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Article

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EXPLORING PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT THROUGH AN AFRICAN BURIAL TRADITION

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Abstract

The paper sets out to illustrate the role that anthropology can play in intervening development crises in Africa. It does so by taking on an aspect of anthropology known as philosophical anthropology, a philosophical investigation that combines the practical study of man with the theoretical (conceptual study) to provide enduring insights into the human mode of being. The paper suggests that this study is relevant to understanding the dominant passions that determine and define the quality of the growth of the African person. In particular, the work takes on cultural expressions in Africa and examines how and why particular forms of cultural expressions have found a space in modern traditions while others have not. It uses the example of the burial tradition in the Benin culture of Edo State, Nigeria, to illustrate. Textual reviews and interviews were employed to collect the data for the study. The study concludes with the view that philosophical anthropology can provide valuable insights into human advancement in Africa and the quality of the growth of the human person in Africa and proposes more research in this direction.

Keywords: Philosophy, Anthropology; Development; Culture, Burial tradition

Introduction

Over time, development in Africa has been interpreted from various points of view - economic, political, cultural, etc. Within the different disciplines that define these interpretations, two schools of thought can be delineated. The first school of thought holds that development in Africa is a form of underdevelopment that is externally caused. For this school of thought, the problem of development which is upheld as a form of underdevelopment in Africa arises from the fact that Africa has been "invented" (Mudimbe, 1988) and re-designed by the western world, who, since the advent of modernity in their culture have wanted to make Africa an appendage in world history. This position is

held by African scholars such as Walter Rodney (1973), Chinweizu (1978) and Samir Amin (1975;1976;1977;1998). For these scholars, Africa's problem of underdevelopment is externally induced, and the notion and goal of development is externally derived and is principally geared towards the benefit of metropolitan economies of the imperial north. As a result of this, Africa's attempt at development as has been held by these scholars as a project in service and support of imperialism and "peripherization of the so-called Third World" (C.O. Uroh,1998). They suggest that the first step towards directing the course of development to an African advantage is to redefine development within the demands of African culture and modernity through a form of decolonization (mental or structural), decentralization and de-westernization.

The second major school of thought that attempts to characterize African underdevelopment holds the view that Africa's development amounts to underdevelopment and that this is because ideas, ideals, capitals and structures through which Africans conceptualize development are not homegrown enough and for this reason do not fall within the cultural potentials and prisms of the African world. The view here, somehow also enshrouded in the first school of thought, is that Africa's problem of underdevelopment is not as a result of the hegemony of the world order by the North but the failure of African people to evolve and negotiate development within the cultural resources of African society. This idea of development is what is represented by the call for indigenous formulas to development in Africa. Champions of this school of thought include notable African scholars such as: Paulin Hountondji (1997) and Joseph Ki-Zerbro (1984;1995). Although Hountondji subscribes to this school of thought, it must be noted that his emphasis amounts to what he called an African critical science of thought in relation to development in Africa. This author has also advertised the view that, endogenous development is relevant as it relates to corruption and underdevelopment, with the view that ideas and strategies that are employed to promote a corrupt-free African society are not indigenous enough and as such cannot be expected to yield outstanding political dividends (Ugwuanyi, 2009), hence, he has recommended an African solution to the problem of corruption.

This work is not tailored towards addressing the debate on development. The focus of the work is to provide a fresh insight on development in Africa by looking at the dynamics of human nature and the extent to which human desires, tendencies, tastes, dispositions, culture, values and priorities influence the choice around which development is conceived and in which direction decisions and options are explored. The aim of the work is that by looking at the inner human desires that influence development options in Africa, an insight into the cause of development can be gained. To achieve this, the instance of a modernized tradition of burial in Edo state, Nigeria was applied in the work. The work does not claim that this is the only part of Nigeria/Africa where this is obtainable but holds that it a plausible example to engage a form of tradition that has been considerably modernized and developed. To this end, will the work (i) articulate the meaning of philosophical anthropology of development? It then proceeds to discuss (ii) the meaning of development and discusses how it is basically human and arises from human drives and passions. Next, the work will (iii) illustrate its claims through the burial tradition in Benin-Nigerian Culture. It will (iv) proceed to discuss the burial tradition in Benin as an illustration of modern economic status and (v) engage in some philosophical reflections on these as an example of philosophical anthropology of development.

What is Philosophical Anthropology of Development?

A cogent way to begin this work is to engage the idea of philosophical anthropology of development by articulating (a) the idea of philosophical anthropology (b) the idea of anthropology of development and then (c) proceed to articulate the meaning of philosophical anthropology of development. (a) Philosophical anthropology is the study that applies philosophical reflection on the human phenomenon by way of translating or transferring the empirical outcomes of thoughts on the human idea to theoretical outcomes. According to Battista (1985:11) philosophical anthropology proceeds “from the phenomena to the causes”. The implication of this is that philosophical anthropology seeks to engage the human nature by studying the manifestations of human nature and how this induces some valuable meaning about the human phenomenon. This method of studying the human phenomenon is not new to scholarship, although it did not acquire such a name from the onset. In the modern era of western scholarship and learning, a host of thinkers made the human species the desideratum for interpreting the world whose influence persists till today, and this meant an effort to understand the human phenomenon that appeals to a form of philosophical anthropology. For instance, in the western tradition of thought, Hume wanted to provide what he called the “science of man” (cited in S.E. Stumpf, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, 1989:281) to provide a view of what ways man could be best interpreted. In Kant, the idea of anthropology blossomed, and this method of investigating man achieved its greatest contribution. This is arising from the fact that Kant introduced specific questions around which these attempts could be weighed and determined. In his work *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1778), Kant advanced four questions in terms of which the idea, meaning and value of an enquiry into man could be determined: (i) what can I know? (ii) what must I do? (iii) what can I hope for? (iv) what is man? (cited in Battista Mondin, p.18). Among these questions, what appears most valuable for our attempt to establish a philosophical anthropology of development is the question, *what can I hope for?* Applied within the context of the cultural tradition the following questions could be formulated in favour of philosophical anthropology: what can I, by approving one idea of development over and above the other, hope for? What can I, by defining life as celebrating the dead, hope (or not hope) for?

(b) Anthropology of development seeks to engage development through anthropological perspectives. Its focus is on how development is understood by different human communities. It then applies this to question the assumptions behind these development models. The University of Melbourne handbook on Anthropology of development (<https://handbook.k.unimelb.edu.au/2019/subjects/devt90056> accessed July 2025) states that anthropology of development comprises “anthropological critiques of Development culture, assumptions, models and policies; the efforts of anthropologists to place the experiences and viewpoints of ordinary people in sites of Development at the centre of Development research and practice; and key ideas in the Anthropology of Development—from the ‘sub-culture of poverty’ thesis to economic substantivism to Dependency and World Systems Theory, and to Post-structuralist approaches to understanding Development”. From the foregoing, it can be upheld that anthropology of development arises from and keys into the Western paradigm of development. Though it is not the mission of this work to debate this model of development, it is important to note that the western model of development is not the only plausible model of development. Development should involve the values and ideals of a given society in so far as this promotes the human idea in a positive direction.

(c) What then is philosophical anthropology of development? It is common to read about Philosophical Anthropology, but it is not common to read about Philosophical Anthropology of Development. Thus, this work claims to be the first to advance thoughts in philosophical anthropology in this direction. By philosophical anthropology of development is meant a unitive account of human nature to locate and reflect on the direction in which it is advancing. It is the application of anthropological data to interpret human passions, desires, aspirations, values and principles to read the forms of thought around which human development and advancement is upheld. Philosophical anthropology of development engages the human idea from the inner structures and properties of consciousness - the wills, the intellect, the passions, the emotions, to see how growth and development are influenced and how and why development choices and options are made in one direction and not in another. It addresses such questions as why a given culture is attracted to one form of advancement more than the other and the role of human will and choice for this.

Often, the interplay between human nature and the environment in the formulation of culture and the place of same in the construction of significant social ideals around which development is conceived and promoted is often under-discussed in development debates in Africa. This option often ignores the fact that development is principally human and that human development stands at the heart of what other aspects of development - social, economic, political, etc. are conceived. This work seeks to fill this gap by providing views that illustrate the influence of culture and tradition on development desires in Africa. It does this through the African tradition of burial ceremony in a given cultural unit of Africa. The argument is that by looking at development in these terms, we could create a role for philosophical anthropology in Africa - that is, a study that locates the relevance of philosophical anthropology in the study of development in Africa. The work, therefore, is not a project in cultural or social anthropology but an exercise in philosophical anthropology - that is one which attempts to study man from his natural givens or the basics of his nature and applies this to determine the passions that influence development drives. What is implied here is a study which by examining a people's form of life - cultures, values, dispositions, and ideals will be able to provide a clue to the dominant passion that defines their culture and worldview and suggest the way this passion can be influenced to yield greater developmental benefits. To this, I apply the instance of burial in Benin culture of Nigeria.

To achieve the goals of this study then, the work (i) discusses development as a cultural/human drive that defines the worth and relevance of the human person and has achieved a form of modernity in African culture and analyze how and why this is the case. Here, I shall cite the instance of burial ceremony among the Benin - a prominent cultural group in Nigeria and demonstrate how it plays this role. Thereafter, I shall (ii) provide an interpretation of this culture with a critical appraisal and the passion which, in my view, it represents and what it suggests to the anthropology of development. In doing this, I shall (iii) demonstrate how such a study should lead to philosophical anthropology of development. I shall be faithful to the method of philosophical anthropology by proceeding "from the phenomena to the causes" (Battista Mondin, 1985:11) and by so doing locate the dominant passions and desires that define the human nature in the African world. My claim is that if we can understand how inner passions influence developmental choices, we can more reliably chart development strategies suited to Africa.

Development as Human Desire and Drive

The first position around which one can advance a thesis on development is that development is basically a human drive that seeks to express human dreams and passions in a chosen direction. By development is implied a qualitative increase and growth of an item. By development is also implied the wider dimensions of development such as political, economic, social and moral dimensions of the term. Because it arises from some human drive, development in the final analysis is directed at man and aims at advancing the human personality. For this reason, development must be seen and judged according to how or whether it has addressed the need for improved quality of the human person. It is perhaps for this reason that Ade Ajayi (1999) states that “development is about the people” and Joseph Ki Zerbro (2007) suggests that “to develop is to multiply one’s possibilities of liberating choices”. The views expressed here imply that development is basically human and for human ends. This position appears to have the best expression in the views of Julius Nyerere. According to Nyerere (1974):

Roads, buildings, the increase of the crop output, and other things of this nature are not development: they are tools of development. A new road extends a man’s freedom if he travels upon it. An increase in the number of school buildings can be and are being used, to develop the minds and the understanding of the people. An increase in the output of wheat, maize or beans is only development if it leads to the better nutrition of the people. An expansion of the cotton, coffee or sisal crop is development only if these things can be sold, and the money used for other things which improve the health, comfort and understanding of the people. Development which is not development of the people may be of interest to historians in the year 3,000: it is relevant to the future which is being created (Nyerere cited in Oladipo, 2009:96).

Following these submissions, it can be argued that development must be that which is done in defense of or for the promotion of human nature in a positive direction, and that it must advance human culture and values since cultures and values themselves are the expression of the desires that are dominant passions in man. To seek to achieve development must amount to form qualitative growth and amount to “growth plus change” (United Nations, 1962 cited in Ibanga Ikpe, 1999). This amounts to saying that development must lead to human growth and advancement or the growth of an item. But how can inner passions and desires which are the engine of development and development choices be known and/or measured? Development desires are often known through items of culture that grow, emphasized and modernized by a given culture. In the next part of this work, I will illustrate this with the burial tradition among the Benin - an Edo culture of Nigeria. I do not imply that they are the only people with such culture, but I used them as an illustrative case for reasons explained elsewhere in this work.

Development as Modernization of Culture: An Illustration through Burial Tradition in Benin -Nigerian Culture

In the Benin culture of modern Nigeria, burial ceremonies advertise wealth and fulfillment, such that they have become a measure of participation in the modernization of culture and its associated values. This scholar observed this trend during the three years he lived in Benin City (2003-2006) and carried out some participant observation study of the tradition.

Hence this work has applied it to demonstrate the example of a traditional culture that has found a place in modernity. This work does not claim that this is the only place where this culture obtains. In other African ethnic groups in Nigeria and Ghana, etc., it is common to see elaborate cultural burials sometimes advertised through billboards and radio advertisements. In discussing burial in the Benin tradition, we shall also look at the event within two periods of Benin history: the ancient period or what Uyi Eweka calls “the unadulterated original version” and the modern period or what we can call the adulterated version. We shall also limit our expository analysis to the burial of elderly people or aged parents since this is the burial celebrated by tradition. This is because burial in Benin tradition is in different forms. The burials of the young people do not demand the same rites and rituals as the burials of the aged people. As R.E. Bradbury aptly puts it:

Edo attitudes to death depend upon the degree to which the deceased has fulfilled his social destiny. The older a man is, the more descendants he has, the higher his rank and prestige, the more acceptable does his death become. (Bradbury 1973:213).

We may also add that, according to the Benins (Benins are also known as Edos as applied by Bradbury above) the wealthier the dead person was during his or her lifetime, the merrier the burial rites. In the light of the above, it can then be safe to argue that the acceptable death in Benin culture is the death of an elder “whether or not,” as Ademole Iyi-Eweka says “the deceased had children” (Edo Anthropology, www.raceandhistory.com).

In the original pattern of burial, what Ademola Iyi-Eweka calls the “unadulterated original versions” (Edo Anthropology, *ibid*), the first aspect of the burial (or interment rites) of an elder as documented by R.E. Bradbury (1973), a pioneer researcher on Benin culture begins with washing the corpse. The dead body is laid on a mat, and the siblings are asked to sprinkle the corpse with a sponge (or bundle of fibre). After this, the fingernails of the dead are cut, and the head is shaved. The hair and the bits of nails, together with “lineages with the bowl and sponge” (Bradbury p.217) are then handed to the eldest son. Thereafter, the eldest son provides a goat which is killed to honour the deceased. A soup is then made from the goat to be eaten by all. Thereafter, the *ibhi-orinhbin* (interpreted to mean key agents of the burial ceremony) come to greet the corpse with their gifts in the order of seniority, presenting a piece of cloth and token of money as offering. The next stage of the interment is grave digging. An elder in the lineage selects a portion and the eldest son strikes the spot seven times with a hoe signifying a journey to the beyond. Thereafter, the corpse is buried with the legs pointing to the west. This is followed by a prayer said by the eldest man or woman of the lineage. Thereafter, the children led by the eldest son, throw native chalk and cowries into the grave, praying for the deceased. This is followed by uncontrollable cries and wails. But the eldest son may not weep after all. He will exude pride and arrogance saying “Behold what I am doing for my father! May my son do same for me” (Bradbury P. 220). This is a common fashion of burial in Benin, “common to all Edo clans” (Ademola-Eweka *ibid*).

In summary, this is the interment rite. This is followed by the second burial or what is known as funeral ceremony. But before we discuss this, it is pertinent to clarify certain items that form part of the interment rites. This is because they provide insight on the idea behind the second burial or funeral rites. These items include: (i) Killing of a goat (ii) Use of white cloth (iii) Laying of the corpse with legs pointing to the west (iv) the involvement of *Igele* age grade and why they bury the dead. The killing of a goat is to pacify the dead man. It is meant to pacify the dead man and give him a place among the ancestors. By killing a

goat, it is believed that his spirit would be pleased enough and would not wander around looking for souls to devour by way of inviting more deaths on the family. The goat is also believed to honour the deceased's waist or his reproductive ability through which he begot his children. In the same vein, the use of white cloth in interment is meant to symbolize "ritual purity and peace" (Bradbury p. 218). It is also believed that by this process, a peaceful re-union would be achieved between the dead and the ancestors, as this will ensure that the dead man when he ascends the revered position of an ancestor treats the children with peace and fatherly care and concern. We can also interpret this to mean: "new cloth, new role, new plain of relationship" (Bradbury p. 218). That the corpse is lowered with legs pointing to the west is a physical demonstration of a belief in the sea as the route to the land of the spirit. The west leads to *Ughoton*, a popular port in Benin. Just as any journey is defined by a beginning, embarking on the journey through this port defines a journey to the sacred land of the ancestors.

Finally, the Igele age grade is the group that inters the dead. They are believed to be linked with *Ighele-Erinbhin spirit* who "hinders the deceased's journey...to the land of the spirits" (Bradbury p.218). They are believed to be "the spirits of men who died in their prime and have not received proper burial" (Bradbury, p. 218), so their role in the internment of the dead arises from their perceived ability to clear the path to a peaceful journey to the land of the spirit for the dead. From the foregoing, it can then be seen that the rigours of burial in Benin tradition is one that defines the expectations of the dead. It is one that invites the ancestors to clear and safeguard the path of the dead to the ancestral home beyond. This, again, defines the second burial rites in Benin also known as funeral rites. We shall now turn to this: The second aspect of burial in Benin tradition is a symbolic extension of the first. According to Bradbury, this aspect is made of different rites. The first aspect is the killing of the goat near the grave of the dead. This is a way of celebrating his safe passage to the land of the ancestors. It may also be interpreted to mean a festival that welcomes the dead elder back to the land of the dead as an ancestor. The second phase is known as *Izakhwe*. This ceremony signifies "the incorporation of the deceased into the collectivity of the dead lineage elders" (Bradbury, p.222) and the formal approval of the ascension of his son to the throne of his father. It is for this reason that the right arm of the slaughtered animal (goat or cow, if the man is titled) is given to the first son.

The third phase is a dancing procession round the town in distinct groups, in fanciful batches led by the first son. During this event a young boy carries the *Okun*, a box containing carved images, beads, mirrors and other objects. This event suggests that the dead elder has crossed the world of spirits to other side where he is already wealthy. At the end of this phase, the bowl containing the hair and nail parings of the dead man (covered with a white cloth) is buried. This is followed by *Asha* and *Isuerhanfua*. This is the wake keep which lasts till the following dawn. A relation or son of the dead man is made to sit down, well dressed and adored. He sits representing the dead man. He is greeted with gifts, and he returns their gesture with anything that suggests blessing, goodwill and farewell, as he goes to *Erinbhin* or land of the spirit to rest. The last event in the funeral rites is the praying session around the *ukhuhe* (a craved piece of wood). During this session, a carved stave is placed upright on the floor on which the people pay their homage and prayers. It is meant to represent the dead man whom they now bid farewell. The above rites which can be conveniently described as a traditional pattern of the burial in Benin however have been modernized considerably. Like all cultural variables that have come under the influence of modernity, it has come to be associated with modern instruments, be they scientific, social

or otherwise. It is for this reason that it has come to stand and serve as a symbol of wealth and development around modernity in Benin. Apart from the use of modern mortuaries, there is overwhelming emphasis on the social weight of the event as the hallmark of proper burials.

Burial Tradition in Benin as an illustration of Modern Economic Status

In its modernized version, burial ceremonies in Benin have become important items that define faithfulness to tradition, economic status, social strength, and relevance. The burial of a loved one, particularly, an aged parent (grandparent or great grandparent) serves as reliable evidence of wealth and economic advancement. This is particularly the case among indigenes of Benin ethnic group in the Diaspora. The modern trends in burial ceremonies in Benin are characterized by mortuary services, employment of undertakers, media advertisements, hiring of recognized artists and comedians, etc., and other cultural variables that define it as evidence of wealth and economic status. Burial ceremonies in Benin, now, function as carnivals to the extent that some exceptionally rich sons of Benin keep their dead relatives in mortuaries for up to three months in preparation for the events. In some instances, wealthy sons of Benin are known to have erected houses afresh or renovated old ones in preparation for burials. This is not withstanding the penury that may have characterized the life of the dead elder while alive. This modern tradition is not restricted to the wealthy but to the aged in general. As a result, an extended relation of a dead elder may be tempted to intervene to ensure that he or she gets a befitting burial rite. The mere fact of attaining an old age is a strong social force that attracts an adequate basis for elaborate burial.

The other motivating factor is the assurance that proper burial of an elder gives them a peaceful abode in the spirit world; hence, it prevents their spirits from wandering in this physical world causing havoc among the living. In 2006, it was widely reported in the local media in Benin City, where this researcher lived at the time, of a prominent Benin chief also known as Bob Izua who traveled to the United States of America to purchase an ambulance estimated to have cost N20,000,000 naira (\$133,333) for the burial of his aged mother. In addition to this, he is known to have built a mausoleum with as much as N10,000,000 naira for the same burial, just as he donated a bus worth N20,000,000 to a student-based organization in a higher institution to mark the same event. The hordes of artists at this event are estimated to have charged over N5,000,000. The result is that a total estimate of what it cost him to bury his aged mother stood around N55,000,000. (\$366,666). Some of these claims were made by the chief in the electronic media as witnessed by the researcher. Although the chief who conducted this burial is based in Benin, his business partners and associates are widely believed to be Benins in Diaspora who, as is believed among the residents of Benin, give him links and connections for his business. Such lavish spending on burials is common in Benin and much more the case when it involves a Benin in Diaspora that is, an indigene of Benin living and working outside Nigeria. The above instance is just one out of many lavish spendings that define burial ceremony in Benin. It would almost contradict the ethics of Benin culture now for one to celebrate the burial of an aged parent with modest spending.

This extravagant display of wealth spans nearly through all the rites of burial in Benin. In an interview with Samson Omokaro of Sam Home Video Recording Ventures along Jesus Christ Road, Upper Sakpomba Road, Benin City, the video expert volunteered that at least two burial ceremonies attract his coverage every weekend and for each burial, he

charges up to N10, 000. When the burial involves wealthy sons of Benin, the charge is often as high as N20,000. When the burial involves emigrant Benin sons in diaspora the charge is up to N40,000.

Other important revelations from the video expert indicate that burial ceremonies organized by Benin sons and daughters in diaspora are more expensive than those conducted by home-based Benins. This is because Benins in diaspora often come with their colleagues who display wealth during the event. In some instances, dollars (up to \$10) are used to spray on performers at intervals during the ceremony and this is definitely more rewarding than the local currency of twenty naira (N20) or fifty Naira (N50) or even N100.00 (Hundred Naira) that are sprayed during burials sponsored and funded by local Benin indigenes, that is those living and working within Benin or in Nigeria. This is given the fact that \$10 is about N1500 at the moment. With the exchange rate of N150 to a dollar, a performer who is lucky to have been sprayed on up to \$200 would have earned N30,000 just for performing in a burial ceremony. This is far from the meagre sum of N4, 000 he would possibly earn for the same event when organized by a Benin indigene based in Nigeria. Apart from this instant display of wealth during the dancing period, the quality of entertainment which reveals itself in the kind of foods and drinks served during funeral ceremonies all serve to distinguish a burial conducted by a foreign-based Benin from one conducted by Benin-based indigenes.

Dr. Sunday Elusoji, owner and proprietor of Our Hospital Ikpoba Hill Benin City, also provides additional information that justifies the claim that gives insight to the high cost of burials in Benin at the moment. In an interview with this author, he volunteered that corpses of elderly people are often kept for about one month on the average in addition to an embalmment fee of six thousand naira and a mortuary fee of two hundred naira per day. His charge is also similar to those of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital and Central Hospital Benin City which charge six thousand naira and a mortuary fee of two hundred naira per day and six thousand naira and a mortuary fee of one hundred naira respectively. Further studies show that while Benins who earn their wealth within the Nigerian economic space may only preserve corpses in the mortuary for a month, Benins in diaspora sometimes exceed this just to emphasize their economic privilege. This is also evident in the quality of media coverage that precedes such events. For instance, while a few minutes obituary announcement may serve for a home-based Benin, that of a Benin in diaspora may take as much as ten minutes.

Similarly, burials in Benin at the moment involve the services of professional undertakers. At burial scenes in Benin, it is customary to see undertakers handle the various functions that relate to interment. They would often carry the coffin and dance to the excitement of the people before laying the corpse to rest. They are often many with a single dressing code that suggests that they operate more or less like a club of undertakers. Although this data were gathered over a decade ago, the culture of burial ceremony is still growing. In a recent interview with Ernest Ejiade-a sociologist who lives in Benin city on the state of burial ceremony popularly called *Obeto* in Benin, I posed the following questions:

- (1) Does *Obeto* still hold in Benin. (2) Do people still apply the main roads or streets and close roads when they are doing *Obeto* or is *Obeto* restricted to people's compound now? (3) What is the average cost of videoing *Obeto* in Benin at the moment? (4) Do people still spray moment on dancers and what currency do they

use? Do they spray in dollars or naira and what unit N1000, N500, N200, etc.

He responded:

(1) *Obeto* still holds in Benin., (2) they do, some use public school, block roads, personal compound. (3) around N250,000, though some spend millions of naira on just the video (4) they still spray money on dancers. They spray both in naira, dollars, and pounds, the least denomination you can spray in *Obeto* is N100 to N1000. With this era of internet fraud (Yahoo Yahoo), some of these boys buy flashy cars for their parents' burial, you see them with convoy, with even soldiers guiding them, some with police, or Edo security network.

The above details suggest the influence of modernity and modernization on burial tradition in Benin. They also suggest that migration to advanced economies of the world is a factor that has radically influenced burial traditions in Benin and provide insights on how the values are favoured by modernity in Benin culture.

Engaging the Burial Tradition in Benin through Philosophical Anthropology of Development

Arising from the above study, one could argue that burial ceremonies in Benin evidence economic weight and social advancement. The modern components of burial in Benin - including mortuary and embalmment services, media advertisements of burial ceremonies, employment of undertakers, and use of foreign currencies as discussed earlier justify this claim. This ethic of grandeur as a measure of advertising wealth and economic growth is not peculiar to the Benin society as much as it reflects the culture of entire modern Nigerian society. Among the Igbos, a neighboring ethnic group in Nigeria, a similar trend exists in marriage ceremonies where wealth and grandeur are prominently displayed. In modern Nigeria, economic well-being is often judged by one's ability to display wealth - through lavish marriage ceremonies, generous donations at events, purchasing luxury homes and vehicles, and using wealth to acquire political influence. However, Benin culture differs in that it is organized around the ritual honoring of the dead. For example, among the people of Benin, high importance is attached to wearing beads - even by non-titled community members (a culture that has also been adopted by other neighbouring cultural groups who are historically linked to them such as Esans). Among the people of Benin, beads serve as a customary dress code and symbol of honour and royalty. While other cultural segments of Nigerian society such as the Igbos and the Yorubas reserve beads for a class of the society, it is common to see youths wear beads in Benin. Although beads were not originally worn by all, the ethic of grandeur has modernized this cultural practice. Although beads originally were not meant to be a dressing outfit for all, the ethic of grandeur has in modern times adapted this culture. In 2006, a media report on the Independent Television Station in Benin reported that the king of Benin had issued a warning against the wearing of beads by youths (perhaps in reaction to the dressing code of a young man had featured for a programme at the *Independent Television Station* a few days earlier). However, despite this official decree, bead wearing remains a popular practice among the Edo people. It follows that one of Benin's most enduring traditions is the burial of an aged parent. This custom even permits individuals to block major streets in Benin for up to three days or more to host funeral

guests. This conventional privilege is unique to funerals and is not granted to organizers of other public events such as religious ceremonies or political rallies.

From this exploration of Benin burial traditions and the implied philosophy of grandeur, several key questions arise: (i) What does this suggest in the attempt to apply anthropology to the study of development through the Benin cultural context? (ii) Can we, through this knowledge, foster an anthropological framework that intervenes in African epistemology and accounts for cultural evolution? (iii) Why is one aspect of cultural tradition more emphasized than others despite the adverse effect it may have on development? These issues give valid insight into the fluidity of the human phenomenon and specifics of the human species. By fluidity of the human phenomenon, I refer to the ways in which human capacities - such as emotion, desire, and feeling - are cultivated and expressed. By the specifics of the human species, I refer to those fundamental aspects of human nature - such as will, soul, and spirit - that are persistent across contexts. Put bluntly, the need to apply philosophical anthropology in the study of the cultural traditions of Africa, especially in relation to development, is to engage in a firmer and more reliable project of studying the human nature; to see in what terms the inner human spirit is realized in Africa *and why* it is the case. It is to attempt to determine the ideals that define and direct the growth of the human phenomenon in Africa and to see in what terms the idea of development is conceived, firstly, as it relates to the human person and secondly, as it relates to the state or society which inhabits the individual and the further demands that may be implied by the project. Assuming that Africans define fulfillment by the number of children they can father (such as is the case at the moment) and not in terms of the wider, universal or global relevance the children should give to his or her name it becomes important to attempt to probe the underlying human passions that stand at the background to this idea of life and other factors that co-operate to sustain this idea of life and how it is valued within an African context.

Conversely, this work leads us to ask: What are the specific and dominant passions in humans that stimulate the will to celebrate the dead, and how can understanding their origins in the African context direct thought to a more developmental dividend? Is it part of the evolution of human nature in African world because of which now it has been so quickly adapted to modernity comparatively better than what is the case with other values and ideals such as quality life, and demand on human rights the absence of which has fueled issues such as poverty, child labour, etc? The claim of this work is that there is the need to locate the inner passions and choices that has found a space in the development ethics of African life as way of advancing the anthropology of development through the African world. I do not mean that this may not be the case elsewhere, but I suggest that some social traditions may have been advanced more than others in the African world, and this advocates for a philosophical anthropology of development that probes this. For example, comparatively speaking, it can be held that African societies have produced very great individuals by many good measures within the context of modernity. It can also be held that African societies have produced very great families in terms of applying the family ethics to advance the society positively. But this cannot be said of African nation states. The quality of advancement in these areas is still weak, at least within the threshold of modernity. This makes it urgent to locate the lack of connectivity in development and advancement and why the passion to advance civic life appears to have been mainstreamed into modernity in Africa comparatively more than civil life at least drawing from the instance applied for this study.

Conclusion

This work sets out to demonstrate the role anthropology can play in addressing development crises in Africa. It did so by engaging in an aspect of anthropology known as philosophical anthropology, and by discussing the specific role it can play in this context. Our study has demonstrated why and how philosophical anthropology can - and should - find a space in the developmental aspirations and institutional systems of modern Africa. Using the instance of burial traditions in Benin culture of Nigeria - where burial ceremonies have become significant makers of cultural fidelity, high economic status and social relevance, the study has shown how and why particular forms of cultural expressions have secured a space in modern traditions. The paper interrogated the dominant passions underpinning these cultural expressions and examined the extent to which such passions shape the developmental imperatives of the African. The paper recommends applying philosophical anthropology to analyze the prevailing desires, the cultural traditions that shape the interests of the modern African and to evaluate the extent to which these desires would promote the course of development. This effort promises important results. First it locates the quality of the human project in Africa and the quality of the growth of the human person in Africa. Second, it interrogates the extent to which the African could be said to be investing his or her energy in the right direction; that is in the way it would yield greater dividend to African society. Third, and perhaps most importantly, it opens a new trajectory for applying anthropological studies to guide development discourse. It is common to encounter works in philosophical anthropology or in the philosophy of development. However, what has not received substantial scholarly attention is the application of philosophical anthropology to development studies. It is by this attempt that we believe we are making a novel contribution to knowledge.

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