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Article

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## AFRICAN IDENTITY IN TRANSFORMATION: EXPLORING SOCIAL DYNAMICS

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### Abstract

The issue of African identity has been one of the major concerns in African discourse. This concern is further heightened in contemporary time by the compelling demand for global standard and push for cultural uniformity as criteria for acceptance into the comity of civilized societies. In this way, attempts at calibrating African identity reflects the principle of existence which asserts that each entity is self-defined, unified with itself, and coherent in its nature. Differently stated. every entity exists separately from the others, with characteristics such as color, size, and shape differentiating it from other entities. The objective of the paper, therefore, is to challenge the position that the debate about African identity is long foregone, and irredeemably so. It demonstrates that the capacity of man to continue to engage in self-interrogation for the purpose of self-affirmation is one of the ontological characteristics of his being. In engaging the method of conceptual analysis. The study establishes a link between the African past, its present and foreseeable future. Finding reveals that the frantic efforts made towards reclaiming and redefining the African personality through social and ideological strides, has culminated into cultural and linguistic activism wherein there is more emphasis by scholars on the need to prioritize indigenous African languages in literature and intellectual discourse. The outcome of the study shows that African identity is not a relic of the past but a living and evolving force.

**Keywords:** African Identity, Colonialism, Post-colonialism, Racialism, Self-affirmation, Reclamation

### Introduction

There is no human civilization which has not got a view or aggregate of views that can be called their concept or theory of a human person that is why we often talk of European personality, the Asian personality or the African personality. Often times, it is through these racial or

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cultural lenses that a people's view about existence, about human being, human value and what makes a person of one race different from a person of another race become known. Basically, scholars in African philosophy are of the view that there are two ways to understand who a human being is. The first is normative and the second is prescriptive. The former is an evaluation of the human person in respect to obedience to cultural, community and social norms. In other words, the definition of the human person using this approach, takes root from the culture and tradition in which he or she originates and thus set him or her apart from another person of different culture and tradition. The descriptive approach to the human person takes its cue from human physical attributes. In addition, a concept of a person is not something that the people in that society will necessarily think of as separate from their views about many other things. In other words, a people's notion of the human being interlocks with their notion of several other things including their notion of reality, acceptable moral conduct and their method of accessing truth. Human Identity, in short, is made up of a multitude of factors and an individual is both subject to them and at the same time influences others as well. Simply put, the experiences of individual personality in a given society or race create their identity or combine to define who they are. Therefore, the work shall explore the normative approach to the African personality and discuss why it is a bit difficult to properly calibrate who an African is owing to his peculiar experience of the past which has affected his present. It shall show the pragmatic ideological efforts being made to reclaim African identity. It shall begin by discussing briefly the unfortunate colonial experience and its attendant consequences on the African personality viz: lost of identity and clear-cut ideology on which path to go.

### **Disrupting the African Psyche: Colonialism's Lasting Effects**

No doubt, as the saying goes, "one cannot divine the future without making reference to the past". It is on this note that the study will look into the past experiences of the African man which led him to where he is today. It is necessary to understand this experience in order to fully appreciate his present status and what awaits his fate in the nearest future. Colonial rule was rooted in the denial of African history, culture, and social system. It was a background already laid by false imagination by Western anthropologists and explorers. European explorers and missionaries propagated the idea that Africa had no history before their arrival, thereby branding indigenous knowledge as primitive. The imposition of western education, languages, Christianity and Eurocentric values systematically impacted indigenous worldviews and identities. An incident that will forever remain fresh and horrendous in the minds of the African political historians is the events of 1804/1805 Berlin conference. For the purpose of recapitulation, this was a date with history when the Western powers and their allies, sat in Berlin Germany to partition the African territory among themselves. Since that date till the early 1960s, the hitherto African territories were directly and indirectly administered by these colonial interlopers. By virtue of this particular event, Africa lost its pride of place, its cultures were invaded and as William Yeats would put it; "Turning and turning in the widening gyre. The falcon cannot hear the falconer. Things fall apart the center cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world"<sup>1</sup>.

Walter Rodney described this era as when the African people were cruelly sold into slavery, used their man powers for the industrial progress of Europe and America. These colonial intruders practically destroyed all that were capable of making Africans great, leaving in its place, mere chaff both in personality and in material resources. Even those left in the soil of Africa, were made to be slaves in their own father land. They underestimated and disparaged African culture and identity. Specifically, the Europeans denied that reason played a

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<sup>1</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*. (New York: Doubleday, 1959), p.4.

significant role in the development of society and culture in Africa as it did in Europe. This claim was an aspect of the myth which was designed as an ideology of legitimation for the colonial enterprise<sup>2</sup>. This unfortunate incidence was technically summarized by C.L.R. James thus:

Africans are, and always have been, a backward and barbarous people who have never been able to establish any civilized society of their own.... These barbarous people were brought into contact with civilization by the brutalities of the slave trade. However, the unhappy slave trade is happily behind us, and as a result of their contact with European civilization, primitive Africans became a part of a unified world<sup>3</sup>

After brain washing the people, they were meant to see all that is African as bad, barbaric, savagery, evil, fetish and diabolic. While those of Western extraction as good, civilized and superior. Worse still; at a point, according to Achebe, even our own people turned against us by joining them to call our cultures bad.

Does the white man understand our custom about land?" "How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.<sup>4</sup>

This was what Frantz Fanon described as:

Two worlds: that makes two bewitching; they dance all night and at dawn they crowd into the churches to hear mass; each day they split widens. Our enemy betrays his brothers and becomes our accomplice; his brothers do the same thing. The status of "native" introduced and maintained by the settler among colonized people with their consent<sup>5</sup>.

The above quotation from Frantz summarizes the conditions Africans found themselves in this period, that is, they were confronted with the enemies within and the ones from outside. To the colonizers, then, Africans were an inferior race of people whose religions, where they had any, were without any abiding values; they were people who generally lacked the intellectual and moral resources of the Europeans, whose mission in Africa was a "civilizing mission." This was the situation which the African man found himself under the European intrusion. It was against this background that the African identity was battered. As seen from the discussion above, the African personality passed through tripartite experience; slavery, colonialism and racism. But like Fanon again observes, colonialism only loosens its hold when the knife is at its throat. It was through this circumstance that the colonial interlopers unwillingly granted the various people in Africa their independence. However, emerging from the foregoing experience as characterized above, the perplexing questions within African philosophy now

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<sup>2</sup> Olusegun Oladipo, "Reason, Identity, and the African Quest: The Problems of Self-Definition in African Philosophy" in *Africa Today*, Vol. 42, No. 3, Philosophy, Identity, and Social Transformation (3rd Qtr., 1995), pp. 26-38. Indiana University Press Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4187048>

<sup>3</sup> C.L.R. James, , *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* .(London: Allison and Bushy, 1977), p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Achebe, op.cit., p.176.

<sup>5</sup>Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*. (Suffolk Great Britain: The Chancer Press, 1963), p.17.

border on African identity particularly: what is Africa? Who is an African? How can an African be characterized? But as observed by Anthony Kalu, at face value, the answer seems obvious. Surely, everyone knows who the African is. But the answer becomes less obvious once other probing qualifiers and circumstances that make the African experience are added to the question<sup>6</sup>. These were the issues that immediately confronted the new African post-colonial states; how to reclaim the African personality and how to reaffirm that which is authentically African in order to usher the people of Africa into a new dawn.

### **The Post Colonial African and the Search for Identity**

The people of Africa entered into the post-colonial era with hope high, thinking that now that the enemy had gone, it would be a new dawn for the young states, indeed. However, the first issue which confronted African thinkers then as part of decolonization process was how to define who an African is. This was necessary because one needs to know who one is before one can affirm oneself and make progress. This principle is in order with the Socratic dictum, “man know thyself”. Accordingly, there was need to re-situate African mode of thinking prior to the invasion of his personality by the Europeans. African thinkers produced ideas and philosophies that were strictly African and which could be equated to what was inherited from the Western ideas. Thus, in the foregoing mission, we can situate African philosophy as essentially an activity, a project, a systematic, coherent inquiry into African experience and his world and how he conceives and interprets the universe. According to, Panthaleon. Iroegbu, “African philosophy is the reflective inquiry into the marvels and problematic that confronts one in the African world in view of producing systematic explanation and sustained responses to them”<sup>7</sup>. This exercise by African thinkers of this period became important because in the views of Frank Ndubuisi,

African philosophy should take cognizance of the African past and present experience in openness for the future through searching, critical inquiry and well-informed criticisms, not only to rediscover, discover, know and interpret his world, but also to master it and enhance it<sup>8</sup>

Again, this cannot be successfully achieved without first understanding who an African is. Like Kanu further noted, the question that confronted thinkers and political theorists of the post-colonial Africa ranged from: How the African identity should be constructed in the face of the mosaic of identities that people of African ancestry living within and beyond the continent bear? Should all been seen as Africans, and does having an African pedigree qualify them as African? Are all who perceive themselves as Africans accepted as such? Are there levels of “Africanness”, and are some more African than others?<sup>9</sup> Stating the opinion of Jideofor, Kanu goes further to observe that in the past, the experience of slave trade and colonialism were the provenance of such an enquiry. However, in recent time (the post colonial Africa), the researcher believes that with the intensification of globalisation the identity of the African would have to be defined from this experience, or else, she would run the risk of being a nameless actor in the world stage<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, what is African identity?

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<sup>6</sup> Anthony Kalu, African Identity and the Emergence of Globalization, in *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* Vol. 3 No. 6; June 2013, p.34

<sup>7</sup> Panthaleon Iroegbu, *Enwisdomization and African philosophy*. (Owerri: International University Press, 1994), p.116.

<sup>8</sup> Frank Ndubuisi, “The Philosophical Paradigm of African Identity and Development”, in *Open Journal of Philosophy* 2013. Vol.3, No.1A, 222-230 2013 in SciRes (<http://www.scirp.org/journal/ojpp>)

<sup>9</sup> Kanu, op.cit., p.34.

<sup>10</sup> Kanu, ibid

## **African Identity**

African philosophy bears on African identity. To understand this more, we have to consider or address certain questions such as: what is identity? What actually characterizes a person as an African? These questions revolve around the issue of identity. For Charles Nweke, the traits and attributes of an object help to identify it. An object's form is referred to as its structural identity. The diversity of nature creates a hybrid identity even though reality is one. "Thus, various aspects of existence bear specific identities so that it is possible to talk of personal identity, cultural identity, national identity, social identity...identity bears the character of specification."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, personal observation has shown that the world is not merely a collection of lifeless, static natural phenomena like mountains and trees. There exists a conscious, engaged, and purposeful entity: Man. In contrast to the previous category of beings that lack awareness of their own existence, man is self-aware and has the intellectual abilities to comprehend himself and make sense of his existence. In the light of this, for Iroegbu, "by African, is understood the geo-political and socio-cultural entity englobed by the continent Africa".<sup>12</sup> He considers more of the place and location. But the questions above went beyond geographical location or designation, the term refers to a being or reality or one who can directly or indirectly trace his route to the African soil or having the characteristics of Africinity. What is rather important is to assert that the African is identifiable naturally; by colour, location or historical origin. The fact remains that, the question of African identity bears on the principle of being that "what is, is and what is not, is not"<sup>13</sup>. It shows, that being is and non-being is not. On this, Richard Popkin says; What is, cannot change into what is not without passing out of existence. Hence, the permanent, the real is and cannot be part of reality or become part of reality. It is what it is, and to become something other than this would involve the contradiction, that it has become what it is not<sup>14</sup>. But again, the question of who an African is remains unanswered. What indeed is an African identity?

In essence, some scholars are of the opinion that the search for African identity is not feasible, since Africans are not one but many peoples and races with a diversity of cultural beliefs, languages and traditions. Emphasizing the truncated effects of African unhealthy contact with the West as the main cause and problem of African identity crisis. As observed at the introductory part of this paper, slavery, racialism and colonialism gave rise to the African psychological and cultural alienation which also gave rise to the loss of collective identity". Also according to Ruch and Anyanwu, "it is all this, this racialism, the slavery and the oppression of colonialism, the ambiguities of attitudes on the part of both whites and blacks which gave rise to the psychological and cultural alienation to the loss of collective identity of the Africans"<sup>15</sup>. The West considered Africa as inferior and without reasoning. They felt that the colour: White is superior while Black is inferior and that the blacks were condemned to be primitives. As again reinforced by Maduabuchi Dukor,

Africans of the first half of this century have begun to search for their identity because they had the feeling that they had lost it. The three factors which led to this feeling were; slavery, colonialism and racialism of all these, racialism is said to be the source of the colonialism and slavery. It was because Africans were considered racially inferior and culturally uncivilized that both Arabs

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<sup>11</sup> Charles Nweke, "African Identity: The Nature of Cultural Perspectives", *philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy (Philippine e-journal)* 19 (1); 66-75 (2018)

<sup>12</sup> Iroegbu, op.cit., p.116

<sup>13</sup> Jim Unah, *On Being: Discourse of the Ontology of Man*. (Lagos: Fadec Publishers, 2002). P.4.

<sup>14</sup> Richard Popkin, *Philosophy made simple*. (New York: Doubleday Publications, 1993), P.101

<sup>15</sup> A.E. Ruch, & K.C. Anyanwu, *Africa philosophical trend in Contemporary Africa*. ( Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1981), p.168.

and Europeans felt a moral justification in exploiting them by reducing them to slavery. Therefore the heart of the whole problem of African identity lies in Racialism”<sup>16</sup>.

African identity carries on the stuff of which any African can be identified and associated with appropriately and comfortably. It bears also, on that underlying element of unity in the plurality of all African peoples. It does not subsist on the accidental facts, may be, by the virtue, that one was born and bred or lives in the African continent. In other words, the fact of location does not strictly define who an African is. Instead, what is most paramount is having the African mind or consciousness: “that we are persons and we can think which the major activity here is”<sup>17</sup>. This is the fact of group consciousness, having common experience or goal. Thus, the issue of rising to consciousness is very important in the philosophical inquires and search for identity. For this view, it does not matter whether you are black Australian, American, Japanese or Jamaican, in as much as you share in the pains, misery, mystery and joys of the black race, you are an African. This consciousness can help to unite the many peoples and races with diversity of cultural beliefs, language and tradition in the African continent. Furthermore, Dukor explains that Africans by consciousness are “people who become aware of themselves as they imagine themselves as history has made them, who treasure their own past and who love themselves as they or imagine themselves to be with a kind of inevitable introversion. Hence identity is a function of culture, group and collective personality”<sup>18</sup>.

Another important attribute of who an African is, is the fact of colour. Although of less important when compared with the fact of consciousness, Black is one of fundamental elements of African identity. This again is re-echoed by Dukor when he says that “there is a particular continent where we have large concentration of black people, and that the continent is called Africa. Therefore any man that has a black colour is called an African”<sup>19</sup>. This suggests the appreciation of a colour as an identity. Most of African traditional nationalists emphasized and appreciated the African treasured colour; Black. African continent is known as the land of the black and African race is a black race. It qualifies to be an original primary identity, the blackness and other important features<sup>20</sup>. According to Ndubuisi, Dukor also added another factor which he calls; the generosity and hospitality of African people thus, “looking at the ethical dimension, it has been established for example that the Africans generally welcome people into their community even when they see that you are a stranger, they still welcome you well. But in many other parts of the world it is not like that”<sup>21</sup>. Stretching this explanation further, Ndubuisi adds that;

African identity centers first and foremost on the African self-hood. It is important and proper to assert that the African is easily identifiable ontologically. In African metaphysics, the self is conceived essentially towards other, that is, a “being- with-others”. The African is not just a human being but essentially a “being-with”. Consequently it is the community which makes the individuals, because of his relationship with other in the community.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Maduabuchi Dukor, *African freedom of philosophy* . (Germany: LAP LAMBERT Publications, 2010), p.159.

<sup>17</sup> ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p.159

<sup>19</sup> ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ndubuisi, op.cit., p.224

<sup>21</sup> ibid

<sup>22</sup> ibid



The point to draw from the foregoing discussion is that in order to correct the afore-mentioned underestimation of the African personality by the colonizers and free themselves from the social subjugation that went with it, Africans had to initiate a "counter discourse." The aim of this discourse, of course, was reclaiming African humanity. This reclamation took the form of demonstrating the rationality of African beliefs within the framework of the people's world-views and cultural practices. In epistemological terms, it involved the postulation of a form of rationality unique to Africans who, in metaphysical terms, were said to have a personality different from, but not in any way inferior to, the European personality. According Leopold Senghor, an "African mode of knowing" characterized is in the following terms:

The African is, as it were, shut up in his black skin. He lives in the primordial night. He does not begin by distinguishing himself from the object, the tree or stone, man or animal or social event. He does not keep it at a distance. He does not analyse it. Once he has come under its influence, he takes it like a blind man, still living, into his hands. He turns it over and over in his supple hands, he fingers it, he feels it. The African is one of the worms created on the third day...a purely sensory field. Subjectively at the end of his antennae, like an insect, he discovers the other. He is moved to his bowels, going out in a centrifugal movement from the subject to the object on the waves sent out by the other<sup>23</sup>

Olusegun further stresses that the African mode of knowing is a holistic one in which dualisms such as those between man and nature, subject and object, mind and matter, are totally absent. This mode of knowing is then contrasted with another which is considered to be characteristically European. This mode of knowing is analytic and, consequently, promotes all manners of dichotomies: between man and nature; subject and object; body and mind and so on.<sup>24</sup> He again clarifies that the life-surge of the African, his being-with attitude is actuated by reason:

But here reason is not the eye-reason of the European, it is the reason-by-embrace which shares more the nature of logos than ratio. Ratio is compass, set-square and sectants, measure and weight, where logos, before its Aristotelian tempering, before it became diamond, was living speech. Speech, which is the most typically human expression of neo-sensory impression, does not cost the object, untouched, into rigid logical categories. African speech, in raising itself to the Word, rubs and polishes things to give them back their original colour, with their grain and their veins, shooting their rays of light to restore their transparency penetrating their surreality, or rather their underlying reality, in its freshness. Classical European reason is analytical and makes use of the object. African reason is intuitive and participates in the object<sup>25</sup>.

The contrasts presented above marked the beginning of "the struggle over the control of identity by means of the definition of reason, its nature and functions," in the arena of scholarly discourse in Africa<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Leopold Sedar Senghor, *Prose and Poetry*, John Reed and Clive Wake, eds., trans. (London, Nairobi, Ibadan and Lusaka: Heinemann African Writers Series, 1976), pp. 29-30 (emphasis added).

<sup>24</sup> Olusegun, op.cit.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p.28

<sup>26</sup> ibid

### **Pragmatic Ideological Approach in the Post-colonial Identity Redefinition**

In the decades following decolonization, African nations have grappled with the profound challenge of reconstructing a society fragmented by colonialism. Indeed, the colonial project did more than subjugate land and resources, it as well sought to reengineer cultural consciousness, devalue indigenous systems, and impose foreign identities. As African countries continue navigating post-colonial realities, a renewed and pragmatic ideological approach has emerged, blending tradition with modernity in effort to reclaim and redefine the African identity. This practical ideological approach is not merely rhetorical or nostalgic, it is a strategic fusion of cultural reclamation, political consciousness and socio-economic restructuring grounded in African realities. This approach is pragmatic in that it acknowledges the globalized context but insists on centering African perspectives and experiences. Other form of pragmatic approach was seen in Pan-Africanism which attempted to establish communal worldview as the African identity. Julius Nyerere like many other post colonial African leaders, came up with what he called “African brotherhood” with its root in the African extended family system. This principle is discovered in African metaphysics that “the self” is conceived essentially towards others, that is a “being-with-others”. Life for the African personality is an integrated network of artistically harmonious daily rhythm. Therefore, being that the African people before the coming of the colonial people, had a form of political interaction called communalism, Nyerere of Tanzania adopted what he called “Ujamaa”. Hence, he came to the conclusion that socialism was the solution to all the problems which Tanzania faced shortly after independence. He felt there was the need to integrate the individual African persons back to the society. He felt there was no need for the existence of class in the new Africa because such concept was unAfrican. He says:

Indeed, I doubt if the equivalent for the word ‘class’ exists in any indigenous African language, for language describes the ideas of those who speak it, and the idea of ‘class’ or ‘caste’ was non-existent in African society<sup>27</sup>

On his part, Kwame Nkrumah reasoned that the post colonial Africa has left us with three different kinds of situations. Hence he writes that:

African society has some segments which are: first, our traditional way of life : it has a second segment which is filled by the presence of the Islamic tradition in Africa: it has a final segment which represents the infiltration of the Christian tradition and culture of Western Europe into Africa, using colonialism and neo-colonialism as its primary vehicles.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, Nkrumah reasons that since independence has been regained, there was a need to forge what he called a new harmony. This new harmony in his view, will allow a combined presence of traditional Africa, Islamic Africa and Euro-Christian Africa. The fall out of this infusion according to him will be in tune with the original humanist principles underlying African society<sup>29</sup>. For Nkrumah, the post Colonial African personality required a new ideology, ideology which he reasons must be in agreement with humanistic principle of Africa, thus he submits:

Such a philosophical statement will be born out of the crisis of the African conscience confronted with the three strands of present African society. Such a philosophical statement I propose to name philosophical consciencism, for

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<sup>27</sup> Julius Nyerere, *Essays on Socialism*. (Daressalaam: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.11.

<sup>28</sup> Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonization*. (New York. Monthly Review Press, 1970), p.69

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p.70



it will give the theoretical basis for ideology whose aim shall be to contain the African experience of Islamic and Euro-Christian presence as well as the experience of the traditional African society, and by gestation, employ them for the harmonious growth and development of that society.<sup>30</sup>

So what Nkrumah really wanted was total decolonization by forming a new philosophy which serves as the new socio-political order. Ogundowole takes a rather different, although more profound and realistic approach on the issue of forming a new pathway to African development. He reasons that the earlier postulations by Nyerere and Nkrumah still dangled between the Western capitalism and socialism. In place of that, Ogundowole arrives at what he calls "self-reliancism". He believes that external foreign-oriented structures are not likely to lunch the African society into the new dawn which it desires. Ogundowole believes there is need for the African people to understand the Euro-philosophical heritage so as to enable them forge ahead. Thus, he writes: "the position we hold is that the people of the new state need only such an understanding of Euro-philosophical heritage as may help them to free their society from economic backwardness, and from oppressive external influence".<sup>31</sup>

In recent times, the Pan African position on carving out a distinctive niche and reclaiming African identity has experienced a surging revival. Thus, Pan-Africanism is being revived, not in abstract calls for unity but in economic and political collaborations such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA). In this respect, Pan African identity is being leveraged for continental solidarity and global negotiation power. It is on a similar note that we now have concepts like *Cultural Renaissance* and *Afrocentric Education* wherein African intellectuals and policy makers are reimagining education systems to reflect African values, history and epistemologies. In this form, cultural reforms now emphasize African literature, philosophy, language and precolonial histories, thereby moving away from completely Eurocentric narratives. Again, in the area of language, there is a concept as *language revitalization*. Here there is a growing movement to promote indigenous languages in governance, education and media. Particularly, countries like Tanzania and Ethiopia have advanced the use of *Kiswahili* and *Amharic* respectively, as instrument of national identity and unity. Of course, there is no doubt, language is increasingly recognized as vessel of culture and resistance. In a similar vein, South Africa's Ubuntu philosophy in governance is worth mentioning among the individual nations' frantic effort towards identity reaffirmation. Here, their incorporation of Ubuntu, a philosophy emphasizing community, compassion and mutual respect into constitutional and legal frameworks reflects a localized ideological grounding in governance and social justice. More remarkably in recent time is the surge in decolonizing religion and spirituality, most especially among the African youth population. Thus, reshaping African identity is the renewed interest in indigenous spirituality, cosmology and African traditional medicine. This revival challenges the colonial-era demonization of African religions and repositions them as legitimate and vital to African worldview.

In this effort of identity retrieval, one cannot leave out the issue of creative and artistic expression. In this regard, music, film, literature and fashion are becoming powerful tools for articulating African identity. Nollywood, Afrobeats and African speculative fiction offer platforms for self-representation, thereby challenging global stereotypes and affirming African aesthetics. Notwithstanding the strength of these ideological strides, one can object that they appear too elitist and the initiatives sometimes fail to resonate with rural and marginalized

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<sup>31</sup> Kolawole Ogundowole, *Self-reliancism: Philosophy of a New World Order* (Alternative Development Strategy for the New States). (Lagos: Correct Counsels Limited, 2011), p.44.

communities. Again, there is another concern that the commodification<sup>32</sup> of African culture for tourism or global consumption can risk superficiality and loss of authenticity rather than genuine transformation because it prioritizes profit over cultural integrity<sup>33</sup>.

## Conclusion

The research has been able to articulate broadly a good number of issues surrounding the question of African identity. It established a nexus between the African historical past and her continuous search for identity recognition. It demonstrated the practical ideological approach unfolding in postcolonial Africa geared towards reclaiming and reconstructing that which is uniquely African. The study showed, among other things that, by drawing from indigenous epistemologies and blending them with contemporary tools, African societies are forging new identity, one that honours the past while shaping a sovereign and self-defined future. Furthermore, it showed a renewed interest in African culture, language and spirituality. Although this evolving ideological movement may not be uniform across the continent, it reflects a shared impulse which points to the fact that African identity is not just a relic of the past: it is a living, evolving force central to the continent's liberation and transformative development.

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