the Bukusu people to worship their ancestors, stick to their traditions and shun western values which had started penetrating the Bukusu society.

Masinde managed to recruit into his sect a large number of the Bukusu people and some few from the neighbouring communities like the Sabaot, the Teso, the Nyala, and others. The sect was therefore felt in all the corners of the Bukusu community, and managed to convince a large section of the people about the value of traditional modes of life. By fastening the Bukusu to their ancestors and traditional beliefs and practices, Masinde managed to enhance a sense of unity not just among his followers but the entire Bukusu community. 'Dini ya Musambwa' eventually became a formidable force against colonialism in western Kenya, and thus won its many adherents in the region. It became one of the unifying force of the Bukusu struggle against colonialism.

Finally, was Lumbasi, who was a great man due to his cattle wealth. He was reported as having been the richest and most generous man in the community. In political circles he assisted in conflict resolution between and among the Bukusu clans and families. In addition, he was said to have been a brave warrior and war prophet, whose advice was essential before the Babukusu could engage in any war expeditions.

These were the eminent leaders in the Bukusu society who to-date are well known among the Babukusu. These were leaders whose words were revered and carried a lot of weight among the Bukusu. In this way, they helped a great deal in ensuring unity and harmony among the various Bukusu clans. The Bukusu society, therefore, saw in its heroes, a means through which unity of the society can be enhanced. Due to the respect, reverence and power they commanded, they were useful in this regard.

Besides this group of leaders, certain clans were known to have individuals with certain mystical

powers such as in rain-making, divination, circumcision, blacksmithery, etc.¹⁰

Such individuals enjoyed some power over other ordinary members of the society by virtue of the roles they played in the society. The possession of these powers by certain clans and not others ensured some form of interdependence that enhanced unity among different clans.

3.2 Law and Customs

Custom in certain respects can be seen as habit that is followed by the majority of members of any given community. It involves a rule or a norm, and has an obligatory character. This understanding makes custom more than habit or behaviour, but a judgement upon action or behaviour; a judgement that is general and impersonal in its terms.

According to Ginsberg, custom is a common creation and a result of several years of human interaction. It is due to some individual habits meeting other individual habits and leading to constant modification each by the other, and the eventual crystallization into a composite resultant.

What happens now is that opinions or judgements radiate from some individual centre, impinge on the opinions of others, clash with or reinforce them, modify or are modified by them, and eventually out of the clash of ideas and influences there emerges a more or less stable opinion or judgement which will henceforth act as an influence to mould the ideas of other men.¹¹

Essentially then, custom develops out of social interaction which, given man's nature, makes it necessary that certain obligations be put in place to constraint individual anti-societal behaviour.

In the case of traditional African societies, established customs were transmitted from generation to generation, on the understanding that what past generations found beneficial was ideal for subsequent generations. In this way, it was intended to save new generations from having to relearn by a costly process of trial and error what has already been learnt by past generations.

Ginsberg emphasizes the great power that customs can have on adherents in any society.

Thus Shakespeare speaks of "tyrant custom"; Montaigne calls it a "violent and treacherous schoolmistress"; according to Bacon it is "the principal magistrate of man's life", and Locke ascribes to it "greater power than nature."¹²

In traditional African communities, custom permeated every aspect of human life prescribing the minutest detail of conduct. Every member had, however, to ascribe to his or her customs. In the customary, in what has always been done, it was thought, there was safety, not just for the individual but the entire community. Customs were therefore revered and surrounded with an air of sanctity, and any violation was subject to both supernatural and societal punishment.

Hence, one of the main emphasis in the socialization process, is the need for the youths to revere their customs, and to avoid the unknown as they were likely to lead to problems.

The new and varied cannot be relied upon, cannot be calculated in advance, and is therefore full of terror.¹³

Customs are therefore essentially conservative, and are good channels of preserving past traditions and beliefs.

Law usually deals with externals, and can take no notice of inner motives. In traditional societies,

customs and law were, however, not radically different, and in any case, there were no well established laws as they are in modern societies.

The point, however, is that both customs and law express a society's judgement, and implies in their origin a conscious sense of right and wrong. They are an expression of the growing moral sense of a community, but as they were in traditional African societies, they were good vehicles of suppressing new ideas and ensuring a continuity of past traditions and ways of life.

Among the Babukusu, law and customs served to enhance family, clan and tribal unity. Social control was essentially customary which touched on even the minutest aspect of human life. The customs placed certain obligations and requirements on the individual right from the movement of birth and followed the individual to the world of the living dead. Customs of the Babukusu can be classified into the traditions, practices and beliefs that placed appropriate constraints and obligations to the individual in order to enhance solidarity and harmony in the community. They touched on how children were supposed to be reared, how they were required to relate with their elders, what was required of them in order to be completely accepted into their societies, and many other requirements and constraints. At certain ages they were required to go through their societal rites of passage such as initiation and marriage. Each of these rites had elaborate rules that had to be followed.

The adults and the elderly had their own constraints and obligations placed on them. This was even extended to the living dead who were obligated to those who are still a life.

In brief, customs were norms that touched on every member of the society and helped in ensuring

that self-interests were curtailed in favour of the common interest.

The law and customs in the Bukusu traditional society were handed down from generation to generation. Law and customs among the Babukusu was, in theory, unchangeable and no one dared to initiate change in this respect. Legislative powers were not in the hands of the living. Law and customs were the creation of the ancestors. This ensured that the living observed them without questioning their validity. Because of this, there was a strong resistance to breaking away from these laws and customs as this could invite punishment from the ancestral spirits.¹⁴

The ancestors were believed to play an important role in the socio-political organization of the Bukusu society. The Bukusu society was made up of both the living and the living dead. They both formed one community whose members were dependent on each other. Those who had died were still felt to be part and parcel of their families and society and any decision in the family and society at large had to have them in mind.

The ancestors were believed to exercise power over all the living members of their families and society. In the Bukusu society, they were seen as guardians of the living and the censors of their conduct. The rules of conduct and the customs were believed to have been enacted by these ancestors when they were still alive.

In recognition of their powers and benevolence over the living, the living members of the Bukusu society honoured them by conducting themselves in accordance with rules passed down to them and by frequent offerings to the ancestors.

On their part, the ancestors were concerned about the well-being of their family and society

members and also ensured that the moral and religious norms and values were enforced. The ancestors enjoyed supernatural power over the living. Their powers were beyond human challenge and this ensured total adherence to the society's laws and customs. When the ancestors inflicted harm on the living, it was simply to warn them against their waywardness. Anyone who failed to adhere to the societal mores was an offender not only against the ancestors but also the living members of his/her society.

The role of ancestors, in traditional Africa ensured strict adherence to the rules of conduct and harmony among members of any given society. The presence of ancestors, in fact, made it unnecessary to have the police in traditional Africa. There was no need for the police because the ancestors were in control and everywhere. Whenever one broke the rules of conduct, it was believed that punishment from the ancestors was sure to follow.

In the belief that although ancestors meant well for their people, they could instantly punish any injustice or any vicious crime. Babukusu performed all their religious and social obligations devoutly. The rule of the ancestors ensured that Babukusu followed the tribal mores and were dedicated to the unity of the tribe. The customs of the Bukusu traditional society had one aim, to ensure the harmonious existence of the members of the society. They served to guard against deviation from principles and values of communality.

3.3 The Use of Taboos

Another important form of social control in the Babukusu society was the use of taboos. According to Kayode, taboo is a Melanesian word with a religious and social interdict, meaning forbidding performance of an act or stating the wrongness or rightness of a way of life or of a

certain action. It is a restriction or ban founded on custom or social connection. Essentially the taboo systems is a ban or prohibition on touching, or eating, or speaking or seeing something or someone in certain conditions. The Bukusu, like many other African societies believed that violation of a taboo would invite supernatural punishment. Babukusu were surrounded with many taboos with each taboo spelling out the consequences of breaking or violating it.¹⁵

Kayode believes that taboos helped to preserve the awe-inspiring aspect of the faiths in African religions. It created fear in the minds of members of the community who would have treated religious and social injunctions with impunity. Taboos helped to strengthen the tenets of traditional African religions and, therefore, the social-political systems of African societies. From the moment of birth to death, a traditional African individual was beset by taboos which controlled his/her conduct. In fact, taboos played an important role in ensuring order and harmony among the people of a society.¹⁶

The Bukusu society was littered with taboos covering almost every aspect of human conduct in society. They ranged from social, economic, political to religious taboos which ensured that individuals follow the prescribed mores of the society. These taboos were backed by the supernatural beings and this ensured their efficacy.

Examples of some Bukusu taboos include the following:

1. When there is a funeral in the home, neighbourhood or village no one should go and work on his or her shamba. This ensured that whenever somebody lost someone, everybody in the area came to console him, sit with him, and assist him during the mourning period.

2. A man cannot wrestle with any person of his age-grade. This served to reduce conflicts among members of the same age-grade enhancing their solidarity and by extension the solidarity of their families.
3. When a person injures or causes another person to spill blood, the person, together with his/her victim(s) and their relatives have to slaughter a chicken and share together. This helped to reconcile individuals or families when they were involved in acts described in the taboo.
4. Meals provided at a funeral place should be shared by all funeral attendants. This enhanced sharing among the mourners and therefore closeness to each other.
5. A man or woman was supposed to keep some social distance from his or her mothers-in-law, or fathers-in-law, respectively. At no time are these two types of people allowed to get into physical contact with anything used by the other. This ensured a special kind of formal relationship amongst in-laws.

Ayisi argues that the concept of taboos presumes that the person has actual value or a sacred entity, which must never come into contact with certain objects, actions or persons. Any contact would produce a negative effect, depriving the individual of the qualities, which maintain his well-being. This then becomes a source of danger to the individual and even the whole society.

The individual in the Bukusu society could not just do whatever he/she wanted since he/she was beset by numerous taboos requiring him to follow a certain line of conduct and conforms to the social norms and values.

Witchcraft and sorcery, although usually seen as a social ill, can be successfully used to ensure adherence of certain individuals to the requirements of their communities.

Although Babukusu understand that death can occur naturally, this however was never readily accepted whenever people lost their loved ones. In cases of death, no better explanations were accepted than the pointer to witchcraft and sorcery. Death, so it was thought, could not just target a certain person without somebody being behind it. This somebody could either be a witch or a sorcerer.

Such people were usually accused of being driven by hatred, envy and greed whenever they were accused of causing the deaths of others. Conflicts or any social ill among family, clan or tribal members could easily trigger cases of witchcraft and sorcery.

Babukusu therefore were quite aware about the dangers of witchcraft and sorcery, and tried all the time and in their dealings to avoid anything that will attract the eye of a witch or a sorcerer.

They for example refrained from boasting about their health, wealth, or doing anything that deviates very noticeably from the accepted ordinary life of the people. People could not dare steal, kill or do any harm to a member of another family or clan for fear of reprisals from witches or sorcerers.

Despite its negative tendencies, witchcraft and sorcery helped curbing certain problems that could lead to disunity among the Babukusu. However, where certain individuals were suspected to have bewitched others causing them harm, cases of reprisals were usually evident. In such cases, it

required the intervention of elders to reunite the people.

It is said that among the Bukusu, people dared not become very wealthy, rise in social positions, or show unrivalled talents for fear of attracting witches and sorcerers. However, there were those who could dare to so, under the protection of other more powerful witches and sorcerers.

Babukusu therefore avoided being industrious, innovative, resourceful and creative for fear of witches. In this way, the belief in witchcraft and sorcery can be rightly said to have directly contributed to conservatism, inertia and lack of progress among the believers. Conservatism was the driving spirit of communalism. Any force that ensured conservatism and curbed free attempts to forbidden modes of life, helped in cementing the spirit of communalism. People continued to live as others lived, thus enhancing egalitarianism among the members of the community. In addition, the fear for witchcraft and sorcery, helped to avoid conflicts and other anti-social activities, since such things could easily trigger into cases of witchcraft and sorcery which most people wanted to avoid.

The beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery played some positive social roles in the Bukusu traditional society. They acted as forms of social control in discouraging unacceptable behaviours in the society. The fear of witchcraft and sorcery believed to be practised by neighbours, age-mates, or co-wives served as a warning to individuals to maintain the proper behaviour towards other members of society. In so far as witches and sorcerers were believed to send sickness on men in return for a breach of a role of right behaviour, we had a religious sanction to punish wrongdoers. It was therefore wise for one to fulfill his obligation to others lest they employ witchcraft or sorcery to get their rights.¹⁷

The problem with witchcraft and sorcery, however, is that it could also be easily used against even the innocent.

Related to witchcraft and sorcery, was the belief in curses. This was a belief that certain individuals, especially when they are your seniors and related to you, were able to exercise mystical influence over you just by altering a curse or pronouncing a blessing. Once a curse has been pronounced, the cursed was bound to suffer the ills that the curser would have pronounced.

A curser could usually call down all possible ills to befall the victim of his/her curse. Sickness, bad luck, accidents, blindness, sterility and other misfortunes were believed to follow and down upon the cursed.

The efficacy of curses was based on the principle of seniority and blood relatedness. One had to be an elder to victim of the curse for the curse to work. In addition, there must be some relationship like that between a father and his sons and daughters, or the mother and her sons and daughters. The extent of this relationship was limited to the members of an extended family.

Curses were a form of power that the elderly members of society could resort to punish the younger members who wronged them or deviated from the accepted norms of their families.

The fear of curses and the ever present possibility of their being pronounced against one, kept many young men and women adhere to their society's traditional beliefs and practices. It also gave the elderly, as indicated elsewhere in this thesis, to have firm control over the youths. This way they were kept to the tailored requirements of traditional communalism. An individual had to operate within the accepted social norms without any noticeable deviation. In the event of any deviation, the individual risked being cursed by his/her elders.

3.4 The Institution of Circumcision Age-Sets.

The greatest association of age-groupings among the Babukusu was the one associated with the circumcision ceremonies. Circumcision ceremonies among the Babukusu are done every even year. Circumcision provides the occasion for feasts on a tribal scale. Such common feasts serve to maintain the feeling of unity within the clans and the whole society at large, and among members of the same age-group.¹⁸ During Circumcision, the parents of each circumcision candidate were obliged to invite and give gifts of meat to their age mates. Relatives and neighbours were also invited and these ceremonies provided some of the most magnificent gatherings that enhanced interaction and communion.

There were eight (8) age-sets among the Babukusu each of which comprised a period of approximately six circumcision years. Each of these groups was given a distinct name.¹⁹

<u>Age group name</u>	<u>Period of circumcision</u>		
Bakolongolo	1900	-	1910
Bakikwameti	1912	-	1922
Bakananachi	1924	-	1934
Bakinyekeu	1936	-	1946
Banyange	1948	-	1958
Bamaina		1960	- 1970
Bachuma	1972	-	1982
Basawa		1984	- 1994
Bakolongolo	1996	-	2006

Before 1900, Babukusu had no organized age-sets. It was until Mango, revitalized circumcision

among the community that age-sets began to take shape. Members of each age group greet each other as "Bakoki" a term that expresses togetherness, friendliness and good will. The proper use of the word "Bakoki" is however restricted to persons who belong to one of the two consecutive circumcision years - usually referred to as "Chimbaga".²⁰

Persons, for example who were circumcised in the years 1900 and 1902 call each other "Bakoki". They had strong relationships towards each other and conducted themselves just like kinsmen. They had a special relationship towards each other and each other's children. This created a strong bond of relationship among 'Bakokis' who included their families as well. This relation brought many families into some form of relationship, which helped to built affection and, therefore, communalism.

The eldest circumcision age group at any one time was the one that society could turn to for guidance and leadership whenever there was need. The elders at whatever level of society were drawn from the earliest existing age grade at the level. These were seen as the people who could command authority and whose wisdom was valuable to the society.

3.5 Festivals and rituals

Festivals and Rites of passages are common to most human societies. Rituals are performed to cure illness, increase fertility, defeat enemies, change people's social status, remove impunity, reveal what lies a head. and appease the spirits.²¹

Among the Bukusu people had to be metaphysically and sociologically remade into new beings to fit into society. This remaking was a form of socialization which involved a great deal of the

supernatural powers and beings. When an individual was born, society had to tailor him into his society. This tailoring involved the metaphysical world, where a host of ancestors and supernatural powers were involved in the process of socialization. The individual was not just made to be accepted in his community, he had also to be accepted by his ancestors, and so they had to be involved and consulted whenever important rites of passage were undertaken. A close examination of such rites could reveal an elaborate involvement and consultation of the living dead. The remaking of the individual was therefore not just a social matter, it was also a religious issue. The rites of passage were held at every marked stage of an individual's life, and the most notable were at birth, circumcision, marriage and death.

The entry of a person into new social status among the Babukusu was marked by ritual ceremonies as a mark of his/her gradual elevation in status and influence in the society. At birth, puberty, marriage and death, an individual had to pass through some initiation rites ushering him/her into the new social status. The sacredness of some of these rites and the educational processes during these rites influenced the attitudes and behaviour of the concerned individuals.

One of the most distinct rituals among the Babukusu is the practice of circumcision. After circumcision, the initiates are put in a seclusion hut where they receive a lot of education on their society's values and what society expects from them. At the end of their seclusion a ceremony is again held to mark their entrance into adulthood.²²

During the rites and other feasts, clan members usually assemble more or less in full and this offered them an opportunity to know their kin and neighbours. Such events also offered clan or society members to remember their heroes and build unity among themselves. In fact,

circumcision ceremonies, were the most important social event that helped to forge unity among the Babukusu. The gatherings during these festivals and rituals were a testimony to the unity that Babukusu enjoyed among themselves.

The coming together of individuals from various clans during these festivals and rituals gave each of them a chance to know the other. This served to bring the gathering members into the epistemological realm of the others. This acquaintance enabled each member not only to know the other but also to understand their likings and dislikes. When people know each other well, there is a tendency for them to establish close links and harmony.

The gathering also enabled young men and women, together with their parents to know each other for future possible marriage arrangements. All these helped in fostering unity among the concerned clans in the Bukusu community.

3.6 The role of ancestors

The Babukusu, like many other traditional African societies, believed in the idea of immortality of man. Death was merely seen as a transition from the physically living to the living dead. When the Bukusu talk about their living dead, they usually have in mind another form of existence where people continued to live just like they did when they were physically alive. They were seen to continue to exist very much as they were, looking as they did and in brief, as a whole persons with body, and mind though invisible.

When a person dies, he/she simply moves over to join the company of the departed in the 'hereafter'. The dead was thought to possess all the qualities of the living, they could think, feel, and act like a living person. Among the Babukusu, the dead and the living were both members

of society and both had to be consulted wherever any decision about them and their society was to be made.

The idea of ancestors or living dead takes us to the concept of immortality. The word is used to refer the belief that life survives death. It points to the idea that a person is more than just a body.

A great number of philosophers have agreed that human beings are more than their bodies and this something else is what is referred to as the soul. It is therefore argued that a person is made up of the body (which is material) and the soul (which is immaterial).

The belief in immortality holds that the soul survives death and continues to exist when the body dies and disintegrates. This belief has always been held by a large majority of mankind, and as such the Babukusu case is not unique.

How this belief came to the mind of mankind remains a puzzle, but what is clear is that mankind has never existed without the belief in immortality. It has been suggested severally that this belief may be due to certain desires which death appears to frustrate. These may include, among others, the desire for a reunion with persons dearly loved but whom death has taken away. It could also be due to the desire for a fresh opportunity to grow in ability, knowledge and character or to have another go for the happiness and things missed.

Others may have come up with the belief in immortality to down play the harshness of death so that people can face it courageously, knowing very well that there is after all still life after death.

Death is inevitable and despite the scientific and technological advances there is still no escape from death by mankind. Death is a law common to all mankind. Everybody must therefore face

it. This verse of a poem says it all:

Down, down, down into darkness of the grave; Gently, they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind; Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave I knew; But I do not approve; And I am not resigned.²³

Mankind therefore feels helpless before a destiny that looks painful and yet inevitable. This helplessness and the inevitability of death for all, must be the main reason behind mankind's determination to think about life after death.

There is, however, no evidence in the history of mankind that beyond death there is life. By the mere use of reason, it seems untenable to think about the idea of immortality or living dead. It is difficult to accommodate this idea, particularly the issue of a soul surviving without or outside the body. The existence of the soul, must in one way or another, depend on the presence of a functionary nervous system, and as such, it is not logical to think of its survival outside the body.

There must have been a reason for the location of the soul in the body; there must be some form of dependence of one or the other.

When we see human beings (the bodies) we have no doubt that they have souls, particularly for those of us who subscribe to the idea of dualism. The body appears to be necessary for the existence of the soul.

Babukusu, like many other communities entertained the belief in life after death. After death, so they believed, the dead acquires a new life among the abode of the living dead. The most respected and elderly members of the society assumed the role of ancestors after death. They continued to live and control the society of the living.

The ancestors were the most powerful spiritual forces in the Bukusu society. They occupied the ontological position between God and men. They wielded unlimited power over the living. Their power was immeasurably magnified and made sacred.

The living honoured them through sacrifices and offerings and by adhering to their society's beliefs and practices. The living were expected to maintain close ties with the ancestors, to adhere to their guidance and to meet their wants. The well being of the living was in the hands of the ancestors. To break ties with the living was like threatening the living community with destruction.

The belief in ancestors and their powers made the Bukusu people adhere to the traditions and practices of their societies. Among the Bukusu, the existence of the ancestors and their power was not in doubt. Nobody would dare challenge this belief, for, it was believed to be real to every member of this society.²⁴

Each clan had its own ancestors although there were other ancestors that commanded respect from the whole society. Each clan and family believed that everything, from health and fertility to taking of right decisions, was of interest to their ancestors.

In short, Babukusu clans were united among other things, in the belief of ancestral power over them. The ancestors, therefore, played a key role in the socio-political organization of the Babukusu. They were consulted and involved in every decision that affected the society. Nobody could dare ignore them. The belief in ancestors and their role in the society was real and great.

This belief contributed greatly to the conservative way of life observed among the Babukusu.

The ideal way of life, was the way these ancestors lived.

It should be pointed out that not any dead person could become an ancestor. Old age, wisdom, physical and moral integrity, passage through life without deviating from its normal course, and communal identification with one's society, constituted the attributes of becoming an ancestor. Others, who did not qualify as ancestors, were just as the living dead who did not wield much power over the living.

Among the Babukusu, the societal laws and rules of conduct were believed to have been enacted by the ancestors when they were alive. How far we can go to trace the real ancestors who initiated such ways of conduct may be a futile exercise. The fact, however, is that successive generations of ancestors, basing their experiences in their struggle to survive in their respective environments, began to adopt certain ways that appeared beneficial and shun others that appeared harmful. These experiences gradually were accepted the customs and traditions of the society by later generations. Gradually, also, these, customs and traditions assumed sacred status due to the reverence that successive generations had towards their generations had towards their ancestors. Eventually there was the belief that what the ancestors had bequeathed on their ancestors had to be followed strictly to the letter. The descendants had therefore a responsibility to ensure that the demands of their ancestors are made. The ancestors' justice was directed to enforcing the moral and religious norms and values on which the social order rested. The ancestors constituted the basic categories of moral and legal thought among the Babukusu.

Anybody who failed to abide by the tribal mores was seen as an offender not only against the living members of the society, but the entire community composed of both the living and the dead.

The ancestors had established the norms and rules of conduct for a good life, which they expected everyone to follow without dissent.

In the belief that the ancestors can bless, can assist in times of difficulties, can punish injustice or any vicious crime, Babukusu adhered religiously to the established norms and rules of conduct.

Given the community's theoretical framework, the reality of ancestors was not in doubt. It was as real as, for example, the existence of electricity and magnetism. Though physically beyond their vision, their power was a life among the people. This ensured a high level of order discipline and harmony among the Babukusu. The sustenance of communalism among the Bukusu owed much to this mythical reality and thought systems.

3.7 Other forms of social values

The cultivation of good manners among the youths was greatly encouraged among the Bukusu society. Every parent and clan took greater pains to bring up children in accordance with the accepted laws of good breeding and politeness.

Once a child is born in this society, there were elaborate rites of passage which the child goes through throughout his/her life in the society. During most of these rites of passage, a person was taught many things he/she is supposed to know and practice at every stage he/she was being inducted into by the rite of passage. The person learned that natural impulses had to be tamed in the interest of community and was introduced to an elaborate system of morality to help him/her towards this end. Such an individual learned that his activities should be tailored to conform to the conscience, traditions and customs of the corporate group. Society emphasized collectivity and conformity among its people and this helped to build a strong sense of solidarity among the Babukusu.

The individual was also taught to shun what lay in the future, the new and the unknown. He/she had to live in accordance with the already established or known ways. Individuals were fastened onto the customary ways of life and were made to know that the ideal way of life lay not in the future but in the past. The belief in ancestors ensured that conformity and preservation of the established customs and traditions were guarded. They expected the living to live in strict accordance with these traditions and customs without any deviation. The standards and wisdom of the ancestors represented the glorious past, which had to be adhered to.

The need to relive the past was based on the philosophical understanding that the already established norms, initiated by ancestors, were put in place for the good not only for themselves but also for their descendants. They were the best-trying ways established by the wisdom of those who understood the past better than current generations. Current generations, who were required to live by already established ways, had therefore to shun new ways and adhere to those established by the wise, the ancestors. In a society where knowledge or wisdom was equated to one's understanding of the past ways, one should be able to understand the important role of the past in the present.

In addition, taboos and curses whose efficacy depended on supernatural forces were used in guiding and directing individuals to adhere to traditional norms and values. Rules of conduct, however, hard, were therefore, unquestioningly followed.

The purpose of education was to perpetuate but not change the cultural heritage of the clan or tribe. It was aimed at disciplining the child, moulding his/her character as well as inculcating in

him/her desirable moral qualities such as sociability, solidarity, courage honesty, endurance, a sense of responsibility and ethics, humility as well as obedience.²⁵

According to Occitti, an entire community or class of pre-colonial period considered itself and was considered by others to be responsible for bringing up children.²⁶

Among the Babukusu, there were certain established rules of relationships and conduct, which served to enhance brotherhood and solidarity. A greeting, which involves shaking of hands, was an important ceremony and sign of peace, goodwill, togetherness and respect. In fact, among the Babukusu, if one refused to greet another wherever they meet, it could become an important issue, which the person concerned should explain. The ceremony of greetings through the shaking of hands was a fundamental social value, which enhanced unity and togetherness among the Babukusu. The shaking of hands was a show of peace and harmony not only between the people involved but also their families and relatives.

Among the Babukusu, if anybody slaughtered an animal, he was obliged to share some of the meat with his neighbours or any passers by who could also come by. And if a person is given anything valuable, good Bukusu manners required that the recipient should receive it with both hands, regardless of its size as a show of gratitude.

If a Bukusu gave anybody food or drink, custom demanded that he/she should eat or drink a little of it in the presence of the recipient before handing it over to the recipient - be it a stranger or neighbour. This served to reduce instances of and claims of poisoning, witchcraft and sorcery - with their divisive consequences to the community.

Another important value in the social organization of the Bukusu was the mutual neighbourhood relationship which showed a lot of brotherhood, generosity and considerateness among neighbours. Whenever one lacked food or even fire in his/her house he/she relied upon the neighbours who were more than willing to assist. When one had work which required many hands such as daubing of a house, neighbours helped for no payment. In brief, neighbours were there for each other and none of them could suffer while others were watching. They helped each other in almost anything that could require outside assistance. In the evenings, it was common for neighbours to gather in one homestead to relax and talk about issues of all types that concern them.

This neighbourhood relationship was frequently flavoured with evening gatherings where several families would come together for an evening chat before returning to their houses to sleep. Common feasts and ceremonies also helped to strengthen this mutual relationship.

The feeling of solidarity and oneness among the Babukusu was also manifested in the classificatory use of kinship terms.¹⁷ The terms for father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, and others that related to in-law relationships referred not just to the real physical relatives designated by these various terms but to all members of the clan and society who, because of their sex, age and generation correspond to the physical relations to whom the respective terms primarily apply.²⁸

Babukusu believed that there was a string of consanguinity, a web of relatedness that made them one family. There was therefore, among them no stranger, no non-relative.

To enhance this relatedness members of society had to look at each other in the above classificatory usage of kinship terms.

In addition to this, the strong sense of solidarity, brotherhood and reciprocity among the members of the society made them appear like one large family. Everybody was the keeper of the other, one had to relate with the other as per the requirement of the classificatory use of the kinship terms.

A Bukusu does not, for example, restrict the title 'Father' to his/her male parent but extends its application to his father's brothers and all his age mates. Your father's age mate was to be referred to as 'father' as well. One's mother's sisters and age mates had to be referred to as 'mothers' as well. The idea of stepbrothers or stepsisters and cousins are foreign to a traditional Bukusu society, as these people were seen as full brothers or sisters. These individuals, although not your actual physical relatives, relate to you as if they were actual relatives. There was therefore, no need of using terms that could show division or disrespect to them.

Towards every person whom one addresses by the same kinship term, one displays in principle, the same legal, economic, ritual and social behaviour. This feature was very evident among the Bukusu society. It ensured that children, wherever they were, they were under the supervisory "eyes" of their 'fathers' 'mothers', 'brothers' or 'sisters'. A child could be disciplined by any of these people without eliciting any complaints from its real parents. Children belonged to the clan and the society and all its members had the responsibility of bringing them up into responsible members of the society. This relationship also ensured that a child could not become socially or

economically destitute in the absence of their real parents.

This nature of relationship attests to the strong sense of brotherhood and the positions of individuals in relation to each other. Babukusu were all related and were like one family.

Another important value manifested by the Bukusu was hospitality. They had a strong and unlimited mutual responsibility, which was extended to foreigners or strangers. The Bukusu adopted a philosophy of the "Thigh of the Elephant" symbolizing the warmth and magnanimity of Babukusu. The Bukusu, because of their high level of hospitality have assimilated many outsiders who have now become part of the community.²⁹ The sense of hospitality and generosity to their fellow tribesmen and outsiders helped to build unity and interdependence among them.

The Bukusu's power to assimilate non-Bukus into their community was said to have been formidable. What was initially a small community expanded quickly absorbing into their fold a number of strangers they encountered. Their assimilation was so effective that soon those who were assimilated became complete Bukusu in all ways. This effectiveness, according to Wagner, made Chief Mumia of the neighbouring Wanga sub-tribe to remark that the 'Bukusu are like the thighs of the elephants'. What Mumia had in mind is that the Bukusu are a strong and assertive community which swallows any strangers who mixes with them. The 'thighs of the elephants' are not just strong, they are also warm; these are the characteristics that were extended to the Bukusu people due to their strong sense of solidarity and warmth towards non-Bukus. Genuine non-Bukus were treated cordially.

The Bukusu community therefore is not a pure community and is strictly speaking a composition

of members from other neighbouring communities.

The philosophy of “the thighs of the elephants” also symbolized, as Makila puts it, the common destiny and solidarity of the Babukusu based on the main pure Bukusu clan clusters. Each of these clan-clusters are inter-related in one way or another. There was a string of consanguinity leading to a kind of social web that bound members together.

This form of togetherness or brotherhood was charming to all those who came across the Bukusu in their migrational trends. The willingness of the Bukusu to assimilate such people made it easy for them to incorporate into their fold members from neighbouring communities. Why this was too easy for the Bukusu is usually attributed to their traditions, practices and beliefs that treated foreigners, unless they are clearly up to no good, as signs of good, as signs of good health for the community.

It was also believed that such incorporated members were strategically important to the community whenever it was involved in a conflict with their communities of origin. Such members could become valuable for gathering information for their adopted community, the Bukusu. The readiness to assimilate was therefore also for security purposes.

Gradually, however, such people became completely swallowed by the Bukusu, becoming part and parcel of them. The “thighs of the elephants” was therefore a philosophy that enhanced the community’s power to assimilate strangers, and more importantly, to build a strong sense of brotherhood among the Babukusu.

This was an elaborate social organization that helped in cementing communality and reciprocity among the Bukusu people. It also, together with other agents such as taboos, curses rites of passage, etc helped to inculcate moral values into the people and also serve as sanctions to ensure that moral agents pursued right things and avoided what is wrong. The aim was to produce moral beings whose character would help build structures and systems that were in conformity with the traditions and practices of both the living and ancestors of the society.

Solidarity among the Babukusu was also extended to economic activities. The notion of property was defined in terms of the family, community or the village and not in terms of the individuals. Farm fields and pastureland were often common property and work, in most cases was often collective and not paid for.

In the Magical-religious field, only certain clans possessed these powers such as rainmaking, divination, circumcision and blacksmithery. This ensured interdependence among the Bukusu clans in order for these powers to benefit all the society.

These powers were largely believed to be inherited, and among members of certain clans. Once an individual is possessed by any of these powers, one had no choice but practice the vocation. A person possessed with these powers would, for example suffer from certain strange illnesses, or odd dreams.

In such cases, such individuals are then inducted into their respective vocation through elaborate rites. Individuals from certain clans and who possessed these powers performed their duties throughout the Bukusu community, and in some cases would ask for a small token of

appreciation. Bukusu clans such as Bameme, Balunda, Babuya, Baliuli, Bakimweyi and Bamuki were believed to possess many of the above powers. Other clans were not fortunate enough to have these powers. However, they were not without importance to the above clans. There were clans reputed to have powerful warriors, political leaders, negotiators and wealth individuals.

This therefore produced a kind of a web of interdependence that enabled the Bukusu clans to rely on each binding into a strong sense of solidarity and brotherhood.

Under modern circumstances it would be difficult to believe that only certain clans or communities can produce individuals talented in certain fields like leadership or blacksmithery. In traditional societies, it would have been probably due to the fact that the first individuals to be recognized in these vocations may have come from certain clans, which were then considered to have the powers in the vocation by successive generations. These individuals may have encouraged their fellow clansmen and women to join their fields.

Be it as it may, this arrangements produced a form of division of labour that bound one clan to the other, in order to have their needs fully met.

These values and other forms of social organization helped to condition the people's behaviour towards solidarity. The social patterns adopted by the society guided the innate, broadly appetitive and acquisitive interests of the youths and the old into conformity with the norms and traditions of the society.

The above were the institutions, practices and beliefs that nurtured and ensured harmony and

brotherhood among the Babukusu. The Bukusu socio-political organization appears to have been structured to ensure that the people live in conformity with the demands of the already established traditions and practices. The above structures were pillars of communality among the Babukusu, and in general, among many other traditional societies in Africa.

These were the established social order, which the people sought out and found to be the most suited to advance their cause as a community. It was the people's will, which, to a large extent, was determined by the mythical reality and thought of the time. Whatever the case, it was what the Bukusu, through their elders, thought to be the best form of organization, and one that enhanced harmony, brotherhood and a sense of community among them.

They represented the people's intention to achieve a certain end which in turn would enable them attain the ultimate end of all human endeavours.

The Bukusu Community put in place certain Social-Political Institutions and values that were conducive to communalism in its traditional settings. Measures such as living in walled villages, the tying of leadership criteria to seniority in age, the use of respected leaders and counselors, elaborate customs, use of taboos and others helped to ensure a strong sense of solidarity among the Babukusu. Besides ensuring solidarity the above features served the Community in its pursuance of other ends but the ultimate aim was solidarity.

The above measures should be viewed as a community's deliberate attempts at ensuring a most conducive and acceptable form of existence. These measures should be treated as the society's means carefully crafted to achieve desired ends which in turn serve as means to the ultimate human purpose. These were the means that were seen to be appropriate at the time, given the

prevailing circumstances.

It is important to note that these means and even subsequent ends are subject to change but the rate at which this change was taking place in most traditional African societies was, as we shall see, slow and frowned upon.

The Bukusu culture was generally not in favour of rapid change but was more conducive for a static form of societal organization. This was made possible by a number of underlying tenets, which are covered, in the next chapter.

What we have looked at were the means to communalism, which were a deliberate endeavour by the community to attain this nature of social organization. This social organization however, had to be sustained. Towards this end, the Bukusu society was not devoid of further means of ensuring that society sustains this mode of organization with least internal disruptions.

In the next chapter, we examine these further means that were responsible for the sustenance, of the communal spirit among the Africans in their traditional setting, but this time with a view of unveiling the undermining principles of the spirit.

3.7 NOTES

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4.0 CHAPTER FOUR

THE SUSTENANCE OF THE COMMUNAL SPIRIT

In this chapter, we endeavour to provide an explanation about the sustenance of the communal spirit among the traditional African people. What were the forces, both internal and external that may have helped in the sustenance of communalism in Africa? Things do not just happen; they usually have certain underlying philosophical basis that explain their nature and existence.

In this study, although we limit our endeavour to the Bukusu traditional society, we begin by examining these underlying philosophies by examining what appears to be the evident Africans' orientation towards the past.

4.1 The past-ward looking philosophy

According to Zahan, the Africans were oriented towards those who no longer belong to the world of the living, while they turned their back on what is to come in future. Due to this orientation, the Africans found the justification and meaning of their actions not in the future but in the past.

The ideal for a traditional African lay not in the future but in the past. The ideal involved the indefinite repetition of the normative past. For Zahan, the reasoning of the African is therefore regressive. The present for them must be lived exactly the way the past was lived. The present must be lived in line with the already established traditions of the people.¹

Zahan is not right to content that Africans turned their back to the future and concentrated on the past. The fact is that the past or the already established norms were seen as ideal and the basis on which the present and future should be based. The Africans did not turn their back to the

future but only looked pastward to chart out a more certain future. The important point here is the seemingly evident tendency among the Africans in traditional societies to look pastward and run their societies on their ancestral's established traditions.

Tradition was the collective experience of the community. It consisted of the totality of all that successive generations had accumulated since the dawn of time, both in spiritual and practical life. It was the sum total of the wisdom held by a society at a given moment of its existence. Tradition, in the sense in which it was seen by Africans represented the norms, beliefs and practices created by ancestors for the good of their descendants. This was the ideal, which all future descendants had to live by. This ideal, established by the ancestors when they were still alive, was dominantly communal with a strong sense of brotherhood and solidarity.

According to Mbiti, in traditional Africa, life was a two-dimensional phenomenon, with a long past, a present and virtually no future.² Traditional African concept of time was 'backward' oriented rather than being 'forward' oriented; and people set their minds on the past rather than future. Mbiti goes further to argue that in traditional African thought, there is no concept of history moving 'forward' towards a future climax. The African thought systems is centred on the thought and activities of the past, towards which the present moves. People look towards the past, as the foundation on which the present rests and by which it is explainable or should be understood. The past was the 'golden age' which the present should emulate.³

Although Mbiti may not have been right in denying the African the concept of the future, the point here is that traditional African communities 'lived towards the past'. The present and even future had to find justification in the past. The community's ideal lay in the past, and everybody had to

be inclined towards the past. This does not mean that they did not think about the future. In fact, this orientation towards the past was a planning for a more certain future.⁴

In traditional African thought, there is no concept of history moving 'forward' towards a future climax, or towards an end of the world. Since the future does not exist beyond a few months, the future cannot be expected to usher in a golden age, or anarchically different state of affairs from what is in the *sasa* and the *zamani*... so Africa peoples have no belief in progress; the idea that the development of human activities and achievements move from a low to a higher degree. The people neither plan for the distant future nor 'build castles in the air'. The centre of gravity for human thought and activities is the *zamani* period, towards which the *sasa* moves⁵.

Mbiti thinks that the golden age for the Africans lay in the past or *zamani* as he calls it. The people expect the present and the future to be like the past. The future element in the African conception of time is almost non-existent. He argues that Africans hardly conceive of a future beyond two to three years. This, according to Mbiti, is unique compared to the west, where time moves from the past to the future. These findings based on research done among the Kamba and Kikuyu made Mbiti to opine that Africans do not, therefore, plan for the future.

Mbiti may have been wrong to deny the Africans the concept of the future based on his findings that they do not have, in their local languages, the words for future. Many critics of Mbiti have pointed out the fact that a people may lack such words but this does not mean that they have no concept of the future.

In fact, traditional African communities did have the concept of the future and planned for it. Through their activities and practices one could discern elaborate planning and preparations for the future.

Among the Bukusu community, one would easily notice that, like the Kamba and the Kikuyu, the community had, and still does not have, a clear and straightforward word for the future. This, however, does not mean that the community never planned for its future. In fact, among the Babukusu the activities of prophets and diviners were geared at understanding and preparing for the future challenges. The rites of passage particularly at birth, initiation and marriage were meant to prepare the individuals concerned for future life in his/her community. In actual fact, the whole process of socialization was aimed at preparing the society's members for the future.

The question, however, that needs to be asked here is about the type of future that was being prepared for. Was society preparing for a future that was to be radically different from the past?

On the contrary, the Bukusu society wanted its future to be as similar as possible to the past. Things had to remain and be done the way they were done in the past. The future was to be like the past. It could, therefore, be argued that the future that the Babukusu were preparing and planning for was to be as similar as it was possible to the past. The preparation and planning were meant to ensure this similarity.

Thinking almost in a similar line is Robin Horton, who argues that traditional African cultures had no developed awareness of alternatives to the established system of theoretical tenets. The lack of this awareness makes for an absolute acceptance of the established theoretical tenets and removes any possibility of questioning them. The believer, therefore, is compelled to remain faithful to the established tenets, as there is no other recourse for such a person. Established tenets therefore, remain unchallenged and are religiously followed by the people. These are tenets thought to have been established by the forefathers in the golden ages, and no present generation

can dare challenge it. In traditional African communities, there were, therefore, many activities aimed at reliving the past.

Advancing time, with its inevitable element of non-repetitive change, is the vehicle par excellence of the new and the strange. Hence, its effects must be annulled at all costs⁶.

Traditional African societies therefore had in place elaborate activities and practices to ensure that their present and future are as much as possible lived as the past was lived.

The element of Mbiti's contention that the 'Zamani' served as the ideal, a golden age by which the present and future ages should live is largely true. Mbiti was only wrong when he denied the Africans a concept of the future. The idea of the future is largely silent, not because the Africans do not think and plan for it, but because much of the efforts were aimed at making it similar as far as possible to the golden past. The future was full of uncertainties and the Africans thought that the more similar it looked like the past, the better for their societies.

It is for this reason that most traditional African societies were very much concerned with the conduct of the individual members of the society. Individuals had to live by following the modes of existence already established by their ancestors. The welfare of the whole society required that all its individuals conform to the established norms and standards of existence handed down to them by their ancestors without deviation. The society, therefore took the responsibility of molding an individual right from childhood into conformity with the traditions and values of his/her society.

Even under these circumstances, whenever there was compelling need for change, it was upon

the elders in “consultation” with the ancestors to initiate and direct the change. Occasionally also, there could arise certain radical “Socrates” or “Copernicus” who could challenge a few cultural beliefs and practices. Initial reactions to such challenges were usually very punitive, although some packed some supernatural powers would convince the community to change and adopt new values, whenever it was evidently shown that there was a need for change. Change could easily be accepted if it came from the society’s reknown leaders. Otherwise, the Bukusu society was generally conservative.

In the Bukusu traditional society, the rites of passages which individuals went through and the many other social activities were meant to fully integrate an individual into the society. The individuals were subjected to a process of education battered with religious beliefs which tied up every aspect of an individual’s life with the society’s traditions. Critical questioning of traditions were forestalled by attributing their origin to the remote and powerful ancestors and by endowing them with sacredness. A youth, therefore, entered into adulthood decisively tailored into line with the society’s traditions. Traditions were made to appear as a matter of life and death for both the individual and society.

A Bukusu was taught to revere his/her traditions and resent or shy away from any change or unfamiliar things. As McVeigh puts it, the ancestors have established the norms for the good of life and to serve as the protectors of tribal morality. Where changes were necessary, the ancestors would make their will known through their representatives among the living. It is not the duty of living members of society to alter the established practices of the community. Anyone who dared do it would be met with vindictive supernatural forces. Contraventions of the ancestral norms were simply not thought of. Wherever it occurred, it was believed that, it was met with

automatic retribution from the ancestral forces.⁷

The ancestors, therefore, weighed heavily over the living. They jealously guarded the preservation of the old traditions. Their standards and ways of living had to be adopted to the letter by the living members of their communities. The power of the ancestors to rain down misfortune on the living was the major reason for the conservative nature of their societies. No one would want to be subjected to supernatural punishment by vengeful and angry ancestors.

Traditional Africans lived in constant fear of the contingent ills of life, sickness, famine, starvation and accident. The struggle for life was severe and harsh, so much so that conservatism became a necessary impulse for the survival of society. The unfamiliar was revered and avoided while the usual and habitual on the other hand was to be zealously adhered to. What was once done was done for all time; as things were in those days of long ago, so they should remain being so today. A man had to do as his ancestors did, speak as they spoke and ensure that everything is as it was. Things remain, they don't pass away, they don't change. As parents found them, so their children should find them; and leave them as they found them, uninterrupted.⁸

The past, bequeathed to the living by their ancestors, brought them blessings, plentiful harvest, kept off sickness and calamities. To stray from the past ways, was like to call for the destruction of oneself and society. Any tendency to burst out of the bounds of conservatism would be met by the ire of the public opinion and the ancestral spirits. Tradition was not just sanctioned by the ancestral spirits but also by public approval and disapproval, by the balanced advantages inherent in reciprocal relationships, physical punishment, use of curses and witchcraft directed at the social deviants.

Survival in traditional African communities was made dependant on the past ways. It was the only known way of preserving peace and comfort and prosperity for the living in life and in the spiritual world. The new and strange, in so far as they fail to fit into the established system of classification and theory, were seen as intimations of chaos to be avoided.

Traditional African societies had put in place rigid classificational and thought systems. Anything new could not fit in these systems and had to be discarded and avoided. These systems provided no alternatives to the established traditions.

The absence of any awareness of alternatives among the people cemented the absolute acceptance of the established traditions and removed any possibility of questioning them. In this circumstances, the established traditions invests the beliefs with compelling force. Where the established traditions have absolute and exclusive validity for those who hold them, any challenge to them is a threat of chaos, of the cosmic abyss, and therefore evokes intense anxiety. People were not given the latitude to think freely and inquire into new and untried things. Progress and ventures into new areas were impeded by the over meaning prestige of the old and tried ways, and the uncertainty of the new and untried ways.⁹

To secure this desired goal, the Bukusu traditional society resorted to the employment of very elaborate and convincing usage of rites of passage, offerings and sacrifices, and other religious activities to bind very firmly the fetters of traditions. The elders, diviners, medicine men, rainmakers and other specially gifted individuals played key roles in ensuring that people were demonstrably conditioned towards the past.

The use of taboos, curses and witchcraft also helped in cementing conservatism among the people. In fact, among the Bukusu people, in nearly every case of taboo reaction, the events and actions involved were the ones that seriously defied the established traditions of the people. A taboo system therefore helped in upholding established traditions by making any deviance of established traditions liable to supernatural punishment. People in this traditional society would not dare to venture into new paths or discoveries for fear of being condemned by their elders or even being bewitched in some cases. Curses were used often by parents against their deviant and disobedient sons and daughters. The working of the mystic power through the taboo system, curses and witchcraft was at the root of the Bukusu conservatism.

Having seen the above state of affairs, we would like to argue that it is the above strong urge for conservatism - the past-ward philosophy that was responsible for the strong sense of communalism among the Bukusu people. Communalism in the Bukusu traditional society, could have been a historical epoch like it was in many other societies in the world. In many African societies, however, this historical epoch was institutionalized and lived for a longer period than it was done in other non-African societies. This epoch became part and parcel of the African traditional societies and due to their strong urge for conservatism, they hanged onto it until the colonial period. Although communalism was meant to be just a phase in the historical development of human societies, traditional African societies must have found it a very appropriate way of life which made them to put measures in place to retain it as an African way of life. The orientation towards and the glorification of the past ensured that communalism remained a way of life for a long time. It was a historical phase which African societies were not willing to let go and its passing away was therefore delayed until colonialism stepped in. The

traditional Bukusu society, therefore, fastened itself irretrievably to communalism and for a long time this inertia prevailed against the entry of any other historical phase. The environment could have been of a nature that made for change called insistently for adjustment, but the above orientation was very powerful to be defied.

This phenomenon must have grown out of the hostile environment in which the Bukusu people like other African peoples, lived. Africa was fraught with all kinds of dangers and enemies both from within and without. There were many marauding wild animals, floods, earthquakes, intertribal wars, diseases and generally a wild and hostile environment which gradually may have necessitated the need for collectivity, solidarity and togetherness. This solidarity gradually became part of the African social structure and took some religious dimensions. Successive generations attributed this structure to the ancestors and as such everybody had to follow it. Communalism became an important element of the African social structure and it was reflected almost in all aspects of social life.

Traditional Africa therefore, lived through this phase for a long time, institutionalized and perfected it. It was adopted into every aspect of social life, making it a major influencing factor in all social activities - economic, social, political and religious. This is what made traditional African communalism unique as compared to its nature in other societies.

4.2 The use of mystic power

According to Tempels, there is recognition of an extraordinary supernatural force in many African societies. There was recognition of a hierarchy of force or power. In the minds of the Bantu, according to Tempels, all beings in the universe possess this power which he calls the 'vital force'.

This vital force existed in these beings in a certain hierarchical order. At the helm of this hierarchy was the vital force possessed by God. This was the overall vital force, which had control over all other forces. In fact, the other lower forces derived their being from this force.¹⁰

After God, came the tribal and clan ancestors who were the founders of the tribal or clan groups. These and other ancestors constituted the most important link of the living to God. Below the ancestors was the other living dead whose vital force was more powerful than that of the living.

The living followed below the dead of their societies. Among the living, the eldest members of society and the gifted individuals such as diviners, rainmakers and medicine men were at the helm. Below them were the other ordinary members of society whose vital force's strength was determined by age. Children had the lowest vital force among the living members of society.

After the living human beings, came the other creatures of nature, the animals, vegetables and non-living things. According to Tempels, even among this category there was a hierarchy based on the vital power. The animals were at the helm, just below the human beings, followed by the plants and then finally the non-living things at the bottom of the ladder.¹¹

Tempels occupies an important position in the debate on African philosophy, for he was the first to attribute 'philosophy' to the Africans. According to him, Bantu have a philosophy although they themselves are incapable of articulating it. The focus of this philosophy he attributes to the Bantu is an ontology in which being is conceived as 'vital force'. He looks at the Bantu world as an interrelation of forces within the realm of existence. This interrelation of forces, as explained earlier, is hierarchical running down from God, man (including the ancestral), to the

animals and the inanimate world.

According to Tempels, Bantu ontology is essentially a theory of forces, and their ways of life is aimed at maintaining the right level of the 'vital force' in all the beings. This power, Tempels wrote, can either increase or diminish due to many causes within society. The maintenance of the right hierarchy of the 'vital force' is essential for social order and harmony.

Tempels' work has received a lot of criticism, especially with regard to the aim of his work. It has been argued that Tempels' aim in his book was to arrive at an understanding of the workings of the Bantu mind in order to facilitate the integration of Christian principles within its scheme of values. It has been said to be part of the design to conquer the African spiritually.

Among the Bukusu people, one could notice the fact that the ancestors possessed more powers, followed by the elders, the specially gifted individuals, then the ordinary people and children at the bottom. Non-human beings came below the human beings but one could notice that certain plants, water sources or physical features enjoyed a lot of respect and reverence from human beings mostly due to the beliefs surrounding them. Such beliefs bestowed upon them some supernatural powers that gave a higher hierarchy in the society.

Tempels' discovery and assertion about some mysterious force among the Bantu is largely true. Despite his generations, one could notice such a force in operation among the traditional Bukusu community. The society's reverence of the ancestors and the elders, simply help to cement the belief in the existence of such a force.

Welbourn argues that there was certainly in many African societies, a hierarchy of power.

The creator God (if there is a belief in him) is its source, as he is the source of all things. But it is found, in descending order, in lesser spirits, in ancestral ghosts, in chiefs, in witches and sorcerers, in ordinary men, but also in animals, plants and inanimate things. A man who killed his clan totem automatically died. If a pregnant woman laughed at a lame person, her child would be born lame. If a sheep or a goat or a dog got onto the roof of a house, the inhabitants would leave it at once, saying it was unlucky to live there.¹²

Welbourn's arguments about the consequences of certain actions like killing a clan totem or laughing at a lame person may not meet the test of reason in modern thought systems. In traditional societies, however, it was seen as real, and the force or power, whether it actually existed or not, is not the point here. The thing is that people believed in it and knew that it was in operation.

Welbourn adds that humanity has three ways of looking at the universe, although he admits that other ways may be possible. The first case is that of materialism in which phenomena is seen as matter organized in less or more complicated forms, but because it is matter, it is subject to control by man.

The second is where phenomena is seen as an expression of a mysterious force which human beings try on different ways to control for their own advantage but to which they are ultimately subject. Lastly, is the case where a phenomenon is divided into the natural and supernatural. The former is subject to human beings' control while the latter is wholly mysterious.

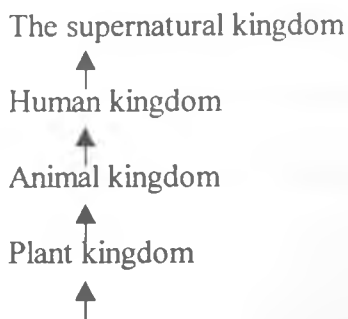
It would appear that traditional African societies viewed phenomena as being both natural and supernatural. However, the natural phenomenon was seen as entirely dependent on the

supernatural phenomena. The well functioning of the natural world or the malfunctioning of the same was seen to be the work of the supernatural and mysterious force. This force penetrated the natural beings in varying degrees, and the more it existed in a natural being, the more power the being had over the other natural beings.

In Welbourn's analysis, it was evident that traditional communities did operate under the belief in a certain mysterious force whose role in the lives of the believers was great. And because it was believed to exist more in the elders and ancestors, it gave them more power to exert control over the more youthful members of society, thereby keeping them away from the forbidden paths¹³.

Parrinder recognizes this mysterious power as having been central in traditional African beliefs. He asserts that in these societies, it was believed that all beings had power and the most powerful beings had the greatest amount of this power. He also acknowledges the view that this power is hierarchical right from God, the ancestors and spirits, elders, ordinary men and women down to inanimate beings at the bottom. The higher a being is in the hierarchy, the more powerful and influential it is.¹⁴

The idea of the vital force appears to classify reality into a hierarchy of kingdoms as shown below.



Mineral kingdom

The lowest element has the power of cohesion, and the power to provide sustenance for the kingdoms above it. The mineral kingdom provides food and a base for the upper kingdoms.

Above the mineral kingdom is the plant kingdom, which has more powers than the lower kingdom. The plant kingdom, however, relies heavily on the mineral kingdom for its survival. It has the power of growth, limited power of movement and reproduction.

Above it is the Animal kingdom, which largely depends on the lower kingdoms and also on members of the same kingdom, as is the case with carnivorous animals. This kingdom has the power of growth, perception freedom of movement and reproduction.

Above the animal kingdom is the human kingdom, which possesses the power of growth, perception, freedom of movement, reproduction and above all the power of rationality. The power of rationality has given humanity the faculty to understand the law of cause and effect and can therefore, using this power be able not only to control nature but deviate from the natural course of things. For its survival, it relies on the three lower elements.

Above this kingdom is the supernatural kingdom that is usually elusive proper human understanding but is nevertheless believed by the human kingdom to exist. It is a mysterious and yet believed to have all the powers exhibited by the lower kingdoms, and in addition has the power of control over all the lower kingdoms.

In the classification of these kingdoms, each kingdom has power over its lower kingdom and within the kingdom especially the supernatural and the human kingdoms. There are also hierarchies of power increasing from the lowest to the highest in the hierarchy.

The beliefs in mysterious force or power appear to operate on the basis of the above ontology, with less power at the lowest kingdom and more at the highest kingdom. The ideas of the vital force in traditional African societies appear to have generally been based on the above ontology.

McVeigh agrees with the fact that there appear to have existed a certain mysterious power in most traditional African societies. Behind African beliefs and actions in traditional Africa lay a fundamental experience, a feeling of the existence of something or somebody beyond the people themselves, a mysterious power which could not be seen and which was not fully understood but was nevertheless at work in the societies.¹⁵ Accompanying this belief among the living, was a sense of awe and inadequacy, of reverence and dependence on the higher vital force. The Africans believed in this great power which they were seeing working in the rain, thunder, sun, fields, witchcraft, divination and other events of life. The Africans were aware of their dependence upon this unseen power. They knew that in themselves they are inadequate to live their lives meaningfully. To live one's life well, one had to keep his/her relationships with the whole host of spiritual powers. He/she had to recognize their presence, adhere to them and sometimes make offerings or sacrifices to them.¹⁶

This mystical power could even cause people to walk on fire, to live on thorns or nails, to send curses or harm including death, to stupefy thieves so that they can be caught red handed, to make inanimate objects into biologically living creatures, to see into secrets of life, and to send

benevolence to the people through big harvests, adequate rains, etc. This power could harm those who disobeyed their society's norms and rules, it would punish those who deviated from the accepted social norms.

Among the Bukusu people, every aspect of life, every activity, economic, social or political was religious. There was hardly any aspect of life that was devoid of religion. The Bukusu traditional religion was for example decisively conservative and any deviation from the accepted traditional beliefs and norms could be made with threats of supernatural wrath.

Religion, as stated above, permeated every aspect of human life and one could hardly identify any aspect of life that was devoid of religion. Everybody was religious and nobody could dare detach himself from his society's religion.

Every human activity or event had some religious or supernatural links. The union of the living dead and the living made it in such a way that the living had to involve the living dead in all their activities and events. This linkage ensured that every aspect of the living's life had some connection to the supernatural. In traditional societies where many things remained without any scientific explanations, religion enjoyed prominence in providing such explanation. Further, in these societies, there were no policemen or women as we have today. The supernatural therefore played a major role in ensuring conformity to societal norms. In order to be able to do this, it had to be inculcated into every member of society from the time of birth to the time of death. This made it possible to tie every human aspect to religion thus its importance and penetration into the people's lives.

It was therefore not possible for one to survive among his fellow men and women without being religious. In fact, for a traditional Bukusu, it was impossible to survive without religion. One's acceptance into the community meant that one had inducted into the community's religion.

In the absence of direct political and moral enforcement institutions, the Bukusu society, had to resort to religion for the maintenance of order and unity. Society had to resort to supernatural beings and forces as the guardians of order and unity. Therefore, every aspect of human life had to be made religious so as to be under the control of the supernatural beings and forces. Any violation of the established order and unity was seen as an abuse and challenge to the supernatural which no sane Bukusu person could contemplate doing. The guardians of law and order were the unchallengeable and powerful supernatural beings and forces. The rules of conduct, however hard, irksome, and unwelcome were generally obeyed without opposition or resistance. It is this high level of religiosity that nurtured and sustained the vital force in most traditional African societies including the Bukusu society.

The vital force was kept a life and its efficacy maintained by the fact that everybody in the Bukusu traditional society was religious. The efficacy of the vital force and the power of the supernatural beings especially the ancestors was adapted to the needs of life of the Bukusu people. Any problems or benefits that society had was always explained in terms of the vital force and ancestors. The welfare of the society was dependant on the ancestors and their vital force. The living had to maintain close ties with the ancestors, adhere to their guidance and social norms.

In the Bukusu traditional society, the existence of the ancestors and their power was not in any doubt; it was as real as the existence of electricity and magnetism in the modern world. Babukusu did not doubt anything about their ancestors and, as such, their power and authority over the

living was real.¹⁷

As guardians of the moral and religious norms and values on which social order rested, the ancestors and their vital force played a key role in maintaining and influencing the structure of the Bukusu society. The veneration of the ancestors and the fear of their powers played a key role in the control of the Bukusu traditional society. They were the sources of authority of law and integration of their people.

The belief in ancestors and the vital force helped in the maintenance of the communal spirit among the Bukusu people. The ancestors were a highly conservative category of beings who ensured that the established social norms were not violated. Religion also ensured that things remained the way they were without any deviation. In fact religious practices such as rituals or ceremonies are done exactly as they used to be done in order for the vital force to act. The Bukusu religion required that religious practices be done following a strict religious formulae and any utterances were to be recited with absolute accuracy. Rhythm, mode of utterance, details of religious activities had to be done properly and in accordance with established tradition. The elders were the people trusted with the duty of overseeing and carrying out these religious practices. This helped in enhancing and creating faith in the efficacy of the vital force. It also ensured that the Bukusu people continue to live in accordance with their traditions and practices. Society was dependant on the vital force and the supernatural. Society was however, required to adhere to the already established mores and norms in order to be at peace with their ancestors and the vital force. The vital force played a major role in revitalizing communality among traditional societies.

4.3 **The use of customary morality**

In most traditional African communities there was evident use of customary morality rather than what we could call reflective morality. The use of customary morality was an effective way of social control in traditional societies. As such, it is possible to argue that the communal structures in traditional African societies was partly supported by the use of a more effective type of morality that was in use in traditional societies.

Whenever human beings live in groups they evolve certain ways of acting which are common to them. These become the approved ways of acting, common to the group and which are handed down from generation to generation. They imply the group's judgement that they be followed. The welfare of the group is regarded in a way to be dependant on them. Any deviation from these approved ways will be met by a hostile group's disapproval.¹⁸

In traditional African societies, the group consisted of the dead and living members. Every member in the group stands in certain relations to others and the group as a whole. These relationships tend to become regular and standardized. Some of the group's adopted ways of acting or doing things fail, while others succeed. The group hands down to successive generations the successful ways with its approval, while condemning those that fail. The group welfare is bound up with the acts of every member. As such individual conformity to the group's mores becomes a matter for group concern and not an individual's private affair. Individual conduct ceases to be an individual's affair. The system of morality that can sustain such a social set-up is what we are calling customary morality.

Customary morality refers to a system of morality that is essentially habitual or customary where the standards and rules of conduct are corporate rather than individual.' It operates largely

through habit rather than through choice. It places the standards and rules of conduct in ancestral beings and forces; its strength is rooted in the emotions of fear or awe of, and sometimes reverence and administration of authority beings or forces. The norm giver in customary morality is always an authority transcending the individual. The system is based on awe of the authority and in the subject's feelings of weakness before and dependence on, the authority whose power must and cannot be questioned or challenged.¹⁹

Customary morality prepares the way for the conception of virtue or excellence by providing a group's approvals and disapproval. The group or society trains its members to act in the approved ways and afterwards holds them to these standards by all the agencies in its power. Customary morality has an idea of the good but this is a group's idea of good rather than a good that is individually valued. It secures steadiness by habit and social pressure rather than by choices of the individuals. It is designed to maintain a fixed order rather than to promote and safeguard dynamism. The system holds back individual's impulses and desires tailoring them into group life.

Traditional African societies used a number of means to enforce customary morality. Among the Bukusu people, for example, songs were used to praise and blame while decorations, costumes and tattoos were used to honour their heroes and heroines. Public disapproval was so great in some cases that an offender who suffers it may feel compelled to commit suicide as the only way out of the intolerable situation.

Rites of passage and other rituals were also used by the Bukusu society to condition individual's conduct towards social conformity. The society also used taboos to direct and control an individual's impulses, desires and general conduct. The use of physical force was also an open

alternative to enforcing customary morality. Where these were not used, some traditional modes of punishment were very cruel and served as very efficient deterrents to future deviants.

Customary morality weakens its hold on the subjects when old institutions breakdown and/or when influences from without radically alter a people's way of life. When this happens, customary morality gives way to reflective morality.

According to Aristotle, in morality, an individual must know what he is doing, he must choose it, and choose it for himself. The moral act must be the expression of an informed and stable character. For Aristotle an act is moral when it is done voluntarily by an individual.²⁰

Reflective morality evolves from customary morality. It is reached "only when the individual recognizes the right or chooses the good freely, devotes himself heartily to its fulfillment, and seeks a progressive social development in which every member of society shall share".²¹

Reflective morality differs from customary morality due to its emphasis of freedom, individual conscience, reason and other principles of thought. Morality should be a matter of people's free personal decisions; it must consist of mores that are deliberately accepted. It is based on the principle that only man himself can determine the criterion for virtue and sin and not other super human beings or forces.

We would like to argue, here that customary morality backed by the group and supernatural forces and which were beyond any challenge from individuals were more effective in meeting the requirements of traditional societies. Standards and rules of conduct, however, hard and oppressive, were religiously adhered to. Nobody would dare question or challenge his/her society's morality, as this would ignite public disapproval and automatic supernatural punishment. Customary morality had an effective and unchallengeable sanction which made its adherence

automatic and a matter of life and death.

Morality is dynamic, it is a moving process and not a static structure. It however requires a certain order. A certain level of moral life is called out or ushered in by certain necessities and conditions of existence.

Traditional African societies regarded their welfare as being embedded on proper adherence to the group morality. In these societies everybody stands in certain relations to the others. The act of one member could make all the society impious and expose the society to supernatural punishment. The young generation was, therefore, carefully trained and socialized to observe them.

Customary morality has been criticized for being largely habitual with a strong tendency to resist rational justification. It easily holds up an individual's talents, creativity and determination to forge ahead of the others.

As far as traditional African societies were concerned, in terms of the organization of tailored and streamlined character to suit into the society's norms, it was extremely instructive in meeting the objectives of the time. It has been argued that customary morality was authoritarian and gave the individual no room to express his/her personality. However, within the traditional milieu itself, this cannot be said to have been the case. It is only in the modern changed circumstances that we look back and say that customary morality was authoritarian.

Modern history and western values have tended to emphasize the principle of individualism. It emphasizes the proposition that society and its institutions exist and should be varied and

organized for the greater development of each individual member's potentialities. As societies become complicated, affluent and specialized with sharp divisions of labour, many collective compulsory norms for minimum elements in a standard of life become unnecessary.

Modern developments, increased mobility and influence from the west has broken down the basis of customary morality and ushered in slowly what we can now call reflective morality. The new contention is that morality should be a matter of people's free personal decisions which however may be linked to certain rational ethical standards. Reflective morality is based on the principle that only man can determine the criterion for the good and the bad and not a being on beings that transcend him. The reflective conscience is not external to man, it is their voice, present in every human being and independent of external sanctions and rewards.

When the centre of morality shifts to the individual in reflective morality, standards and rules of conduct may be broken without any fear for any external punishment. In fact, the evolution of morality from customary to reflective morality could explain the increasing individual freedom but at the same time explain the moral laxity in modern and contemporary societies. For a long time people were morally upright due to the threat above them, but not out of some internalized love of the good.

The point, however, is that customary morality helped in sustaining and enforcing communalism in traditional Africa. Communal values were cultivated and adherence to them by individuals was total due to the authoritarian nature of this morality. Due to the conservative nature of society, customary morality for a long time assisted in sustaining the communal values and other social traditions. Communalism in Africa was strong and lasted for a longer period partly due to the

effective use of customary morality by most traditional African societies. They helped in keeping a social system in place, probably longer than it could have otherwise lasted.

4.4 The Use of Elders in Leadership

The Bukusu traditional society was firmly put under the control of elderly members of the society.

The main necessary condition for the attainment of leadership position at the lineage, clan and tribal unit was ones age. It was the eldest members of society who determined the direction that the society took at almost all levels. The elders, were not just appropriate means to the attainment of communalism but were also effective in keeping the social structure in place using the powers invested in their hands.

The elders, in traditional African societies were more acquainted with the knowledge and practices of their societies, and they were therefore, given leadership roles to ensure that their societies do not deviate from the past ways. The elders were the most conservative members of the society and their leadership ensured that societies remained conservative.

At the individual family unit, the father, who was usually the eldest was at the helm and ensured that his children and wife or wives did not follow the forbidden path. They had to live as per the traditions of their society. Then there was the extended family unit or the lineage groups which again were headed by the eldest members who ensured that the society's norms and traditions were strictly followed. The clan, just like the tribe, was also under the eldest members of the society.

This societal management style appear to have been deliberate attempt to ensure that society was

firmly under the hands of the most conservative groups and those who were most conversant with the society's traditional practices. These were the people, in line with the past ward oriented philosophy, who were best suited to direct and lead society along its established traditions and practices with minimal deviations.

The youths, who were not conversant with the past ways, could not be trusted to lead their societies. In their hands, society can easily drift away from the established ways, which would mean chaos for its members.

Old age, and the fact that the elders had a more powerful vital force as compared to those younger than them, gave them enough force to command obedience from other members of the society. The elders, because of their age, were also seen as potential ancestors and nobody would therefore, dare disobey them. The placing of traditional societies under the control of the elders who were advanced in age helped cement traditionalism and more specifically communalism. New ways were frowned upon and members were constantly reminded to avoid such ways. This ensured that traditional communalism was lived longer in traditional Africa until colonial era. It was the elders who were in leadership and therefore determined the live that the society followed. And for them the live was to put their society under a strong communal system.

The above factors largely helped to strongly anchor the peoples' orientation to the past ways of the ancestors, which were extremely communal. These are the undermining principles that provide the ultimate explanations for the existence of communalism in traditional Africa. They are contingent principles either consciously or unconsciously incorporated and followed but which ensured a strong and unique sense of solidarity among the people. Communalism in Africa was

in actual fact, deliberately made to survive longer than it did in other societies. It was a form of existence that Africans saw to be most ideal for their own survival and the above measures were put in place to ensure that it remained a permanent social structure. It was, however, unfortunately disturbed by colonialism but immediately after colonialism, there was a spirited attempt to revive this mode of existence. The period just before and after independence was dominated by calls for the revival of communalism, which had been disrupted by colonialism. It is this spirit that we here call neo-communalism. It appears to have been a direct effect of the strong impact that communalism had had on the lives of Africans. Colonialism was not enough to completely obliterate this form of existence in the minds of the people of Africa. With its demise in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Clarion call was the restoration of the Africa way of life, which happened to be communalism.

In the next chapter we look at the colonial period in Africa and make a philosophical analysis of its impact on the way of life of the people in Africa. This period cannot be ignored by any study on traditional African value system. It was largely responsible for the deliberate denigration and disruption of authentic traditional African values. The consequent of this was the strong neo-communal spirit that engulfed the continent once colonialism was dismantled.

4.5 NOTES

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5.0 CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 THE INTERLUDE OF COLONIALISM IN AFRICA

The interlude of colonialism in Africa was an important mark on the history of the continent. Colonialism provided the people of Africa, hitherto used to a strong sense of communality, a direct challenge to their identity as a people. The onslaught of colonialism was heavily resisted in most parts of the continent but in the end, the colonialist managed to subdue the African people and put them under their control.

The period that colonialism was in place did disrupt the African way of life but the disruption was not enough to obliterate the authentic African way of life. Throughout the colonial period the Africans despite heavy inroads of western values, continued to live a communal way of life. Communalism, it is true, was heavily disrupted but not completely eroded among the people.

Due to this heavy disruption, it is necessary that we make a brief analysis of the onset and actual nature of colonialism in the continent.

From roughly about 1880 to 1960, traditional African societies were subjected to a disrupting era of colonialism that left a permanent mark in their history. By the 1885, the scramble for Africa by the then great powers, Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Belgium and Holland had began. These powers set out to carve out the continent of Africa among themselves without any recourse to the people of Africa themselves.

In fact, one traces the origin of colonialism to the sporadic and systematic maritime commercial adventures by Europeans, which eventually led to trade in slaves¹. The coming of these visitors to Africa presented a major theoretical lapse among the Africans who first came in contact with them. Terence Ranger vividly describes how these visitors were received:

When European seafaring travelers first set foot on the coast of Central Africa in the late 15th century, for example, it is reported that the local inhabitants saw them as spirits who had returned to the living from their ancestral world somewhere far off at sea.²

For Ranger, there was no category of person in Central African thought, which could account for a European, so rather than come up with a new category, they fitted them within the existing categories – dead ancestors³. This was the only category that could explain such strange and unique ‘human-looking creatures’.

This, however, was a contact that for a long time was going to have great impact on the people who could not categorize the visitors. First to come to the continent were explorers who were followed by missionaries. It was their work – exploration and the spread of Christianity that prepared the way for actual colonization. Africa became a battle ground for the conflicting and ambitious interests of the major European powers.

Between 1884 and 1894, most of the continent had been partitioned and put under the control of the colonists⁴. Britain and France took a lion’s share of the continent putting it under their control.

Britain adopted an indirect system of rule which it thought, was economical in terms of capital and manpower. The French on the other hand, treated their colonies as part of France thereby subjecting them to a direct rule. The French aimed at assimilating Africans under their control into being part of the French people. The British were a bit lax towards total assimilation.

Nevertheless, these two types of rule did not matter a great deal in the final end.’ The impact of

colonialism, be it by France, Britain, Portugal, Belgium or Germany were great and cannot and should not be underestimated. It brought about a sudden social upheaval of often dramatic proportions⁵.

The Africans were caught unawares, surprised and proved helpless before a European intrusion that was fast and overwhelming. The advantage of science and technology that the Europeans had, gave them the power and capacity to overwhelm the Africans. With their entry into the continent changes brought about were sudden, unexpected and of external origin. There were a number of stages from the onset to the end of colonialism in Africa.

At the first stage was the simple coming into contact of The Western and African values. This is the stage when these values, for the first time come into contact, and each of the value holders, western and African, learnt of the peculiarities of the values of the other.

The second stage was one of value conflict, when the two value systems began to clash and discover their incompatibility. The indigenous values were still relatively intact and strongly resistant to the encroachment and entrenchment of the newly arrived values, seeking to impose their own will. Here Western values, suddenly introduced, found themselves in sharp contrast and conflict with indigenous values. It was almost like a clash under the law of the jungle, where only the strongest could survive.

This clash led to the next stage, which was one of conquest where Western values were deliberately packaged and enforced onto Africans eventually leading to a slow erosion of the indigenous values. Western values, backed by science and technology, proved a more formidable

force that indigenous values could not successfully resist.

The next stage was a period of cultural confusion among the indigenous African people. In cases of such confusion, the choice was usually between cultural surrender, or alienation and a cultural revival to regain one's original culture⁶. A possible stage which was hardly experienced in the African case could have been one of cultural fusion or integration.

The Western and African cultures did not come into contact as equals, at least from the point of view of colonialists. There were certainly both direct and indirect designs by the colonialists to erode away the most important elements of the culture of the African people. This process had begun long before the actual colonization of the people of Africa.

Anthropological and philosophical ideas before and during the period of colonialism helped in driving a wedge between the Africans and the colonizers. These helped in the reconstruction of Africa and its culture. This construction was an attempt to portray the African and his culture, as primitive, evil and rudimentary. The European culture was portrayed as the ideal of human civilization, good and scientific, towards which all other non-European cultures should strive.

Some aspects of the works of Hume, Kant, Hegel and other philosophers did actually portray the African and his culture as being at the bottom while the European and his culture were at the top.

David Hume, who lived between 1711 and 1776, put it that the Negroes and all other non-white species of human beings appear to be naturally inferior to the whites.

There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or

speculation. No ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as ancient Germans, the present Tartars, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men.⁷

Similarly, Immanuel Kant, a greater modern philosopher who lived between 1724 and 1804 expressed views that were contemptuous of the black people. According to him, the Negroes are suited for damp hot climates where they are lazy, soft and dawdling. At one point he is said to have dismissed a certain opinion from a black by retorting, 'This fellow was quite black... a clear proof that what he said was stupid'.⁸ Kant failed to notice the obvious and inherent fallacy in such an assertion, whereby instead of addressing his views to the matter raised by the black, he choose to attack the person who raised the opinion, as a way of showing that what he had raised is therefore stupid. In logic this fallacy is called 'Argumentum ad Hominem' (argument against the person).

In terms of denigrating the Africans, Friedrich Hegel, was even more candid. According to him all non-European races are less human and unaware of themselves as conscious and historical beings. Hegel held that the African was still at the first stage of human development, a stage at which human beings are dominated by passions, and are nothing more than savage living in a state of savagery and barbarism.⁹

The Negro is an example of animal man in all his savagery and lawlessness, and if we wish to understand him at all, we must put aside all our European attitudes.¹⁰

For Hegel Africa was a place of superstition, cannibalism and sorcery. In Africa, so he thought,

human flesh is sold openly in market centres.

At the death of a rich man, hundreds may well be slaughtered and devoured. Prisoners are murdered and slaughtered, and as a rule the victor consumes the heart of his slain enemy. And at magical ceremonies, it very often happens that the sorcerer murders the first person he encounters and divides his body among the crowd.

Since human beings are valued cheaply, it is easily explained why slavery is the basic legal relationship in Africa. The only significant relationship between the Negroes and the Europeans has been and still is that of slavery.¹¹

Hegel enumerates all types of evil and negations and lumps them on the people and continent of Africa. Among the Africans, he thought, what is seen as evil or a negation is normal and readily accepted.

The conditions in which they live is incapable of any development or culture, and their present existence is the same as it has always been. In face of the enormous energy of sensuous arbitrariness, which dominates their lives, morality has no determinate influence upon them. Anyone who wishes to study the most terrible manifestations of human nature will find them in Africa.¹²

Africa for him was unhistorical, pre-logical, pre-scientific with no movement or development of its own.

The above views and many others by western anthropologists, philosophers and historians painted a poor picture of the people of Africa before the whites, whose only contact with the continent was through these writings. It was, therefore, widely accepted that what was written about Africa was actually true. It was a horrible representation that created curiosity about Africa and a kind of dualism where the Africans were placed on the opposite side of the Europeans. Europe was seen as the epitome of reason, civilization, humanity and light while Africa was one of superstitions, primitivity, inhumanity and darkness. Africa was consequently seen as a continent

that was waiting for conquest and liberation from the above evils and human negations. The Africans, so it was thought, deserved to be enslaved and colonized.

Eze sees the above philosophical casting as having been responsible for the racial destinations that began to place Europeans at the helm of human civilization and the Africans at bottom of human civilization.¹³ Colonization of Africa was based on the understanding by the whites that they, 'the Us' were the symbol of the good and civilization or the ideal towards which all other races should be directed. The Africans, 'the other' were a symbol of evil and primitivity.

In the minds of the Europeans the African was a lesser human being and their continent a hotbed of evil. Given these deficiencies, the Europeans sought to render a service to Africa through colonization and 'protection' and redirect her towards the ideal.

With the advent of colonialism, the contact between European and African cultures were, therefore, not on equal terms. For the Europeans, theirs was the ideal for the African masses.

Grinker and Steiner, admonish us not to think that colonialism was simply a process of conquer and rule. Such a mistake may make us unable to understand the other forms of colonialism that aimed at changing everything in Africa towards European designs. Colonialism was fraught with certain modes of power that was to radically change the African's awareness of themselves and others, that have profound psychological implications and that could even alter forever the meaning of the African's culture.¹⁴ Colonization was not so much a question of political rule as the seizing and transforming 'others' through a process of conceptualization inscribing and interaction with them on terms not of their own choice. In order to do this various direct and

indirect designs were put in place.

In the first place, it consisted of a continuation of denigration of the Africans and their way of life and values. The purpose was to create a sharp dichotomy between the 'us' and the other and also to show the superiority of the 'us' to the 'other' in their own continent.

The whites, therefore, started by putting in place magnificent houses for themselves and an infrastructure that gave them an envious status in the midst of the African people who were living in poorly constructed huts. With time, modern sanitation, piped water, electricity, roads, railway transport, medical services and schools were introduced. This was a design supported by a heavy capital backup from Europe to demonstrate to the Africans their superiority.

The introduction of the cash economy and personal taxes forced a number of Africans to work under the colonialists. The working conditions under which the Africans worked further enhanced the colonialist design that they were superior.

Next was a strategic weakening of the indigenous system of governments and pivotal elements of the African cultures. A number of traditional rulers who had been conquered were retained but used to enforce oppressive policies such as forced labour, spread of Christianity and payment of taxes. These undermined the strength of the affected communities, which looked upon their traditional rulers for salvation from the colonialists. A few Africans who cooperated were airlifted to Europe for overseas education. On coming back, such Africans had almost changed completely towards the western lifestyles. Such people plus the local rulers or chiefs who cooperated were supported to lead a life that propelled them at higher status than the ordinary

fellow Africans. The message was to show the rest of the colonized that adoption of western values meant an immediate success in ones life.

Having demonstrated this point, the next step was to invite the Africans to abandon their values and join the European value system. To do this, schools and churches were built all over the continent as avenues through which one could abandon indigenous values and adopt western ones. In addition, the press, and audio-visual media helped in diffusing new values to the African people. Through these they managed to some extent, to shake certain unifying cultural systems while offering new ones which the people were lured to adopt.

The creation of colonies involved boundaries that cut across ethnic groups, chiefdoms and kingdoms. This disrupted the people's traditional ways of life, as they soon found themselves under different administrative states. A number of people especially in colonies where white settlers came in large numbers like in Kenya and Zimbabwe, were moved away from their traditional abodes to give way to white settlement.

These measures and others subjected the Africans to a high level of humiliation, exploitation and discrimination. Eventually, under such repression, persecution and humiliation, sometimes even fronted by their own people, the Africans began to give in to the demands of the colonialists. The African values were put on the defensive. God and Christianity were put on the side of the European values. To be Godly and Christian, one had, first and foremost, to abandon traditional values and be 'Europeanized'.

All the pivotal African practices and traditions that had kept them together and in solidarity were

condemned by the colonialists and their new religion. The rites of passage, the belief in ancestor cult, the mystic power and many others, were all condemned and their abandonment was the focus of the colonialists and their new religion.

Although colonialism was a short interlude in the history of Africa, it nevertheless was of significance for Africa and left a lasting impression on the continent. It radically changed the direction and momentum of the continent's history.¹⁵

The effects of colonialism constitute a legacy that extends far beyond the historical point at which it ended i.e. when African states became independent. Albert Memmi, has argued that at the end of such a period characterized by a painful process and full of conflict, the colonized could have been expected to dissolve into the midst of the colonizers. This was, however, not possible due to the many contradictions in the European and African value systems. Many were far apart that complete assimilation was elusive.¹⁶

Cabral, however, is of the view that with certain exceptions, the period of colonization was not long enough at least in Africa for there to be a major and lasting erosion on the main tenets of the African culture and traditions. These people were only able to rise against colonization because they were able to cling onto their culture and traditions despite spirited and well designed attempts to destroy their culture and traditions¹⁷.

The post-colonial period brought to a stop a period of dictation, forcible imposition of a variety of alien values and institutions on the people and continent of Africa. It ushered in a period of self-governance, self-assertion and a self-reevaluation of the African values and identity.¹⁸

This period, however, was not a total rejection of the alien values but was one of selection whereby the formerly colonized people decided to retain certain values and institutions, which were thought worthwhile and necessary to their development. This selection should indicate to us that colonialism was not without some benefits to the continent. Weighted against each other, however, the negations were much more than the benefits. This period therefore, gave the African people a chance to sort out, select, choose and voluntarily adopt some of the alien ideas, values and institutions.

During this period, and immediately after independence, the people of Africa found themselves in between two mostly contradictory and hardly complementary form of estranged existence. This presented an existential crisis on the continent. The Africans found themselves confused in the pursuit of even certain selected alien values, as the indigenous people had little commitment to it. Such values, it was feared, could not be predicted as to which direction and future they could lead their African communities to.

The authoritarian nature of colonialism and the atrocities visited upon the Africans made them want to drop the alien values associated with European colonialists. These values were a grim reminder of the sufferings, humiliation, oppression and exploitation visited upon them by the colonialists.

Amid this state of affairs, the people of Africa began to look around for an authentic African ideology, and a sense of revivalism of their traditional values gained ground in their mind. Colonialism and Western values looked abominable as compared with the 'pre-colonial period and

values.

The voice of the people was, therefore, one of going back to their roots by restoring their values and ways of life that had been disturbed by colonialism and western values. Part of this large efforts of restoration, was the strong sense of neo-communalism among the people and their new leaders. This was an attempt to restore traditional communalism in such a way that it could fit into the somehow changed circumstances. It was a rejection of foreign values imposed on a people; values which their intentions and executions were not party to. These were ,therefore, values seen not to be of their own creation and not suited for their environment. And soon after the colonialists began to leave, the people of Africa began to look pastwards. They began to see that their way of life had been disrupted and they therefore, wanted to restore their authentic way of life.

In the next chapter we look at how this pastward look appear in form of neo-communalism and its impact in post colonial Africa.

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6.0 CHAPTER SIX

NEO-COMMUNALISM AND THE COMMUNAL LEGACY IN POST-INDEPENDENT AFRICA

In this chapter we look at what appeared to be an evident attempt to restore traditional values in post-independent Africa. In addition to this, we also examine the possible legacies of communalism in post-independent Africa.

Having been accustomed to a strong communal social structure, the African people were not ready to abandon this form of organization despite the heavy inflow of western influences. This unwillingness was exhibited in the people's strong desire to restore most of their traditional values and forms of organization. It was an attempt to regain their true self and identity, having gone through a most disruptive colonial period where they were treated as lesser human beings and their values denigrated.

6.1 Neo-communalism

Traditional African communalism was a reality, which was subjected to the shock of colonialism and its attendant consequences. After the Africanization of political authority and leadership in most parts of Africa, there was an increasing realization of the need to create a new collective identity by modifying the African people's self conceptions towards the end of enlarged empathy, and thus attain national integration through the merger of ethnic sub-nationalities into a larger national unity.¹

Although traditional African societies exhibited a high level of communality and brotherhood, this did not extend beyond the tribe. Communality was limited within tribes. Towards ones tribesman, there was deep sentiment, affection and loyalty; towards an outsider, there was little affection and loyalty.

At independence, African leaders saw these pre-existent tribal attachments as potentially detrimental to the formation of national identities. The tribes created loyalties and affiliations, which were bound to clash with the conception of an individual as a member of a larger unit - the nation-state.

For sometime in the past, colonialism had somehow united different African societies. After independence, however, internal problems began to loom large. The end of colonialism unveiled a number of new challenges to the African peoples. Among these challenges was the promotion and development of a consciousness of nationhood.²

The challenge was on how to weld the different ethnic groups into new but larger forms of socio-political groups for the benefit and welfare of all. The task that lay ahead was to solder the different ethnic groups into a whole; to integrate the ethnic groups into a nation by deflecting the ethos of cohesion, solidarity, fellow feeling and mutual recognition from the ethnic groups to the larger group - the nation-state. Independence and the creation of artificial states in Africa meant that ethnic groups were going to compete with the central governments for domination. The average African looked to his kin, village, and tribe as his realities, but not a central government, which did not fit anywhere in his or her theoretical framework.

The idea of tribal brotherhood was the seal of life in Africa. The African identified himself with his fellow tribesmen. He knew that his existence depended on them. He 'was' because they 'were'. He knew how to give himself by acts of generosity, hospitality, self-sacrifice and mutual aid.

Beyond the tribe this brotherhood was lacking. In fact, in most parts of traditional Africa, inter-tribal warfare was the norm. It appeared that the fact that Africans had a highly developed sense of brotherhood towards their own tribesmen, it had resulted in diluting their capacity to empathize with those that are outsiders.

After colonialism, this potentially dangerous problem troubled the minds of African leaders. And in a typical characteristic of the African mind, the African leaders' approach was to look past-ward. They thought to invoke the African traditions to justify modern nationalism. They wanted to use the past to reinforce their people's commitment to contemporary social ideals, in the face of subversion by the forces of change.³

According to Kwame Gyekye, the consciousness of a people of their cultural past i.e their cultural values, practices, institutions and achievements of ancestors, evokes diverse, and sometimes even opposing sentiments among them.⁴

Some would dismiss their past traditions as anachronistic and outdated practices which are not suited to contemporary times. Yet others would argue for the revival of their traditional past as a matter of survival. The latter case was the one taken up by African leaders at and after independence. African leaders discovered that "embedded in the traditional African way of life,

are some precious gems of human values, compromised, it is true, by colonialism, but capable of being restored by conscious effort.”⁵

This followed their realization that exposure to European education, culture and institutions during colonialism, had deprived Africans of their true selves, alienated them from their own culture and disturbed the continuity of their development. This was accompanied by the conviction that it was possible for the Africans to restore their traditional values and adapt them to contemporary needs.⁶ The European culture had been imposed on Africans without them being given an opportunity to select or adopt what they considered worthwhile and tailor them to their needs and circumstances. The European values were found to be opposed to the African values. African ideals were compromised by European individualism and its attendant values such as the “obsession with money and sex, the abandonment of the aged, family life, divorce, birth limitations” which were antithetical to African communal values.⁷

The desire to restore traditionalism especially communal values in post-independent Africa may have also been made necessary since it would serve as a basis for the search for a cultural identity, pride and unity for the people. People, it has been argued, do not start wondering whether they are what they ought to be if everything seems to be going well. It is usually when things go wrong that this self-analysis begins to take root. The question arises when a people realize that they are what they used not to be. The next attempt is to discover what they used to be and take steps to be that again.

What we ought to be is what we used to be.... because we became what we are now, not of our own free will, but rather through a colonial imposition⁸.

The pastward looking philosophy was at work in this thought. In other societies, people would have wished to be what they could be but not what they used to be.

Colonialism had made Africans to be what they should not be. It had affected their modes of thought; made them intellectually servile to western system of values and ideas and to think almost invariably in terms of the conceptual systems of the West⁹. The neo-communal spirit at independence could, therefore, in a way be seen as a critique of the way of life the Africans found themselves in at independence. The actual and looming problems in attempts to make progress may have dawned to the Africans, as attributable to the neglect of their past and their alienation into a mode of existence that they had no emotional attachments to. This led to a desire to model a developmental paradigm that incorporated the ethos of traditionalism and the spirit of the past¹⁰. Traditional African was to become the basis of post-independent developmental models.

It was, therefore, the task of the neo-communalists “to set out these values and principles, assimilate and inculcate them and devise the best techniques, the best institutions and process for incorporating and perpetuating them under modern conditions”.¹¹

This restoration of traditionalism was, according to Onuoha, to be re-creative but not imitative, it was a re-discovery of the African identity and a return to the wisdom and values of their forebears.¹²

According to Tom Mboya, traditional African Socialism gave members of the society a secure and adequate livelihood, and a full opportunity to share in the making of the conditions upon which their happiness depended.

For Tom Mboya, in traditional African societies,

each member of the society was able, by his own and by collective efforts, to produce for himself the means of self fulfilment. I commend it to you and to your people in our search for means of rationalizing and humanizing our efforts to plan our society for economic and social growth.¹³

Mboya, is an example of the neo-communalists who discovered that traditional African values would be precious for post independent Africa. African leaders, faced with the post independent economic, political and social problems, began to re-examine traditional communal values with the objective of shaping them to fit the requirements of the new states.

Nyerere was convinced that traditional society should serve as a guide to the post-independent states, because of their communal values. In fact, Nyerere established Ujamaa to strengthen the communal values that had been weakened by colonialism. For Nyerere, traditional socialism was an attitude of the mind whose restoration he worked hard to achieve among his people.

Our first step, therefore, must be to re-educate ourselves, to regain our former attitude of mind....and apply it to the new societies we are building today.¹⁴

There was a strong belief that traditional African societies had a message for modern Africa. Kaphangawani, recognizes this spirit to incorporate traditional features in modern Africa although he saw that certain inherent problems may also accompany them into the modern societies.¹⁵

Wiredu gives the example of Japan, as a country that managed to retain much of its traditions and has developed into an economic super power. For him, it follows by analogy, that the answer to

Africa's problem of identity and development might lie in borrowing the Japanese model.¹⁶

Makang, in fact, confirms that there was a spirit and discourses that pleaded for a critical use of traditional values in today's societies. He asserts that

by appealing to the praxis and wisdom of our African forefathers, we do not mean to repeat them. but we mean to make use of this praxis and wisdom as interpretative tools to enlighten present generations of Africans.¹⁷

Kudadjie, too cautions that there is a danger of losing that component of development that our forefathers fostered, that is, " real humanity, humanness, fellow feeling and concern for one another."¹⁸

There was a strong sense of neo-communalism at and after independence which was intensified by the challenges that post independent African leaders were meeting. The challenges forced many such leaders and scholars to re-examine their societies and the most available alternative was a careful and selective restoration of traditional values. The urge for the adoption of socialism in African was a consequent of this neo-communal spirit in the new states. In fact, a topical feature in post-colonial African political and economic theory was the belief that socialism was the most ideal ideology for post-colonial Africa since socialism was rooted in the traditional past, herein referred to as traditional communalism.¹⁹ Friedland and Rosberg assert that:

The essential contention is that Africa has always contained much indigenous socialism. Among the various elements of traditional socialism cited are the communal ownership of land, ...the egalitarian character of society.... and the extensive network of social obligations that led to considerable cooperation.²⁰

These represented a set of roots for Africa socialism whose existence was to facilitate the creation of modern socialist institutions in post-independent Africa. For Nyerere, the solution to post-independent socio-economic problems lay in investing in the human and social potential inherent in traditional African communalism by channelling clan and tribal loyalties and activities into larger programmes and economic development of the nation as a whole.²¹ Nyerere aimed at creating a socialist national economy but one that is based on the traditional clan or village solidarity.

The clamour for 'African socialism' and the attempts to differentiate it from its more general understanding should be understood as an endeavour to base this mode of socialism on traditional African practices. The Africans wanted a type of socialism that was solely theirs and that had roots in their traditional communalism. They had no trust in new and foreign values that were inherent in scientific socialism. Africans simply wanted to transform traditional communitarianism into a modern African socialism - "the larval communitarianism was to metamorphose into the pupa of modern African socialism".²²

6.2 The Communist Link

It is also important to mention the fact that neo-communalism in post-colonial Africa was also influenced by the international politics of the time. Most African states became independent at the height of the cold war between the West led by the United States of America, and the East led by the Soviet Union.

Implicit in neo-communalism were two things. On the one hand, was the feeling that scientific socialism or communism contained some gems, which appealed to some post-independent African leaders. On the other hand, was a desire to end any special relationship of the continent with

outside powers. In this regard, African states chose neutralism in their relationship with the outside powers so as to avoid indulging themselves in a rivalry they did not understand.

Marxism and general scientific socialism, however, did offer certain central explanations for economic social and political phenomena that seemed to many African leaders to be the truth. Scientific socialism and communism as political ideologies dates from the Karl Marx's communist manifesto of 1848. It has been described as a classic example of pamphleteering which essentially was a programme statement whose main objective was to get rid of the exploitation of man by man. The manifesto spelled out the need to overthrow the bourgeoisie and establish governments of the proletariat. The bourgeois social order is founded on class antagonism between the bourgeoisie (the rich) and the workers (the exploited and poor). The manifesto aimed at establishing a proletariat social order where there is no classes or private property. It is a classless social order based on the ownership of property by the community and not by individuals with the benefits distributed in accordance with the common good.

Karl Marx believed that historical materialism provides a scientific explanation of the development of the human society. Human society, he thought, moves inevitably through certain stages distinguished from each other by the nature of economic production.²³

The first stage is the primitive communal society where the means of production are at the lowest level. Here production and means of production belong to the whole community. This is followed by a stage of slavery, then feudalism and capitalism. In these three stages there are two distinct classes, one owns the means of production and the other is the exploited class that works for the former. The relationship between these classes is essentially characterized by conflict.

The class conflict and struggles lead to a transformation usually through revolutions, which replaces one owning class with the other. These transformations involve complete change of social and political institutions in societies where they occur. In the first case the slave owners are replaced by feudal landlords who in turn are replaced by the capitalists, industrialists and bankers.

After this stage, society enters into the fifth stage when the exploited workers overthrow the capitalists, industrialists and bankers, ushering in a new classless socialist system, where there is no exploitation of one class by another.

The final stage in the historical transformation of society is communism, which, since there are no classes in the previous system, is reached through non-violent means. This is reached when the socialist economy grows tremendously until it becomes possible to replace the socialist formula – “from each according to his work”, to “each according to his needs”.²⁴

Marxian historical materialism held that each of the stages of the development of human society represents an advance on its predecessor in terms of economic efficiency and output. However, it is only when socialism is attained that society can be able to witness a major development in social justice.

Later on most communists, especially the Soviet Communists, came to believe that capitalism as a stage in societal development is not necessary. They believed that a feudal society can leap to socialism without passing through the capitalistic stage. This understanding led to a movement

where communists were encouraged not to sit passively and wait for history to do the job for them. It was upon every communist to accelerate this historical process.

And sure enough a wave of communism began to sweep across the world. Through a long civil war the communists managed to seize power in three countries, Russia, Yugoslavia and China. The first was the October 1917 revolution led by Vladimir Lenin, and after his death Joseph Stalin took over the leadership of the Soviet Union. The aim of these leaders was to have a worldwide communist revolution so that the entire world could be run under the Soviet style communist policies. In 1940 Soviet forces conquered and annexed Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania making them part of the larger Soviet Union. By 1948 a number of states in Eastern Europe, East Germany, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary had fallen under the Soviet Communism. In a short while, North Korea and Cuba came under communist system.

The Soviet Communist believed in a communist expansion to encircle the Americas and Western Europe. These expansionist tendencies heightened conflict between communist state and the capitalist states. Communists believed that only a communist social and political structure was scientific and rational as compared to the exploitative systems of the West.

Amid this expansionism and rivalry, a number of African states were gaining independence from their colonial masters. The experiences that these states had gone through under foreign powers made them to think of an ideology that will not put the African territory under the influence of any competing overseas powers.

Socialism, however, had a special appeal to post independent African leaders essentially because

it condemned most of the things that Africa had been subjected to under colonialism. But rather than submit to Marxian socialism or Communism, post-independent African leaders argued that Africa had been socialistic long before the coming of socialism. It was evident that leaders such as Sekou Toure and Kwame Nkrumah had been heavily attracted to the ideas postulated in scientific socialism.

Most post-independent leaders refused to submit to Marxism and the best they could do was to blend it with traditional African communalism. The stress on traditional communalism reflects the wish for independence from any of the competing world ideologies and powers.

Post independent African leaders such as Sekou Toure, Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Senghor and Julius Nyerere although implicitly influenced by the ideas in Marxian socialism, insisted on the fact that African socialism was different. They argued that there were antagonistic classes in Africa and, therefore, there was no need for the Marxian style of socialism. Africa was essentially socialistic and all that post-colonial Africa was to do was to renew the spirit of socialism that was part of their past. This renewal, so they thought, would help stem any class development in the continent, as it is the case in the West.

Marxian socialism was emphatic against the very evils that colonialism had perpetuated against the people of Africa. It spoke against the system of economic and political alienation and generally against the exploitation of man by man. It went ahead to recommend a social and political structure that can solve this problem. To Africans, therefore, Marxism identified their problem and spoke against it.

This therefore, made postcolonial African leaders to have a leaning towards Marxian socialism but because of the need for an independent ideology and in order to follow a neutral path in international politics of the time, they chose to look for an ideology in their traditional past. Marxian socialism did influence African choice of a post-colonial ideology but the influence only helped the new African leaders to look pastwards for an authentic African ideology.

The point being emphasized here is that the post-colonial African leaders had to look pastwards for justification of their post-colonial ideology. It was recourse to the past as a resource for charting out the future direction of independent Africa. Traditional Africans were oriented towards the past and the attempt to model a post-colonial African ideology on traditional communalism may have been partly caused by this orientation, and the need to confer rightness on the ideology by extending to it the sanctity which enshrouds traditional values.

This action, according to Kopytoff.

is necessary in the sense that profound social and political reorganization is probably impossible without a body of mythology about both the past and the desired future.²⁵

According to Cohen, mythological distance lends enchantment to an otherwise murky contemporary view. A myth is beyond time and helps in blocking off the past from rational scrutiny.²⁶ The use of the past and its mythologies serve as a good propaganda to gaining acceptability of a modern model by a people who have that common past. It makes a people to know that they have an essential commonality on which their solidarity and identity is based.

Post-colonial African leaders must have entertained the fact that ideologies all over the world has served as good instruments in moving and rallying men towards certain ideals or goals. For the

African leaders the goal was to deflect the tribal loyalties to larger groups - the nation-states and even the continent at large. It was an attempt to deflect traditional African brotherhood from the tribal group to the nation-states; of different tribal groups together, to think, act and live as if they were people of one tribal group. Tribal loyalties and commitments had, therefore, to be transferred to the new independent nation-states.

Kopytoff sounded very pessimistic about the success of this transfer. According to him, the extension of any pattern to another unit does not occur in a vacuum, for it always means overcoming already existing patterns. Some patterns in fact are not easily extendable.²⁷

But colonialism and the creation of political structures that lumped together diverse ethnic groups, introduced new realities and needs which pre-colonial groups could not meet.²⁸ Transferring tribal loyalties to the nation-state required a clear understanding of the nature of tribal loyalties, why and how these loyalties became crucial bases of individual and group behaviours. Tribal groups were united by emotional bonds and concern for the preservation of their group. They had common names, language, culture, territory and myths of common descent. Language and even minor differences in linguistic patterns played a big role in enhancing group solidarity and loyalty.²⁹ The group's consciousness of itself in relation to the others breeds a kind of 'we' and 'they' relationship. It leads to some form of isolationism, which even enhances individual groups solidarity in opposition to others.

Faced with these problems Kopytoff advises that:

Successful social engineering in Africa, as anywhere else, will demand at least as much careful study as is given to the promotion of fisheries and new crops, and the complexities of African cultures and the richness of their variations deserve more than a simple pigeonhole of western derivation.³⁰

Attempts to take away certain functions from the lineage, clan and tribal groups to the nation-state was bound to be resisted. The tribal group was generally a natural growth as compared to the nation-state that was essentially artificial. It lacked the natural attractions of individual loyalties.

Nationhood in post-colonial Africa could, therefore, not just be achieved by legislation and organization. Only an interior spiritual awakening of the people could break the bonds of tribal loyalties. Tribal loyalties were not a question of legislation. It was as a result of a number of complex relationships among the people of a certain community. There were, of course, a number of factors such as a common descent, customs, language and geographical location but these factors helped to create in a people a certain bond towards each other through generations, that could not just be restored by legislation. There was more among the people, certain attachments, which helped in building brotherhood among them. Restoration of some kind of nationhood involving many different tribes would require an understanding of the elements that operated at the tribal level and see whether or not they are transferable to larger units. According to Gyekye, the most difficult task was the nurturing of the component cultures.

New states needed to build national institutions, create new values and patterns of attitude and behaviour, create new symbols and myths about a common past, promote and urge new outlooks and self-definitions, new hopes, goals and aspirations, and facilitate cultural contact among the component cultural groups.³¹

Gyekye further suggests that the creation of nationhood in a plural society like the new independent states required the establishment of open states where democratic principles are upheld. Democracy will ensure that the interests of every citizen irrespective of his/her ethnic

background are given equal considerations. Democratic principles will also ensure that opportunities and resources are distributed equitably and fairly. National development should also help in making irrelevant the need of ethnic groups to serve the individual when individual needs and interests are met by the nation-state, the individual will increasingly redirect his/her loyalty to it rather than to his/her group. New national goals, values, ideals and aspirations to bind different ethnic groups need to be promoted. With time, such a people would begin to have a common culture and other characteristics of a shared life.³²

We have seen that at independence, African leaders were faced with the challenges of national unity and economic growth. These challenges required an examination of traditional communal patterns with the objective of shaping them to fit the requirements of new states and economic order. The African leaders looked to the past for values that could be fitted into modern circumstances. However, in this process, it became necessary that certain values such as the emphasis on kinship and tribal brotherhood had to give way to wider brotherhood. The remaining aspect of traditional life was to be translated into more modern circumstances.

It became necessary that Africans had to abandon or loosen their loyalties to the tribe or ethnic group in order for them to be loyal to their new states. The nationalistic sentiments aroused during the struggle for independence was not going to last long once independence had been acquired. Other ways of sustaining these sentiments had to be devised and much of it involved deflecting the people's loyalty from primordial attachments to the nation-state. Post independent Africa was to be remodeled using traditional African values. The spirit of neo-traditionalism was great at independence.

Other scholars like Taban Lo Liyong have frowned at this spirit of neo-traditionalism. He castigates such a clamour for the past and equates it to crying for spilt milk. He preferred that African leaders dream a head and model the continent with modern social, political and economic ideas rather than languishing in the

remembrance of the past.³³

Any blanket condemnation of the past as Taban Lo Liyong would want to do may not sound convincing. As stated earlier on, the present is in most cases, made up of a number of elements from the past. One cannot easily divorce the present from the past without leaving the people concerned without a base and a history. People plan well for the future only when they understand where they have come from. The future, in most cases is a mere improvement of one's present and past. African leaders, therefore, can only dream ahead, if their dream has a foundation or basis and that is their authentic culture.

Cotlow compared to Taban Lo Liyong, was more blunt, as we have stated earlier on, by asserting that modern developments are not compatible with traditionalism and as such they die out naturally.³⁴

Cotlow was, of course, not right to be such blunt. Quite a number of traditions have been persistent, defying Cotlow's predictions. Cotlow never thought that certain traditions would survive and exist side by side with modern realities and conditions of life.

Traditional values were bound not to survive the new realities brought about by modern life. But we need to emphasize the fact that there are certain values that are very fundamental to certain societies that they can, for that reason, be said to transcend particular generations or epochs. The relevance of traditional values and institutions to the present would be determined by their functionality, i.e. whether they are meaningful and effective in helping the present society attain its goals and vision in the face of present problems. In fact, the domain of sociality includes dimensions of the past, the future and the present. Much of the present remains strangely orientated to the historical past.

6.3 The Communal Legacy

As we have shown elsewhere in this study, traditional African societies exhibited a high sense of

communality and ethnic solidarity. These features, however, did not extend beyond the ethnic groups. Whenever we talk about traditional communality, brotherhood and solidarity, we are talking about these features as they were lived only in reference to lineage, clan and ethnic groups. Beyond these groups, these features were minimal. There was very little intra-ethnic solidarity.

This traditional social structure makes one wonder whether the widespread post-colonial ethnic conflicts and the heightened awareness of ethnic affiliation in Africa has its roots in traditional ethnic solidarity. The frequency and ubiquitous nature of ethnic conflicts and awareness in Africa suggest that there could be a hidden cause, a cause that could be uniquely African.

Margaret contends that revitalized ethnic consciousness symbolizes the strength and security of tradition amid the frustrations of modernization.³⁵ After independence the Africans found themselves face to face with the problems of statehood. The creation of states did not contend with the tribal boundaries and some boundaries cut across certain tribes. In addition to this, states were made up of several tribes, which presented a major political problem to the emerging states. Amid these problems, the emerging challenges and competition for national resources, ethnic consciousness began to rise steadily. People began to look back at their autonomous traditional communities as having been more responsive to their needs than the new colonial creations – the state.

According to Roosen, researchers of culture change assumed that direct and continuous contact between groups of different cultures would lead to a decrease in the differences among them.³⁶ Perhaps, this was the feeling of the colonialists when they lumped together several ethnic groups under single states, and the general thinking has been to blame colonialist for such an act that has helped in fueling ethnic conflicts in Africa. Direct and continuous contact among different ethnic communities in Africa, particularly within states, has, however, failed to decrease the differences among them. Probably, the problem in Africa could lie somewhere else, particularly with the type of leadership that most states have had. The point is that

ethnic differences have even tended to heighten rather than decrease, as Roosens had opined. Karl Marx predicted the extinction of ethnic groups, which were to be made irrelevant by new groupings such as the workers group and the capitalists groups.

It looks, however, that ethnic groups, particularly in Africa, are affirming themselves more and more. The fact that ethnicity has refused to die in Africa but has instead worsened, indicates that the focus on the problem has not been properly identified.

Traditional African solidarity co-existed with conflicts and contradictions among different communities. Within a traditional African community, outsiders personified danger, evil and were generally seen as threats to the community. Group solidarity enhances isolationism among different groups. In Africa, this isolationism spawned prejudices and stereotypes, which crystallize in tribalism and ethnic animosity. The reality of ethnic communality in Africa continues to serve as a fertile ground for ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in the continent.

The struggles for succession of Katanga in Zaire between 1964 and 1966, and the Biafra war in Nigeria from 1967 to 1970 had strong ethnic animosity. The ethnic massacres in Rwanda and Burundi was another testimony to the problem of ethnic isolationism in Africa. In fact, most rebel movements in Africa are ethnically oriented. Whenever such conflicts arise, they serve to solidify ethnic solidarity but widen isolationism between or among concerned groups.

Eghosa Osaghae addresses this problem when he states

The modern state did not evolve from within society, but outside of it. State structures were devoid of their moral correlates in the metropolitan country. The state was founded on a moral vacuum. By contrast, the society retained a moral order which included the individual's basic commitment to his community. As this moral order was fragmented by the plurality of groups contained in the state, state-society relations produced not simply the public-private

These, according to Osaghae, are the civic public made up of the alien state structures based on a western moral milieu, and the primordial public consisting of the pristine ethnic and related structures operating on the foundations of an indigenous societal morality which emphasizes an individual's loyalty to his/her group.³⁸ Osaghae believes that it is this dual reality of the public realm that has made ethnicity such a salient force in Africa, since there are two actors operating in the new states. Independent African states were created basically to ensure law and order but were created independent of certain obvious social considerations. Due to this, the anti-colonial feelings that Africans had were extended to the states created by colonialists. The ethnic group became something of an alternative state or a rival competing with the state for the individual's loyalty and support.³⁹ Africans continued to look to their kinsmen and to their tribesmen. For an African, his kinsmen or tribesman were his realities, they were his brothers and his existence was due to their existence too. They were his benefactors, his relatives and he needed not to look beyond them. This outlook has remained true in the African realities thus enhancing the problems of ethnicity and the poor public-state relationship.

In post independent Africa, therefore, it became normal for an individual to loot the state's property or finances to benefit his group. When such an individual is in a position of leadership in the state or in any organization, he recruits his kinsmen and tribesmen to fill positions over which he had control. Such an individual would also concentrate government projects in his homeland instead of distributing them equitably in a state. Such leaders strive to bless their home regions with highways, super schools, hospitals, housing projects, and irrigation schemes and packs the civil service with his tribesmen.

An official or leader who does special and favoured benefits for the interests of his/her primordial group is hailed as a hero by his/her people. These officials or leaders are faced with dual pressure from the state and the primordial group. The state requires a public office holder to uphold the norms of impartiality in the exercise of the powers and privileges of his/her position by being even handed towards all groups. The groups, however, expects any one of their members to use the powers and privileges of his/her public office to benefit his/her group or individual members of the group. Honour for such an individual to the state and the primordial group does not mean the same thing. The solidarity of the primordial groups and, therefore, the strong moral obligations of public employees to these groups make it extremely difficult to avoid nepotism. It puts dual pressure on the individual, one from the state and the other from his/her community. In most cases, the community proves more compelling than the state.

In these circumstances, access to state power is seen as a way of getting ones hands to the unlimited resources of the state to enrich oneself and one's group. This leads to political struggles for state power among the different ethnic groups. Post-independent African leaders have, therefore, occasionally manipulated primordial or ethnic sentiments in their selfish bid to retain or get state power. Nepotism and political patronage become the tools of political survival. These have in some parts of Africa resulted into ethno-religious animosities, irredentism and conflicts involving open civil wars and genocide.⁴⁰

These post-colonial African problems can be traced both in the pre-colonial and colonial Africa. Strong primordial relations in form of lineage, a clan or ethnic group was a major feature of life in pre-colonial Africa as shown earlier on. The colonial state did not evolve out of the indigenous African social and political environment. Instead, it not only imposed western structures on

African societies but also arbitrarily lumped together different nationalities within and between national borders.

According to Ekeh, the colonial state did not incorporate indigenous African values in its structures but instead looked down upon these values as primitive and uncivilized. The oppressive nature of the colonial rule further alienated individuals from the colonial state and made it difficult to foster loyalty from the Africans to their state structures. Where Africans complied with the dictates of the colonial rulers, it was out of fear of the consequences of disobedience, but not that they felt morally obliged to obey.⁴¹

There was, what Abernethy, calls a lack of 'fit or congruence' between the colonial state and traditional African societies. This lack of congruence between the state and the indigenous society produced considerable misunderstanding on both sides. It meant that the colonial state had little if any linkages to the traditions of the African people.⁴²

The alienation of the Africans from the colonial states cemented the already strong primordial attachments. The lineage, clan and ethnic groups were the only structures that stood behind their activities. These groups emerged as the boldest structures of society where individuals were recognized, protected and found solace.

Independence, for most African people only meant a shift of status, and relationship between the state and society remained strained. Individuals and primordial groups now began to look at the state as an institution with unlimited resources, which can be looted to benefit them and their people. Thus a pre-colonial reality has emerged as an obstacle in the building' of nation-states in

post-colonial Africa.

It would appear that the way out for post-colonial Africa is to institute measures of correcting the relationship between the individual and the state; this, will also involve embracing the many primordial groups into the state.

There are a number of evident legacies which appear to have some links or roots to traditional African social structure. We begin with the evident political authoritarianism that has been one of the main problems facing post Independent Africa.

6.3.1 From Epistemological to Political Authoritarianism

According to Kaphagawani, traditional African communalism was dotted with some dangers. One of these is what he refers to as epistemological authoritarianism, a situation where knowledge and wisdom was tied to old age. Kaphagawani contends that epistemological authoritarianism was rampant in traditional Africa because the elders were the only ones held to have all knowledge and wisdom, so that whatever they said or wanted done had to be without questioning.⁴³

It was the eldest members of society whose opinion carried the greatest weight in matters concerning the society. They were believed to have acquired, because of their age, a profound experience of things and societal matters. Age was the criterion of knowledge and wisdom. The knowledge constituted the totality of all that successive generations had accumulated since the dawn of time both in spiritual and practical life, while wisdom entailed the proper application of this knowledge for the benefit of the society.

The non-elderly were identified with that which was immature, untraditional, negligible, and

incomplete. Given their saga, it was believed that they were made to believe that they could not know unless they were taught or told by the aged. The impulse for intellectual probing was therefore not nurtured among the youths. They had to live by the wisdom of their elders and ancestors. There was no need for discovery of new ways as the traditional societies had their past as the ideal and needed no other.

The elders, according to Kapaghawani, claimed to know what was good or right for the society so their ideas were imposed on the non-elderly. The non-elderly were denied the freedom of thought and participation in the societal matters of their societies. This authoritarianism was, in a way, a form of coercion which denied the non-elderly a chance to appraise their social systems.

This epistemological authoritarianism held by the elders over the non-elderly ensued into a political advantage or authoritarianism from which emerged the core of political leadership in most of traditional Africa. This advantage leadership positions without any competition from the youths. While in positions of power, the elders sometimes took oppressive methods to strengthen and preserve the social fabric.⁴⁴

Kapaghawani is concerned that neo-communalism may invite authoritarianism in post-independent Africa. Authoritarianism was part and parcel of traditional African communalism and any attempt, so Kapaghawani thought, to restore or co-opt it in modern Africa was to invite authoritarianism.

And, indeed, he asserts that this epistemological and political authoritarianism has filtered into post-colonial Africa. In fact, in contemporary Africa, it is not uncommon to see elderly people refuse to listen to young people as they are seen to possess nothing valuable. Although some post colonial African leaders are not elders, they have tended to assume the superior knowledge and wisdom of the traditional elders.⁴⁵

This superiority makes them intolerant to criticism and less amenable to public opinion. They want to enjoy power as it was in the traditional political setting, although this time with unprecedented abuses. They seek to be everywhere and to enjoy unchallenged power. They insist that their faces must appear on national currencies, their photographs must be hanged in every office, a number of institutions, streets and other public amenities must be hung after them, they insist on being given high sounding titles and can virtually do anything since their words have the power of law. They easily resort to detaining, exiling or humiliating their critics and sometimes having them murdered. They use the state resources to surround themselves with a cult of personality that defines them as incompatible, godsend, all knowing, courageous and kind. Most of these African leaders have cut their people out of their state's decision-making processes. Personal rule is potentially destructive. It breeds rebellion where disadvantaged groups begin to employ violent tactics to group political leadership for sectional interests.

This one man's show syndrome that has been rampant in some African countries may actually be a legacy of pre-colonial Africa. Most of these leaders were born and brought up in the pre-colonial period, which may explain their authoritarian tendencies. When they took over power at independence, they wanted to enjoy and exercise power like it was done during their youth days in pre-colonial Africa. In pre-colonial communal structure elders enjoyed enormous powers although this powers were used for the benefit of their communities. In post-colonial Africa such powers have been extremely abused and used against the interests of the people.

6.3.2 The One-Party Phenomenon in Post-Independent Africa

Political independence in Africa was followed by a unique political argument brought about by

the emergence of one party system of government in most of the independent states on the continent.

According to Wanyande, in countries like Tanzania and Kenya, the one party system was established by an act of parliament abolishing opposition parties. In others however, small parties were voluntarily wound up making such countries *de facto* rather than *de jure* one party states.⁴⁶

At independence, there was an attempt by African leaders to look pastward in the pre-colonial period for a resilient form of political organization for post-colonial Africa. There was a feeling among African leaders that post-colonial African political systems must have regard to the continent's history and traditions.

Traditional African societies were accustomed to a considerable extent to the idea that society should be centred upon a single complex. Among the Bukusu people, this complex was the clan, which was an independent political unit with its own recognized elders.

The elders were the custodian of the clan and exercised absolute control over the clan property for the clan. Clan eldership was based among other things, on one's age which was determined by one's age group. Whenever there was a problem involving the whole Bukusu community or more than one clan, clan elders who in most cases belonged to the same age-grades met and discussed freely as co-equals. Decisions were arrived at by consensus and in most cases, the elders sought the views of the other elderly members of their clans before arriving at any decision.⁴⁷

This form of political organization especially among stateless societies like the Bukusu, made a number of African leaders and thinkers to commend that traditional African life and governance was by consensus. The demands of communalism ensured that there were no open opposition or opposing camps in the governance of traditional societies.⁴⁸

According to Nyerere, traditional African societies were democratic without multi-partism. Nyerere, and other African leaders, emphasized the distinctiveness of African democracy for them. Elements of democracy can be identified in traditional African societies. Emperor Haile Selassie is quoted by Adrain as having asserted that:

Democracy as the share of the people's voice in the conduct of their own affairs is not foreign to Ethiopia; the democratic spirit is not new to us. It is only that Ethiopia's traditional democratic concepts and convictions have now taken on a new expression and fresh forms.⁴⁹

In the same line, President Kwame Nkrumah asserted that:

Ghana society is by its own form and tradition fundamentally democratic in character. For centuries our people gave great powers to their chiefs but only so long as they adhered to the rules and regulations laid down by the people; the moment they deviated from these rules, they were deposed.⁵⁰

Nyerere, an ardent advocate of one partyism had these views about democracy in Africa:

We in Africa have no more need for being 'converted' to Socialism than we have of being taught democracy. Both are rooted in our own past, in the traditional society which produced us.⁵¹

The argument expounded by these leaders was that democracy must not be seen to be

synonymous with certain institutional forms of democracy found in the west. There is a difference between the universal essence of democracy and the relative democratic institutions.

It was felt that multiparty democracy evolved in the West due to the prevailing conditions in that part of the world. These conditions did not obtain in Africa to warrant a change from one party democracy to a multiparty democracy.

In Africa, unlike the west, a person lived in close interrelationship with others in the group; he felt a collective concern for his nuclear and extended families, his clan and tribe. In the economic field there were no classes based on capital accumulation. In Africa therefore, there were no antagonistic social classes and the people in their respective groups shared an identity of interests and their leaders exercised power in the interests of the whole people, not sections, classes or parties, as these did not exist.

Democracy in Africa then had to be constructed in line with the unanimous will of the people, on the identical group interests and strong brotherhood rather than on social classes as in the capitalist West.

Since there exists only one general interest, one unanimous popular will, and one pre-eminent thought, only one political party must carry out political activities.⁵²

Kwame Nkrumah favoured a unitary system of government based on one party democracy, arguing that democracy should not imply disorder or anarchy, which is likely to arise from factional politics of multiparty democracy. The new African states, so he thought, required order and stability, rather than factional competition.⁵³

Nyerere's Ujamaa had an implicit favour for a non party democracy. In Nyerere's thinking, the new state of Tanzania and other African states needed to be reorganized in line with the traditional African socialism and democracy, which had been disturbed by the colonial interlude. The principles that served traditional social life needed to be restored to serve as the basis of the new social order.⁵⁴

Nyerere thought that African democracy should be based on the principles of freedom, equality and consensus. Such a democracy should be based on free discussion without competing camps, conducted out along the strong egalitarian principles of traditional Africa and be based on reconciliation and consensus where people 'talk until they agree'.⁵⁵

Where there is one party, and that party is identified with the nation as a whole, the foundations of democracy are firmer than they can ever be. Where you have two or more parties, each representing only a section of the community. My argument is that a two-party system can be justified only where the parties are divided over some fundamental issue; otherwise it merely encourages the growth of factionalism.⁵⁶

In Kenya the arguments were the same. It was argued that multiparty democracy in Europe and America rested upon diverse class and status situations, which were built upon the diverse economies and societies that obtained in these countries. These countries had established a tradition and definite norms on the basis of which multipartism rested. In Kenya, like other African countries, class differentiation had not emerged and the society was still generally based on the communal solidarities that had not been completely broken down by colonialism.

Although Kenya gained independence under a multiparty system, it slowly evolved towards one

party system like many other African countries. Until 1992, President Moi had been consistently castigating multiparty crusaders as propagandist of foreign ideologies and values that were not African. Such thinking can only be construed to mean that, in the President's thinking, only the one party system was African and should therefore be followed.

In a survey on democracy and consensus in traditional Africa, Wiredu, asserts that there is considerable evidence that decision by consensus was often the order of the day in African deliberations in social and political affairs. He quotes Kaunda as saying "in our original societies we operated by consensus. An issue was talked out in solemn conclave until such time as agreement would be achieved". For Nyerere, "in African society the traditional method of conducting affairs is by free discussion". Guy Clutton-Brock is quoted as having said, "the elders sit under the big tree, and talk until they agree".⁵⁷

Wiredu thinks that traditional African systems of politics, at least in some known cases, practiced some form of democracy without any mode of competitive or multiparty politics. He, however, takes note of the fact that this form of consensual democracy operated under kinship networks, and it would be difficult to have similar arrangements under contemporary political arrangements.

In any case, he argues that the so-called consensual politics was not a bed of roses, it had its own setbacks and conflicts, and it will be an exaggeration for one to argue that it was an epitome of harmony and brotherhood. He, however, recommends the idea of a consensual non-party system, hoping that perhaps this may be the way forward.

Thinking in similar terms is Ndabaningi Sithole who faults those African thinkers and leaders for thinking that only one party system was indigenous to Africa. He thinks that both multiparty and

one party systems are foreign to Africa.

So far as our knowledge of African political institutions in the pre-colonial era goes, no evidence of the existence of the one-party system has been found anywhere in Africa; on the contrary, the one-party system is as alien to Africa as the two-party system. It was a no-party system.⁵⁸

Sithole, like Wiredu, would therefore rather recommend a no-party system rather than the one-party system.

Eze, in a response to Wiredu's and by extension Sithole's arguments brands them as thinkers who advocated a return to the tradition or to the source. He argues that consensus is not the goal of democracy. Democracy, he contends, should operate on the basis of a set of rules that allow and respect dissent as much as it's opposite. Democracy is not judged by its outcome but by its process, a fact that Eze thinks the above scholars have ignored.⁵⁹

Be it as it may, Wiredu's proposal is perhaps based on the realities that have bedeviled both the one party and multi party politics in Africa. In both those cases, the prospect for the continent has been dim. Perhaps, then there is need to re-examine the whole thinking, and thus the no-party system.

We need also to mention that the colonial period was also marked by a monolithic political system where the colonialists did not tolerate dissent or rebellion. According to Simiyu, colonialism unleashed such violence, discrimination and exploitation so much so that it made Africans to forget the violence and undemocratic practices of their traditional rulers. They began to portray the past as golden, democratic and harmonious. Simiyu does not deny the fact that traditional

Africa was harmonious with some rudiments of democracy but what he questions is the blanket picture of this past as it was done at independence.⁶¹

The argument at independence was that traditional Africa was democratic yet there were no parties. Post-colonial African leaders therefore wanted a political system based on this model where there could only be one party instead of many parties in the newly independent states. The argument was that where there is one party and the party is identified with the nation as a whole, the foundations of democracy are firmer than can ever be when you have a multi-party system. A one party system was African while multi-party system was un-African and foreign. Post-colonial leaders saw 'Africanness' in single party political systems and were determined to adopt this system of governance.

After independence, African governments began to destroy alternative parties and political influences via absorption and suppression. In other countries they were terminated by military rulers who seized governments and destroyed rival parties.⁶¹

Here, again, post-colonial Africa found itself a slave to the pastward looking philosophy whereby the form of political governance in post-colonial Africa had to be based on pre-colonial African forms of political governance. It was argued that since pre-colonial political systems were based on consensus, the best form of political system that would be the equivalent of consensus was to be the one-party system. It was thought that the one-party system represented consensual democracy where there are no conflicts while the foreign multi-party system represented adversarial democracy where conflicts and ethnicity are the norm.

It was felt that in 'pre-colonial African societies political governance was through consensus where different versions of political opinions were discussed under one leader until consensus was arrived at. There was struggle for consensus and not leadership. The most ideal political system in post-colonial system had therefore to avoid the struggle for leadership and put all interests under one leader and political party, as it was almost the case in traditional African societies. This was the only way of having a homegrown political system. Post independent African leaders argued that there was no necessary connection between democracy and multi-party systems. It was felt that indigenous African political systems had elements of democracy although there was no multi-partism. A one-party system of governance with opposition from within was African and democratic. Eventually this political system was adopted by many African states but it has been thoroughly abused making a mockery of the traditional one.

The failure of the one-party system and the problems that have bedevilled multi-partism in Africa have led some people to rethink the viability of these forms of political systems in Africa. Wiredu has, for example argued for a return to a no-party form of governance where governments are formed by consensus of elected representatives.⁶² This would almost be like the form of government adopted by the current Ugandan leadership which is experimenting on a no-party political system.

The point here is that the one-party system and the multi-party system in Africa have not been success stories. In fact, according to Wanyande, it would appear that the one-party system was a creation of African leaders to look for a suitable political system that would ensure that their control of state power was not threatened by competitors. The system developed into an authoritarian one where the people's rights and freedoms were suppressed and political dissent

was not tolerated. Multiparty systems on the other hand have been abused and manipulated leading to heightened ethnicity and even civil conflicts.⁶³

The presence of a party or parties is in no way a guarantee of a constructive or desirable politics.

Such a party or parties can employ unfair means, as it has been the case in Africa. The way forward, as seen by thinkers like Wiredu is therefore to look elsewhere, to a no-party system. How different this will be from one-party system is, however, not well explained by Wiredu.

The thinking behind the one-party or non-party systems is two folds. In the first case, it is said to be African, that this is how our traditional societies operated. A relevant democratic system would be the one that has a basis on our culture, so the thinking goes.

In the second case, there is the conviction that the natural course of free party formation would undermine national character and evolve in its place ethnic loyalties, social and political turmoil, ineffective government and possible loss of sovereignty.⁶⁴

It is this frustration that Africa has witnessed, that has made Wiredu to advocate a return to our traditional past, but this time to remodel it into a no-party political system.⁶⁵ This trend is also greatly influenced by traditional communalism where governance was not through camps or parties.

Post-colonial Africa, it would appear, will continue to look pastward for the solutions to its contemporary problems. It is the pastward looking philosophy that still reigns supreme in the minds of Africans. There is always a tendency to look at our past as having been the golden ideal

that we should restore and rework out to suit contemporary circumstances. It would appear that some of the problems that the continent has experienced may be due to the Africans' orientation towards their past; it results from the attempt, by Africans to relive their past albeit with some modification. The one-party system in Africa with its attendant problems that bedevilled the continent was, as we have seen, an attempt to restore some traditional forms of political governance. With this dismal performance, there are still calls for a return to our traditions but this time to no-party or a non-party political system. The spirit of looking pastward, still lingers on.

6.3.3 The problem of Individuality

Most traditional African societies, as was the case with the Bukusu traditional society, put more emphasis on communality or collectivity rather than on individuality. The group was supreme and overriding over the individual. Individual interests and desires were subordinate to those of the community. The welfare of the community was superior and could override even the most fundamental individual rights or interests.

Individuals were compelled into strict communism, to dependence upon one another, and to a fusion which reduced everyone to the same level. The community was duty-bound to ensure that the individual was part and parcel of his/her community.⁶⁶ The individual had to abandon his/her own self interests and desires in favour of the collective ones. The individual surrenders his self to the group, to its goals, values and standards. The 'I' surrenders itself to the 'We'.

This surrender, according to Fromm usually leads to the loss of the self. He writes:

The individual ceases to be himself, he adopts entirely the kind of

personality offered to him by cultural patterns, and he therefore becomes exactly as all others are and as they expect him to be. The discrepancy between 'I' and the world disappears.... The person who gives up his individual self and becomes an automaton, identical with millions of other automatons around him, need not feel alone and anxious any more. But the price he pays, however, is high; it is the loss of his self. ⁶⁷

Although Fromm sounds too extreme, the individual in such a case, loses his autonomy as a distinct self very different from the others.

Whoever sustains the primacy of the social and collective would make man a slave of society. Collectivity blocks man's self-realization. It stands in the way of the development of his reason and his critical capacities. Under such conditions, the development of an individual as a free, self-determining and productive person is limited. The individual also loses the right to independent thought, action and expression. ⁶⁸

According to Gyekye,

extreme communitarianism fails to give adequate recognition to the creativity, inventiveness, imagination, and idealistic proclivities of some human individuals in matters relating to the production of ideas and the experience of visions. The powers of inventiveness, imagination and so on are not entirely a function of the communal culture, they are instead a function of natural talents or endowments, even though they can only be nurtured and exercised in a cultural community. ⁶⁹

Traditional Africa was authoritarian towards the individual and even throttled an individual's impulse to adventurism, inventiveness and acquisition of new knowledge. Individual liberty was not nurtured and promoted by our traditional African culture. This same tendency appears to have been carried over into post independent Africa. In contemporary Africa, there is a deliberate

coercive tendency against individuality in the guise of cohesiveness and national unity. People have been denied their rights to express their interests, ideas and values. The will of the people in most African countries, has been assumed and 'choice' is made for them by their leaders. Conformity in post-colonial Africa is forced on the people.⁷⁰

The one party system and the military rule in post-colonial Africa have been accused for blatant authoritarianism against individuality. Post independent Africa is dominated by states that have tended to control and limit the rights and freedoms of their people who have even been shut out of their states' decision making machineries.

The pre-colonial cultures that was oppressive against the individual and which emphasized collectivity seem to linger on in post-colonial Africa. The struggle for competitive politics in Africa has been difficult perhaps due to a culture, inherited from our past that is not conducive to such forms of politics.

The political situation in Kenya especially after the 1982 attempted military coup was one of the most authoritarian against the individual. The situation in countries such as Zaire under Mobutu Sese Seko, Uganda under Idi Amin, Central African Republic under Bokassa, Ethiopia under its first two post independent leaders, and many other countries, did not put in place structures that provided the individual with a free environment to think, act and be creative. Individuality was sacrificed for what the leaders called collective order and stability.

Generally, in Africa, individuality has suffered the greatest casualty, a fact that has been attributed to the monolithic type of leadership in traditional Africa. Traditional societies did not encourage individual freedom, and this was in most cases sacrificed for the sake of the communal interests

and pursuits. A number of post-independent African leaders were brought up under the above social arrangements, and found it easier to have similar arrangements in their new states.

6.3.4 The Problem of Envy

Traditional African societies were egalitarian in nature. Egalitarianism was one of the key values of communitarianism. There was little differentiation among individuals in terms of wealth, success and social status. A communal society was one of equals, and individuals' attempt to stick their necks out was met with resistance. Such attempts were seen as a threat to the society concerned.

Post-independent African societies especially in rural areas were largely still under the tendency towards egalitarianism. The changed circumstances, however, have become more conducive to individuality and many individuals are now striving to stick their necks out. There are now two forces in operation in post-independent Africa: the urge to egalitarianism on the one hand and a new spirit of capitalism.

This existence has brought about a phenomenon of envy, which tends to characterize the relationship between the people under the influence of the two forces.

The phenomenology of envy is complex. The target of envy is another person's fortune - his/her intelligence, health, good looks, knowledge, wealth, spouse, title, job, status, or luck. Envy arises when we attempt to take stock of ourselves and in the process, the first stock is to look at others. We are constituted in such a way that we, in most cases, can only be happy by comparing ourselves to others. If the comparison is unfavourable, we feel a pang of envy.

When the contemplation of the success of others brings our own failures home to us with inescapable vividness, we cannot help inquiring into the causes of our failures.

According to Elster

The first urge of envy is not 'I want what he has' but 'I want him not to have what he has, because it makes me feel that I am less.'⁷¹

An envious person will not want anyone to have what he cannot have and will also wish to bring those who are better than him/her down to his/her level.

Envy in this case touches on self-respect and re-distributive concerns. It was perhaps for this reason that Rawls (1971) tried to find an excuse for envy.

When envy is a reaction to the loss of self-respect in circumstances where it would be unreasonable to expect someone to feel differently, I shall say that it is excusable.⁷²

For Rawls a well-ordered society is unlikely to give rise to feelings of envy, both because material inequalities are likely to be relatively small, and because the worst off are more likely to accept them since they know they work to their advantage and, indeed, are allowed to exist only because they work to their advantages.⁷³

Rawls, however, is talking about an ideal society yet post independent African societies are nowhere near the ideal. In post-independent African rural villages, the traditional legacy of egalitarianism and thus envy has worked against individual adventure, industry and creativity. In societies that for a long time were highly communal and egalitarian, individuals' attempts to rise

above others evoke envy among their unsuccessful neighbours. In villages where the belief in witchcraft is still rampant, successful individuals are always fearful that witchcraft will be targeted against them.

In cases where unsuccessful individuals believe that the successful ones have achieved success at their expense, motivation to seek redress or destroy their fortune is high. Thomas, confirms this when he writes,

In primitive society, witch beliefs of this kind can act as a severe check to technical progress by discouraging efficiency and innovation. A man who gets a head in a tribal society is likely to awaken the suspicion of his neighbours....In such an environment, witch beliefs help to sustain a rough egalitarianism. They are a conservative force, acting as a check on individual effort.⁷⁴

The evil eye of envy is, however, not limited to what Thomas calls primitive societies. In post independent African societies, especially in rural areas, success can attract envy. If one becomes unusually prosperous, the witches will probably go after him/her. In such societies or areas, egalitarianism results from envy and the fear of witchcraft.

The efficacy of witchcraft is not the point here. The thing is that envy is a reality in these areas and because people believe in witchcraft, many individuals suppress their potentials and talents as a weapon against witchcraft.

The fears consequent upon witchcraft and envy restrict life activities of some persons, it curtails their social participation and some people are forced to migrate to urban centres or away from their rural homes where the risks are less.

The problem of envy and witchcraft, a consequent of traditional egalitarianism, is one not recognized among many scholars, yet it would be responsible for the economic stagnation of most rural parts of Africa. Industrious and innovative individuals are forced to abandon their villages and thus deny the villages their developmental inputs. It is a reality in our contemporary rural villages which is rarely acknowledged.

6.3.5 The Idea of African Unity

The idea of African unity may mean many things but it brought into existence such terms as Pan-Africanism and negritude. The envisaged end of such movements especially after independence ranged from a United States of Africa, an African Federation to a Union Government of Africa.

The idea of negritude was born out of a revolt against the discrimination of the Africans all over the world. Specifically it was born out of the determination by Africans to revolt against the French policy of cultural assimilation.

Negritude is not merely a description of the norms of traditional black Africa; it is also a capacity to be proud of those values even in the very process of abandoning them. Sometimes it is a determination to prevent too rapid erosion of the traditional structure.⁷⁵

Negritude therefore can be seen as a movement conserved with the awareness, defense and development of African cultural values in the face of a determination by westerners to erode and conquer it. Mazrui divides the movement into two broad categories. On the one hand there is literacy negritude and then on the other hand there is what he calls anthropological negritude.

Literacy negritude would include not only creative literature but also certain approaches in African historiography. Anthropological negritude is on the whole more directly related to concrete cultural behaviour than literacy negritude normally is.

Anthropological negritude is a romanticized study of an African tribal community, by an African ethnologist.⁷⁶

The sense of communion was an essential ingredient of negritude, as reference was again and again made to the communitarian way of Africans before Western interference and colonialism.

It was negritude, founded by Leopold Senghor, and the pre-independence Pan-African movement that served as the basis for the post-colonial attempts towards African unity.

Pan-Africanism was born of the experience of slavery and colonialism, which having gone through the denigration by the whites, wanted to redeem themselves, accept their blackness, be proud of it, and turn it into a resource for a forward movement that would put them on the same level with the whites.

According to Nasong'o the original purpose of Pan-Africanism was the restoration of the dignity of the black people and their descendants found all over the world.⁷⁷ Towards independence, it became a major movement in the struggle for Africa's liberation from colonialism. After independence, it assumed the role of uniting the many independent African states into a strong continent, and some form of 'oneness' with all blacks wherever they had been displaced to.

The roots of Pan-Africanism can be traced to the 'complete alienation, physical exploitation and the spiritual torment of the African people in the Western world.'

Chime Chimelu traces the origin of the movement to the sorry state that the Negro people found themselves in the Western world. It was a kind of state that deprived the Negro any respect that is due to human beings. In the eyes of the West, the Negro was sub-human.⁷⁸

As a reaction to these conditions a number of Africans in the Diaspora and Caribbeans began to whip up some kind of Negro Nationalism culminating into Pan-Africanism after a number of Pan-African Congresses. At the forefront were W.E.B. Dubois, Marcus, Garvey and George Padmore.

When independence was won by many African states Pan-Africanism began more and more to concern itself with the question of African unity, affirmation of the African personality and the articulation of the African values that were threatened with extinction. Particular concern was placed on African unity, economic and political integration that would eventually result into a United States of Africa.

The idea of African unity after independence was kept alive by a number of issues.

First was the persistence of minority white rule in the southern part of the continent. The African states wanted to unite so that they could form a formidable force to liberate their brothers who were still under colonial rule.

The fragmentation of Africa into many states; some very small, made the need for unity among them essential. Some states lacked sufficient demographic and economic strength to form viable and prosperous political units without the other states. Soon, it dawned on a number of African states, that independence was no guarantee for development and a better living standard.⁷⁹

In addition to these factors, the fact of Africanness, and a common history of colonialism served to make the new states look at each other as one and that a drive towards unity was possible

without many obstacles.⁸⁰

The post-colonial Pan-African movement embarked on a spirited mission to reduce the excessive political fragmentation and rational parochialism of African states and to help eliminate any possible friction among them. In addition there was the need to achieve economic development, which, the movement thought, could not be achieved with some form of unity among the African states.

The strive towards unity however was seen differently by different crusaders, so much so that by the 1960's there were two distinct groups. On the one hand was the Casablanca group which preferred a political approach whereby the new states were to subordinate themselves to a central government. On the other hand was the Monrovia group which advocated a gradualist and economic approach where new states retain their sovereign but work gradually towards economic social cooperation, which eventually would lead to political unity.⁸¹

Despite these groupings towards African Unity, one thing is clearly discernible and relevant to our thesis. The attempts towards unity, apart from the other factors mentioned, were necessitated by a romantic memory of the African past.

Crusaders of Pan-Africanism particularly with regard to cultural unity such as Leopold Senghor, desired a form of African unity based on traditional African culture.⁸² Senghor held that in the Negro African society the individual was integrated into a network of particular solidarities. One of which was the family clan, tribe, the kingdom and moved progressively to higher territorial integration. He believed that Pan-African union should reproduce these traditional African

solidarities. This solidarity could even be extended to the rest of the world.

Sekou Toure expressed a similar attitude towards the search for an authentic African unity:

Every time that we adopt a solution genuinely African in its nature and conception we shall solve our problems easily, for those who implement it will not be bewildered or surprised at what they have to do, they will grasp without difficulty the way they should work, act or think. In making full sense of our specific qualities, we shall accelerate our historic evolution.⁸³

Mwalimu Julius Nyerere also argued for an African unity based on traditional African communalism.

Our recognition of the family to which we all belong must be extended yet further – beyond the tribe, the community, the Nation, or even the continent – to embrace the whole society of mankind.⁸⁴

Nyerere believed that African states can evolve a union or a unity on the basis of their past ways of life. For him, it was possible to extend the African solidarity or brotherhood at the family and tribal levels to the national, continental and universal level. If this is possible, then it was easier to have a union or unity modeled along our traditional past.

Colin Legum asserts that the acceptance of blackness was followed by a demand to rediscover the lost past of the Negro race – another strand in Pan-Africanism which was well captured by the Guyana poet, Leon Damas,

Give me back my black clothes to play the simple game of my
instincts...
to recover my
courage

my boldness to feel myself myself
a new self from the one I was yesterday
Yesterday
When the hour of uprooting came.⁸⁵

The rediscovery of the African “lost paradise” particularly the African communitarian way of life was one of the underpinning threat in the Pan-African movement both in the colonial and post-colonial era.

This was based on the thinking that the entire African societies had something in common; they were seen to form one single tradition and particularly the communitarian way of life. There was therefore a tendency by the Pan-African advocates to look pastwards to this communality, this common tradition to provide a pillar or to serve as a model for contemporary unity among the people of Africa.

Jean Marie Makang, however, does not think the same about traditional Africa. He blames ethnological discourses for the ignorance about the diversity that characterized African peoples and societies. There was no such a thing as African tradition, only particular tribal groups with each viewing itself as a totality. He argues that in the history of Africa, there is not one tradition, not one mentality, but a plurality of traditions.⁸⁶

Makang’s contention raises a serious issue but fails to explain the common beliefs, practices and thought systems that so many scholars have identified as running across traditional African culture. Of course, there were differences, internal contradictions but there were certain elements of the African culture that run across and appeared common to all. At this general level therefore one could talk about a tradition of African culture as a basis of African unity. What is important

here is that the essential similarities must have weight to warrant certain generalizations.

It was on the basis of this that the likes of Nkrumah, Senghor, Toure and Nyerere wanted the post-colonial attempts towards unity to take lessons from the traditional communitarian way of life. There was therefore, a clear neo-communal spirit necessitated by the need to build a unified continent for the African people.

The post-colonial era in Africa continues to be pulled towards the pre-colonial era. It would appear that many of the present features and problems facing Africa are a legacy of its past; it is a legacy strengthened by the principle of looking pastwards for solutions to contemporary problems. The communal charm in traditional societies, continues to pull contemporary Africans to the past.

There has always been a clear desire to refuse anything that is thought not to be African and to construct the present on the basis of our 'golden past'. It appears that post-colonial Africa's struggle with the challenges of authenticity in a modern and rapidly changing world has forced the continent into a soul-searching mood for a true African identity. The problem has been aggravated by the tendency by the Western world to impose uniform standards on other cultures.

The attempt to be different therefore forced many leaders and thinkers in post-colonial Africa to look pastward for a solution to the emerging challenges. For them the future had to be constructed on the basis of the past. The very values that were strictly enforced appear to still have a hold on the African mind, as they struggled with the challenges of development and national building.

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7.0 CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 CONCLUSION

We have seen that traditional African societies exercised a strong sense of communality especially within ethnic groups. The communalistic attitude, we hasten to say, is not something unique only to Africa. It was lived in other continents, although, much earlier. The only noticeable difference could be the fact that African societies appear to have institutionalized this form of social organization, which lengthened its existence and strengthened its intensity in the continent. It was a way of life, which the metaphysical world and the people's orientation towards the past combined to ensure that it was lived forever. It was a historical phase that did not fizzle out as it did in other regions. These intervening factors made traditional African communalism unique in intensity and duration, giving it a very special place in the reality of both pre- and post-independent Africa.

The African people had identified communalism as the best form of existence and they deliberately set out to institutionalize it by legitimizing it, thus, making it one of the common aims of society.

They established in themselves and their people a communal mentality whose manifestation was through the union of the self with the group and an intermingled web of reciprocal relationships that extended to both the dead and vegetative beings. It was an intricate web of relationship that tied the individual and the general interest. The lineage, clan and ethnic groups were social units within which the interest of each member had to be in agreement with the interest of all other members of the groups. The self was woven onto the group and an individual's survival and existence was dependant on the survival and existence of his/her group.

Traditional African communalism was the Africans expression of their will to survive under familiar conditions or order and harmony. It was a preference of the moral and social sense over the sense of self-regard. Conflicting individual impulses and interests had to be tamed in preference to social harmony and order.

In the examination of the socio-political organization of the Bukusu traditional society, we saw that all institutions, practices and beliefs were carefully established to cement communal values and harmony in the society. The family, usually extended, was the most basic unit which was followed by the lineage and then clan. At each of these units, the eldest member assumed leadership and ensured that his unit members abided with the established group norms and practices. The units usually resided in one geographical area and, in most cases, lived in walled villages which enhanced cohesion and communality among the members. The Bukusu community was made up of many clans which were under the leadership of the most prominent and eldest members of the community.

Although the most basic political unit was the clan, the entire community also recognized certain prominent elders as their leaders. The community was also united by the belief in a common ancestor, occupation of a common territory, common traditions, beliefs and language.

In addition, the community took deliberate steps to ensure a harmonious, and peaceful society. The community put in place stringent laws, customs, circumcision age classifications, rites of passage, leadership qualification criteria, and tied the society to the supernatural control of the ancestors, which helped greatly in ensuring strict adherence to a communitarian way of life.

This was a community's will to forge and maintain a socio-political structure, which it thought would best ensure its existence. Measures were put in place to ensure that the structure remained the way it was found by subsequent generations.

The sustenance of communalism was greatly boosted by the Africans' orientation towards the past. For the Africans in traditional societies, the ideal lay not in the future but in the past. As such, a way of life that was established due to the prevailing circumstances during the time when ancestors were still alive, became the ideal which subsequent generations were forced to relive.

The believe in the mystic power, the use of customary morality and the role played by elders helped to ensure compliance and adherence to the old tried ways.

These factors helped a great deal in institutionalizing a way of life, which became part and parcel of traditional African existence. Communalism was, therefore, a historical phase that was idealized and institutionalized by traditional African communities.

Africans, therefore, were subjects of this way of life for much longer period and in a much more intensified way than other societies elsewhere. The way of life had, therefore, a long and lasting impression among the people of this continent.

With the coming of colonialism to Africa, the impact of new forces and values on the above factors were most pronounced but did not totally eclipse traditional modes of life, action and thought. At and after independence, therefore, there was a determined and spirited movement

to restore the values of communalism in independent Africa albeit with modifications to suit the changed circumstances. This movement, it would appear, was driven by the African philosophy of life i.e. the orientation towards the past, which the people of Africa were accustomed to. The African people were oriented towards the past; their ideal social, economic and political organization lay in the past. The present therefore had to be lived almost as the past was lived. As it was in the past and with their ancestors, so it should be in the present and with their descendants. The first batch of post-independent African leaders lived under this philosophy which was however, brutally interrupted by colonialism. With the exit of the colonialists, the continent found itself in what we can call, 'a reinvention' mood.

This process of reinvention was greatly influenced by the above philosophy. The neo-communal spirit and the cry for traditionalism in post-independent Africa was a consequent of this philosophy that still lingered on in the people of Africa. The daunting problems, failures and frustrations that faced post independent Africa strengthened the will of the neo-traditionalism. It showed how the future could be so dangerous if people do not live as their ancestors lived. Post-colonial problems almost, validated the belief that the only way out for independent Africa was the reintroduction of traditional forms of social and political organization albeit with some changes. The one party phenomenon, the oppressive and authoritarian nature of African leaders were some of the many negative manifestations of traditionalism in post-colonial Africa. These may have occurred consciously or unconsciously, but are a legacy of communalism in post-colonial Africa.

Despite these negative manifestations the search for the past or a tendency to look pastward for solutions to contemporary challenges, social, political and economic, may have its own merit.

Traditional patterns can be shaped and fitted into a new order. Traditional African communalism was supposed to serve as a model of action, a mobilizing ideal and an ideology to promote a sense of pride and identity among the people. There is usually some kind of sanctity that enshrouds traditions which makes it readily acceptable when certain of its aspects are incorporated into modern institutions.

Due to the impact of colonialism, tradition was seen as the best model for the social, economic and political organization of post-colonial Africa. This, however, should never be a mere repetition of practices and customs of the past. In such a process, certain older values have to give way and the remaining aspects and be translated into more modern circumstances.

Modern institutions can with proper insight be bend to accommodate certain traditional values, which can help in providing a sense of continuity and identity. Neo-communalism should therefore allow the people to also learn and borrow from others. In areas of science and technology, it is imperative that post-colonial Africa should have the leeway to borrow from the West. This is possible when neo-communalism or any form of neo-traditionalism allows for a critique of the past ways of life while only allowing those that are relevant and restorable into modern conditions. Neo-communalism was supposed to put in place a communal foundation on which new knowledge, science, technology and values could be based. In the case of post-colonial Africa however, this was not probably done and as such certain negative manifestations still poked their faces in post-colonial Africa.

The good aspects of communalism may have been ignored by selfish leadership that cropped in post-colonial Africa. Although neo-communalism may have had good intentions, the realities of

post-independence Africa did fulfil these intentions. Instead it served to justify certain negative trends that have continued to haunt the continent.

The legacy of communalism and the norms and institutions that nurtured and sustained it, have therefore, continued to have great impact on the socio-political and economic organization of post-independent Africa.

The neo-communalist attempts to restore communal values in post independent Africa was not to be an easy task and it had inherent dangers. Sometimes old values can be useful for integration and cohesion purposes but they are rarely adequate in meeting new needs and wants. To be tethered to past modes of thought and existence in a rapidly changing world may not be advisable and could be responsible for some of Africans' post-independent problems. The poor state of individual liberty and human rights in Africa, the authoritarian political leadership and the ubiquitous problem of ethnicity in the continent appear to have part of their roots in traditional African forms of social organization. Traditional features and characteristics that were inherent in communalism continue to be manifested in various ways in post-independent Africa.

Traditional African's philosophy of orientation towards the past has capitalized on this to continue pulling the people of Africa to the past, to traditional values, some of which are anachronistic to contemporary circumstances and demands. Unless therefore, this is selectively done, we end up with a situation where such a pastward look is misused at the peril of the people of Africa.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

There were certain humanistic values in traditional Africa, which would be restored and fitted into the modern African society. And quite a number of such values could be ideal the world over.

Certain moral values such as patience, hospitality, self-control, generosity, humility and reciprocity can be fitted into modern institutions for the welfare of the people and society. Such values can now be useful in the caring of the sick and AIDS orphans. In traditional African, such people could be taken good care of.

The strong sense of loyalty to one's community among traditional Africans can be restored and extended to state. This however, requires a lot of social engineering. Post-colonial Africa must now embark on some form of social engineering to deflect these loyalties and consciousness from the ethnic groups to the nation-states. The new states must strive to render irrelevant these natural identities. This can be done by the creation of a common culture and interests among the different groups that fall under one nation-state. The states must strive to provide its citizens with all the things that attract them to original groups.

When the state adequately takes over the responsibilities of the primordial groups, individuals will gradually redirect their loyalty to the nation states. Nation development will have to be pursued equitably and fairly, and gradually people will acquire similar goals, values, ideals, sentiments and aspiration. This can gradually build a common sense of history and culture in the people. A common language is also usually an important vehicle towards a common culture. When people are adequately gathered under the banner of their nation-states, they will cease to look at themselves as members of certain ethnic communities. When the future is be made more certain, they will also abandon their orientation towards the past. People seek refuge in their past when

the future appear to have uncertainties, and to their ethnic groups when the new states fail to give them the security and needs that are due to them.

It is time that post-colonial Africans particularly the leaders realized that although our traditional past is important and harbours certain attractive values, it does not hold the key to the solutions to contemporary challenges facing the continent. There is therefore a need for a diversification of the people's orientation. People should not only be oriented towards their past, they must also look to their future and borrow from others. This would be the only way of retaining their identity and at the same time finding solutions to contemporary challenges. There is need to open up our theoretical conspectus, to accept not only the past but also the future and synthesize the two into a key to better solutions to the problems facing the continent.

There is also need for more research to be done to cover other communities so that a comprehensive understanding of Communal Values and Social Structures can be clearly understood so that any social engineering in post independent African can have a good blue print to borrow from.

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