

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF WEST AFRICA:
A SURVEY EXAMINATING THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT, ITS PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE CHALLENGES, AND
RECOMMENDATIONS, A WEST AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT

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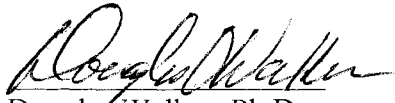
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ABSTRACT

West Africa, enriched with natural resources, culture, philosophy, religion, etc., is geographically made up of the following nations: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. In the past decades, during the late 1970s leading to the present, West African nations have experienced major civil unrest. A number of West African nations, including Liberia, approached the end of directorship governments and advanced into a post-war era. As other West African nations encourage development in a post-independence era, it is important that each West African nation promote a new West African Philosophy of Rights, which will improve the social, political and economic development within the region, while establishing a new West Africa.

The idea of a West African Philosophy of Rights is prescriptive in that it advocates a worldview for West Africans that identifies the essential qualities needed for the development of the entire person. The West African Philosophy of Rights can be defined as having three important components, (1) the equal rights to life, liberty and property, (2) a horizontal covenant authority among ethnic groups, and (3) communal accountability. These three components, for West African nations, are the key elements that will bring about a successful transition into modernization and a sustainable way of life.

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INTRODUCTION

The analysis of economic development within West Africa is a provocative venture. If it is to contribute to human welfare by enhancing Africans' basic needs for survival, West Africa's economic development must focus on the development of the entire person, not merely one aspect of a person's life. If it is the development of the whole person, it is truly a contribution to the development of all West Africans. Economic development within the West Africa region is fundamental to the advancement of the person, the community, and the region. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the paradigm and structures by which such development takes place, how they have succeeded, the setbacks they have encountered, and the changes that need to take place to achieve complete success.

West Africa is geographically made up of the following nations: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. In the past decades, from the late 1970s leading to the present, many West African nations have experienced civil unrest. The civil unrest experienced by each nation has had devastating results, causing a steady decline of social, political and economic development. In spite of this, West African philosophers continue to develop ideas unique to their region, and its development possibilities. However, these philosophical ideas are extremely fragmented; therefore, it is important to bring them

together and understand West African philosophy as it is inspired in the regional and sub-regional contexts.

The purpose of this work is to examine the philosophical and theoretical foundations of West Africa's social, political and economic development. The discourse formulating West African philosophy is extremely fragmented. Therefore, this work also introduces a new idea that unites ethnic tribes within each West African nation by providing alternatives and recommendations dealing with a prescriptive worldview for West Africa's development, a West African Philosophy of Right. It is important that each West African nation promote this philosophy of rights, because its objective is to improve the social, political and economic development within the region, while establishing a new West Africa.

The idea of introducing a West African Philosophy of Rights is prescriptive in that it advocates a worldview that must be adapted and instituted by each West African nation. The West African Philosophy of Rights identifies the essential qualities needed for the development of the entire person: politically, socially and economically. This philosophy has three important components, (1) the equal rights to life, liberty and property, (2) a horizontal covenant authority among ethnic groups, and (3) communal accountability. These three components are the key elements, that when brought together, will strengthen the transition process of modernization and will help develop a sustainable way of life within each West African nation.

The first component that defines the West African Philosophy of Rights is the equal rights to life, liberty and property. This concept of equal rights to life, liberty and property, for purpose of this work, convey John Locke's thought that all men are

biologically equal and therefore have the natural right to life, liberty and property. The second key factor of the philosophy of rights is the need for a horizontal covenant authority between each West African ethnic groups. The horizontal covenant authority, in this text defines a new West Africa concept, which strives for nonhierarchical power between ethnic groups within each West African nation. The third component to complete this philosophy of right is the ability for West Africans to commit to communal accountability. Communal accountability in this text refers to a collective obligation or willingness of each West African nation, leader and citizens to accept responsibility, account for one's actions, and exhibit loyalty to the people, while building a stronger nation, by discouraging corruption and /or embezzlement.

Thus, this work ventures to understand pre-existing West African philosophy. Moreover, this text also attempts to understand the influence of Western philosophical thought and its effects on West Africa's development, by tracing the role of the individual and the collectivist society in Africa. In doing so, this work will create a new understanding unique to the region's economic development. The examination of West Africa in this study, therefore, not only contributes to a better understanding of its history and current societal trends, but permits new interpretations and recommendations that promote its accelerated economic and social development.

This work is comprised of two parts; each part contains four chapters. The first chapter briefly describes pre-colonial West Africa. It outlines the roots of colonial power in West Africa and the challenges that the region must face on its

journey to full economic, political, and social development. Because of the traits and the impact of colonialism on West Africa's culture, Chapter Two discusses the importance of a philosophical structure appropriate to the region's unique characteristics. Chapter Three, on the other hand, attempts to outline trends in West Africa's philosophical thought and its impact on the continent. Because the end of colonialism affected West Africa, Chapter Four endeavors to combine the fundamental traits of West Africa and Western philosophy to foster a new and holistic conception of socio-political and economic development—West Africa's Philosophy of Right.

The second part of this work focuses on current and future regional issues West Africa must address and overcome. Based on the region's current social, economic and political status, Chapter Five discusses the internal climate and external international economic disadvantages and advantages which West Africa continues to face. Chapter Six outlines economic factors, such as the extra-illegal "black market" institutions that are preventing the accumulation of capital within the region. Chapter Seven synthesizes the key elements of West African philosophical thought and Western ideas to achieve economic development and growth; and Chapter Eight advocates economic development by prescribing recommendations that need to be instituted, including the West African Philosophy of Right and the help of foreign investments.

CHAPTER I

PRE-COLONIAL AND COLONIAL WEST AFRICA

The examination of pre-colonial and colonial experiences in West Africa is vital to understanding its economic development. A great deal of pre-colonial West African economic history is lost because there is no evidence of written records. However, much has been preserved in oral tradition and in the writings of Arabs and Europeans. Their writings have recorded that the West African people were not simply hunters and gatherers, but were people who engaged in agriculture and husbandry before the coming of the Europeans and the Arabs.

Iron, gold, and salt were produced in West Africa, and West Africa was Europe's principle source of gold. Cloth and clothing were manufactured in Africa more than a thousand years before European colonization in the nineteenth century. West Africa imported European cloths, while it exported its own cloth to Europe. Local and long distance trade existed in pre-colonial West Africa, which eventually extended to the Arab states, Europe, and India. When the Europeans traded with the West Africans, conflicts occurred, but the rulers of West Africa controlled the trade negotiations.¹

¹ Thomas Sowell, *Conquests and Cultures: An International History*, (New York, NY: Basic Books), 90-99.

Western Africa was on the path to development before the colonial period. Even before the rise of the great African empires in the Third and Fourth Centuries A.D., trade and interaction among its different parts had taken place for centuries, albeit with limited direct contact from the rest of the world. In the subsequent period, many kingdoms and civilizations rose, prospered, and competed with each other, as well as invaders from outside West Africa. The region traded with Europe, and developed a highly organized network of long distance trade, linking its different sub-regions.

By the Fifteenth Century many of the preconditions for wider political integration and economic development had been laid in the form of polities with large populations and territorial administrations greater in extent than those of contemporary Europe. This long-term process of development was interrupted by the arrival of Europeans, who brought with them a markedly different culture and civilization. The Europeans introduced an oppressive colonial relationship²; the interruption, invasion, and exploration of the Europeans imposed an ideological shift upon the entire person within West Africa. This did not only bring about the breakdown of the traditional West African way of life, but it also changed the distribution of power within the community.

In the 15th century, the African continent already had trade and diplomatic relations with Europe. Ikenga Ozigbo argue that Christopher Columbus's discovery of the West Indies in 1492 gave a new dimension to trade, and in doing so motivated

² John A. Garraty & Peter Gay, ed., *The Columbia History of the World*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 150-200.

the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.³ Although the legacy of western colonial power in West Africa created setbacks throughout the region, West African leaders' during the pre-colonial era played a significant role in the process of colonization. The avarice of West African leaders' yearning to gain wealth and power in their region resulted to their collaboration with Europeans settlers, which consequently led to the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Moreover, West African leaders' decision to sell their natural resources and fellow citizens as slaves to Europeans settlers have caused countless deficiencies that Africa must overcome on its journey to the development of the entire person.

By the 18th century, the Europeans' quest for power in West Africa was centered on economic gain. Eric Eustace Williams, a descendent of a family which made its fortune from the illegal slave trade after 1807 was the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and a Caribbean historian—who specialized in the study of the abolition of the slave trade—concludes that the reason for the origin of Negro slavery was “economic, not racial; it had to do not with the laborer, but the cheapness of labor.”⁴ This search for economic power by the West, especially by the British and the French governments, was based on exploitation, mainly an economic and profit-oriented strategy. This exploitation started the breakdown of traditional West Africa by altering the West African way of life and, thus changing the philosophy of the entire person.

³ See Emma Ikoku, *Self-Reliance: Africa's Survival*, (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publisher, 1980), 304.

⁴ Eric Williams, “The Origin of Negro Slavery,” in *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, ed., E.C. Eze (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 386-387.

A 21st century African philosopher and a graduate of Oxford University, Francis O.C. Njoku, in his book, *Development and African Philosophy: A Theoretical Reconstruction of Africa Socio-Political Economy*, shows that the idea of western colonization arose first not as a sincere effort to develop Africa's vast potentials, but to foster Europe's need for different industrial materials, like palm oil and metal bearing ores. To guarantee impute into European-based industries, colonialism was born.⁵ Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, a Nigerian-born American philosopher specializing in post-colonial African Philosophy, in his article "Modern Western Philosophy and African Colonialism," defines colonialism as an:

"Indescribable crisis disproportionately suffered and endured by the African peoples in their tragic encounter with the European world, from the beginning of the fifteenth century through the end of the nineteenth into the first half of the twentieth. This was a period marked by the horror and violence of the transatlantic slave trade, the imperial occupation of most parts of Africa and the forced administrations of its people, and the resilient and enduring ideologies and practices of European cultural superiority (ethnocentrism) and 'racial' supremacy (racism)."⁶

This quest for economic power by the Europeans and the collaboration of West African leaders led to the exploitation of West Africans, and thereafter contributed to

⁵ Francis O.C. Njoku, *Development and African Philosophy: A Theoretical Reconstruction of African Socia-Political Economy*, (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc., 2004), 46.

⁶ E. Chukwudi Eza, 'Modern Western Philosophy and African Colonialism,' in *African Philosophy: An Anthology* ed., Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers: 1998), 213.

the underdevelopment of the region. Colonialism, the result of conquered power and political control, cultivated economic control.

History illustrates that throughout the period of colonialism, Europe's intention was never to raise Africans to the Western level or share with them the instruments of physical, social, political, or economic power. On the contrary, it was their intentional intention to keep Africans in a state of submission and control. Africans did not own their political and economic destiny during colonial rule, so they lacked self-determination in almost all public and private spheres. Colonial rule destroyed the Africans' abilities to own what they produced, and generate and distribute income arising from production in the manner they desired. Therefore, Africans had no economic control over their products or activities in the market economy. Colonialism was only intended to serve the colonial interest and West African leaders, not Africa's interest, and as a result, the colonial powers did not build a foundation from which Africans could fully function after the demise of colonial rule. Thereafter, as Africans began to complain and campaign against colonial abuses by unifying in their determined efforts to reject the rule of their colonies, the Europeans began to see Africans in a new light.

During the 1950s the campaign for West African liberation from colonial rule produced anti-colonist and extremist ideologies calling for decolonization and thereafter independence. However, this era only signified the "mobilization of the people to create pressure for the achievement of political independence."⁷ To pursue

⁷ Obiora F. Ike and Ndidi Nnoli Edozien, *Development Is about People: Business is about Ethics*, (Enugu: Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace (CIDJAP), 2003), 9.

a peaceful decolonization, Europe and the West African petite bourgeoisies, African leaders trained by the colonial nations to rule their individual nations, benefited from colonial rule and wanted the colonial ties to continue, thus they conceived an alliance. The result of the alliance remains a chief factor in the execution of national and international policies by West Africans leaders in today's society.

The petite bourgeoisie of West Africa had to undergo socio-political and economic grooming in order to learn how to fully manage their economic affairs since West African way of life and accumulating wealth had been tainted by the western phenomenon of the capitalistic model. The capitalistic form of development influenced many West African leaders, especially the petite bourgeoisie, in a loyal and self-serving partnership with Colonialism—European imperialism, and in doing so, encouraged corruption that is currently prominent throughout West Africa. The transfer of power from colonial control to the petite bourgeoisies in the form of an alliance allowed the Europeans to manage power and control throughout much of West Africa. This era defines the first stage of West African development, since it would have been impossible to completely exclude Europeans from their former colonies.

Europeans and Americans maintained power and control in many West African nations, for example, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ghana, etc., through the establishment of Western private companies, which became increasingly active in African economic affairs. Although these companies sought their own interest, their presence contributed to the economic development within West Africa. European and American companies, such as Chase Manhattan Bank of America, Gulf Oil, Texaco,

Philips, British Petroleum (BP), UAC, Firestone Rubber Company, and many others came as wolves in sheep's clothing by using economic aid and stimulation.⁸ These companies' business strategies contributed to West Africa's development. However, in many cases West African leaders, for example ex-president Charles Taylor of Liberia, and Idi Amin Dada, former dictator of Uganda, used profits from indigenous products for the importation of weapons and military technology and support, instead of goods and services that would raise the standard of living and promote development of their citizens. Furthermore, many of these companies, for example, the Firestone cooperation in Liberia, after being established in Africa began to take advantage of the natural resources and the availability of cheap labor.

After colonialism, many colonial imperialists felt some moral responsibility to help develop Africa. Therefore, Phillip Darby states that there was

“...a body of thought and belief that advanced peoples had an obligation to help those less advanced. Society which had traveled ahead, it was held, had some duty to offer guidance, instruction, even to rule. The signposts along the way were marked by concepts drawn from politics and economies—trusteeship, colonial development, modernization. Such guides to action were not simply theoretical constructs that expressed something of the temper of the metro-polite society, or at least sections of it. Imperialism, according to their conception, was primarily a set of moral attitudes.”⁹

⁸ Francis O.C. Njoku, *Development and African Philosophy: A Theoretical Reconstruction of African Socio-Political Economy*, 51.

⁹ Philip Darby, *Three Faces of Imperialism: British and American Approaches to Asia and Africa, (1870-1970)* (London: Yale University 1987), 31.

This “moral humanitarian” responsibility that the colonial powers felt to help develop the third world, especially Africa and Asia, promoted the idea that Europe, especially Britain, needed to rescue the “under-privileged in the colonized land. It is this concept and globalization, given that the world is becoming more interdependent, that binds and convinces colonial powers to aid Africa.

The concept of moral responsibility relating to West Africa’s development contributes to what is known as the dependency theory, which continues to haunt Africans and their leaders to this day. It is this intent model that led Winston Churchill to insist that, “The gap between conquest and dominion becomes filled with the figures of the greedy trader, the inopportune missionary, the ambitious soldier, and the lying speculator, who disquiets the minds of the conquered and excites the sordid appetite of the conquerors.”¹⁰ The goal of the colonialists ruling West Africa, especially the French, was not to foster an understanding of the West African culture and its societal structure by allowing the full interpretation of the efficient use of indigenous resources in the production of goods and services to achieve long-term human satisfaction.

The paradigms of colonial West Africa, the construction and infrastructures of colonial ruling along with indigenous and colonial exploitations, have had impacts on its economic development. And as a result, it altered the ideology and identity of the entire person. It is this change that leads one African, Tsenay Serequeberham, an African Philosopher, to write the following:

¹⁰ Winston Churchill, *The River War* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1951), 10.

“For us, contemporary Africans, the condition that has resulted from the colonial obliteration of the ‘standards and practices of our father,’ to use Plato’s words and the consequent neo-colonial inertness of our contemporary situation is the necessary point of departure for any worthwhile or meaningful philosophical engagement. Thus, the closing years of the twentieth century are bound to be for Africa and Africans a time of prolonged, deep reflection and self-examination. Having achieved political ‘independence,’ for the most part, we now need to take stock of the victories, defeats, and compromises that constitute and inform our enigmatic present.”¹¹

Serequeberham claims in this passage that Africa’s petite bourgeoisies’ self-serving loyalty to the French and British behavior helped corrupt and raid their own country as it created trade deficits that sustain the colonialist strategy. In this sense, the colonial elites of Africa were co-opted to maintain a state of dependence, so that Africans would have to look to Europe for aid, such as foreign investments, money and technology.

¹¹ Tesany Sereueberan, ‘Philosophy and Post-Colonial Africa,’ in *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, ed. E.C. Eze, 9.

CHAPTER II

POST-COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT AND AFRICA'S PHILOSOPHY

West Africa's philosophy--the development of the entire person--is fundamental to a successful strategy for economic development for the region. The discourse of what constitutes African philosophy is uniquely regional to West Africa, and is reflected in the socio-economic thought in areas such as Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and in Western countries where expatriate West African and African intellectuals reside. Philosophers from these regions are inspired by the regional context.

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the importance of current philosophical thought unique to the West Africa region and Africa. Analyzing the root of West African philosophy as it relates to culture, religion, economics, and socio-political issues is crucial to understanding the process of economic development. Understanding West African philosophy will elicit policy changes and subsequently promote its development. Moreover, the role of the individual and the communalistic structure in West African culture can be examined by describing the similarity and differences that currently exist between African and Western philosophy, and therefore provide an explanation for its economic underdevelopment.

Etymologically, the word *philosophy* comes from two Greek words, namely: *philia* and *sophia*, that is, love/friend and wisdom, respectively, which literally

translates as love of/and with wisdom.¹² Philosophy denotes an organized body of knowledge as a specific discipline. It is a critical examination of views and evaluative tools for testing the pretension of beliefs. Plato claims that philosophy is the science that is the science of itself and of others; that is, it is the art that equips its possessor with wisdom. While Aristotle claims it “is the criticism of criticisms.”¹³ It is the chief functions of philosophy to free men’s minds from bias and prejudice and enlarge their perception of the world in which they live. The development of the entire person and the socio-political and economic progress of West Africa in a cultural specific context are interdependent based on the establishment of a new West African philosophy of right.

West Africa’s socio-political and economic advancement in a cultural and regional context adopts and emphasizes a new African philosophical thought, presented by Francis O.C. Njoku, in his book titled, *Development and African Philosophy: A Theoretical Reconstruction of African Socio-Political Economy*, of “covenant authority and communion—the community,”¹⁴ while it encourages Western philosophical thought of individualism. The duality between these two strands of thought is fundamental to West Africa’s socio-political and economic development. As this new paradigm fosters an understanding of each individual within West Africa, it also observes the collective (local, state and national institutions’) need for development.

12 See Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary of English usages (1994).

13 William Ebenstein and Allan Ebenstein, *Great Political Thinkers: Plato to the Present*, sixth edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Group/Thomson Learning, 2000). P 182-183.

14 Ibid., xviii.

The word ‘development’ comes from a French verb ‘veloper’ meaning to wrap, therefore, to develop is “to cause to grow gradually, fully, larger, stronger and bigger.”¹⁵ To develop is to progress towards maturity and betterment. According to Walter Rodner, development implies an “increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being.”¹⁶ Socio-political and economic development begins with the individual level of development, and then later promotes the collective community and institutions to flourish and ultimately results in the development of the entire person.

Development, a gradual process of growth, is a natural state of being for an individual, community, nation and institution. Bernard J.F. Lonergan highlights that “if one [person] attends to the circle of development itself and to the structure of what can be known as proportionate being, the development is philosophic. But if one is a proportionate human being, one is engaged in actualizing herself or himself; that is, in a personal search for self-fulfillment in a relational world backed by wisdom.”¹⁷ Socrates tells us that an unexamined life is not worth living. Plato insists on getting philosophers to tutor politicians, for the health of the body politic when he opts for philosophers-king.¹⁸ The dialogue of cultural and regional philosophical development within West Africa permits a quest for a new paradigm of leadership

15 S.I. Udoidem, *Values and National Development*, (Lagos: African Heritage Research and Publications, 1992), 110.

16 Walter Rodner, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1982), 9.

17 Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, (London: Longman, 1957), 458.

18 William Ebenstein and Allen Ebenstein, *Great Political Thinkers: Plat to the Present*, sixth edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Group/Thomson Learning, 2000), 50, 73.

and authority by evaluating wisdom, self-discipline, responsibility, accountability, greater freedom and practical solutions to better understand a person or group of political leaders' influences on their society.

African Philosophy produces an authentic definition rooted in an African identity. The African philosophy discourse is diverse in that it emphasizes a broad school of thought that formulates an African worldview different from mainstream western philosophy. This school of thought is different from what was imposed on the colonies by the West. Formulating an African Philosophy destroys dependency theory and enlightens Africans to view their individual desire to develop Africa. The lack of effective leadership in Africa has not only made the African continent grope in the dark so long but has also suffocated the social, economic and political development of its people.

The quest to bring to the forefront African philosophical thought by the current community of African philosophers have resulted in redefining the meaning of the African discourse, its culture, traditions and religion. This search for meaning and clarification of the African culture, which first began in the mind of the West, claimed total denial of humanity to the Africans. For example, David Hume, the 18th century Scottish philosopher, economist and historian, and G.W.F. Hegel, the 19th century German philosopher, both of their ideas, which influenced the intellectual classed during both eras, were particularly negative about the humanity of Africans and the contributions of Africans to civilization. Still to this day, Western judgments or attitudes about Africans have been based on mere cultural bias. This bias “gradually grew into formidable two-pronged historical reality: slavery and slave

trade on the one hand, and academic expressions on the other hand.”¹⁹ This discussion of African philosophy and Western reflection on African culture demonstrates two distinctions between the civilized and the uncivilized, the logical and mystical, by claiming that those in the West have a stronger logical ability to develop intellectual reasons, while Africans, on the other hand, are equipped with the ability to develop their emotional reasons skills.²⁰

West Africa’s philosophical discourse is unique to the region and arises in areas such as Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal, along with other regional countries. The debate on nature’s problems and methods of African philosophy is, in part, inspired by the context in which Africa has been developed. The selected schools of thoughts are fragmented, and as a result, have been categorized as the following: Culture (the philosophy of), Trends (Ethnophilosophy, sage philosophy, professional philosophy, and ideological philosophy), Metaphysics (Idealism), Epistemology (Sociology of knowledge), Ethics (communitarianism), Politics (liberation ideologies and struggles, a South African focus) and Aesthetics (the status of African art as ‘Art’).²¹ This work will examine the first five trends of African philosophical thought by demonstrating each fragmented thought and how they are to strengthen the advancement of Africa and its economic, political and social development.

¹⁹ D.A. Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 2.

²⁰ Francis O.C. Njoku, *Development and African Philosophy: A Theoretical Reconstruction of African Socia-Political Economy*, 110.

²¹ See Didier N. Kaphagawani, ‘Reading: What is African Philosophy?’ in *The African Philosophy Reader* ed., P.H. Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux (New York, NY: Routledge 2000), 86-108.

When defining African culture (the philosophy of), Emevwo Biakolo, a professor of African Philosophy at the University of Botswana, Gaborone, who continues to conduct research on the orality in culture and oral traditions, argues that the distinction between savage/civilized, pre-logical/logical, oral/written, magical/scientific is nothing more than mere European ethnocentric convention.²² This examination of the African use of culture and cultural constructs attempts to create dialogue within a culture-specific context of philosophy; that is, to discuss and place into perspective that which has been distorted by the West. Christo Van Staden, a philosopher and essayist who has written extensively on the use of culture in Africa, argues for an articulation of cultural concept, which focuses on culture as an enterprise. Van Staden claims that culture is historical and political, in that, it is used to further political enterprises or to achieve certain political goals, be it conservative, progressive or oppressive.²³ The examination and establishment of a new philosophical archetype unique to Africa secures the possibility of a cultural shift in hopes of providing new economic and socio-political development strategies.

Overall, culture, in the philosophical context, is portrayed as singular, or universal. Singular culture denotes a category of beliefs, practices and systems of meaning for a specific group of people, while universal culture can be described as a standard of achievement, often equated to the concepts of progression and civilization. Therefore culture in African philosophical thought is a system of

²² See Emevwo Biakolo, 'Categories of Cross-Cultural Cognition and the African Condition,' in *The African Philosophy Reader* ed., P.H. Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux (New York, NY: Routledge 2000), 1-12.

²³ See Christo Van Staden, 'Using Culture in Africa Context,' in *The African Philosophy Reader* ed., P.H. Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux (New York, NY: Routledge 2000), 15.

reflection and reasoning merely bound by traditions, but the reflections and reasoning do affect the ideologies of the individual and their leaders, be it good or bad, and as a result, encumbering a certain economic and socio-political development.

CHAPTER III

CULTURAL CONTEXT: AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

The goal of this chapter is to emphasize how vital it is for West Africa to examine the already existing philosophical ideas unique to the region and how these ideas may have influenced Africans. The trends in African philosophical thought denote the following: ethno-philosophy, sage philosophy, ideological philosophy, and professional philosophy. Ethno-philosophy depicts the first movement of African philosophy, which involves the recording of beliefs found in the African culture. This approach treats African philosophy as consisting of a set of shared beliefs, values, categories, and assumptions that are implicit in language, practices, and the beliefs of the African culture.

Ethno-philosophy demonstrates an old African worldview that is seen as African socialism, where more emphasis is placed on communal property rather the individual. A proponent of Ethno-philosophy, Placid Temples, a Belgium born missionary to the Democratic Republic of Congo, neither African nor philosopher, led a movement that influenced African philosophy through his publication in 1945 of the book entitled: *La Philosophie Bantoeu (Bantu Philosophy)*. In this work, Temples argues that the metaphysical categories of the Bantu people (those residing in what is now sub-Saharan Africa) are reflected in their linguistic categories, which is called “unanimism,” which is the idea that people have unanimous views about their culture

and beliefs. Temples characterizes the fundamental principles of this philosophy as “force,” which he claims is within the human being; therefore, without this element of force, “being cannot be conceived.”²⁴ This kind of “force” that moves all living elements and values is viewed according to whether these elements and values strengthen or weaken the force of the person. Although this genre of African philosophy is partially true, there are other African worldviews that is a holistic view emphasizing African emotions and intellect. Temples’ worldview places emphasis on the emotional aspect of African culture instead of African intellect or logic, which contributes partly to the development of the entire person.

Like ethno-philosophers, *negritude*—which most closely translates to “blackness” in English, was developed in the 1930s. Negritude describes a movement that identified the common elements that are specifically thought to be African or black. Its proponent, Leopold Sedar Senghor, a former Senegalese president, author, politician, founder of the political party called Senegales Democraloe and the first West African to sit as a member of L’Académie Française (or the French Academy body on matters) was a chief advocate for the uniqueness of race and cultural consciousness. As a politician, Senghor argued that the distinctly African approach to reality is based on emotion rather than logic, and that analysis works itself out in participation. As a result, it manifests itself through the arts rather than science.²⁵ Ethno-philosophy and negritude philosophy claims that black

²⁴ Placid Temples, *Bantu Philosophy*, trans. Colin King (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959),40-41.

²⁵ See Leopold Sedar Senghor, ‘Black Woman,’ in *Western African Verse: An Anthology*, chosen and annotated by Donatus I. Nwoga (Harlow Essex: Longman, 1967), 97.

decedents have something specific to offer in bringing about communion among the peoples of the black race and beyond.

On the contrary, both Ethno-philosophy and negritude philosophy expose an inferiority complex that reflects the already existing Western stereotypes that are imputed to Africans. Such ideology supports David Hume and G.W.F. Hegel's negative worldview, which portrays Africans or the black race as being intellectually inferior when compared to the white race, and the African culture as having limited or no intellectual or logical contribution to civilization. This culture bias, created and imposed upon Africans by the West, is a direct result of the some Africans worldview of themselves, the West's distorted worldview of Africa, its colonial affects and the breakdown of African identity. The development of an African philosophy of right will not only intellectually and logically liberate Africans and their leaders, but will also educate the West and build leadership accountability amongst Africans that is based on a stronger system of individual rights, covenant authority and communal accountability.

Sage philosophy is an individualist version of ethno-philosophy that emphasizes the beliefs of certain special members of a community, while it makes an assumption that is logically opposite to that of ethno-philosophy. Didier Kaphagawani, a Malawian philosopher at the University of Malawi and an expert on the African community claims that sage philosophy emphasizes each individual role within the community.²⁶ Henry Odera Orika, educated in Sweden and the United

²⁶ See Didier N. Kaphagawani, 'What is African Philosophy,' in *The African Philosophy Reader* ed., P.H. Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux (New York, NY: Routledge 2000), 93.

States was a Kenyan philosopher, best known as a proponent of sage philosophy, views it as a didactic wisdom that is a rational thought expounded by individuals with creative power of judgment.²⁷ Sage philosophers argue that this philosophy does not have to be written since Socrates used his dialectic method to fashion philosophy out of narrative materials.

On the contrary, African professional philosophy constitutes the definitions and conceptions of trained African philosophers whether they are logical, metaphysical, ethical, or historical. This approach, chiefly supported by Henry O. Oruka, a Kenyan philosopher, Kwasi Wiredu, an Oxford graduate who wrote his thesis on 'Knowledge, Truth, and Reason' and an opponent of the ethnophilosophy and philosophical sagacity approach to African Philosophy claiming that all cultures have their distinctive folks-beliefs and world-views, but that these must be distinguished from the practice of philosophizing; Paulin Hountondji, a graduate from the school of Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, a Beninese philosopher, politician, and expert on African professional philosophy, argues that what passes as philosophy is "ingrained with argument and criticism."²⁸ These philosophers, and especially Kwasi Wiredu, a leading African philosopher working today, argue that truth is universal; meaning that there is no black or white truth and that there is no existing philosophy unique to Africa. Contrary to the above argument that truth is universal, it is important to note that such a worldview prevents the development of an authentic

27 H.Odera Oruka, 'Sage Philosophy: The Question of Methodology,' in *Sage Philosophy* ed., H.Odera Oruka (Nairobi: Africa Center for Technology Studies Press, 1991), 33.

28 See Marlene Van Niekerk, 'Understanding Trends in "African Thinking"- a Critical Discussion' in *The African Philosophy Reader* ed., P.H. Coetzee and A.P. J. Roux (New York, NY: Routledge 2000), 98.

African philosophy. It also averts the establishment of an authentic African identity that could foster a new socio-political and economic development consistent with the history, culture, and needs of Africans.

Ideological or nationalist philosophy, unlike professional philosophy, “evolves a new and, if possible, unique political theory based on traditional African socialism and family hood.”²⁹ This philosophical trend developed as a reaction to western colonialism experience. This African resistance and liberation philosophy is promoted by many African leaders who claim that their governments are not capitalist, socialist nor communist, but are African. Proponents, such as the centralized-Marxist socialist, Kwame Nkrumah, an anti-colonial, anti-neo-colonial, anti-imperialist African leader from Ghana and the founder and first president of the modern Ghanaian state emerged as one of the most influential Pan-Africanists of the 20th century. Julius Nyerer, the first president of Tanzania, known as a teacher because of his active role in government, earned a degree from the University of Edinburgh UK) in 1952 as an economist and a proponent of the Fabian thinking connected socialism with African communal living. While Leopold Senghor, on the other hand, believed that certain constants, which have been distorted by colonialism, needed to be identified and recaptured within the African tradition.³⁰ The establishment of nationalist philosophy demonstrates how many Africans see the need

29 Pieter.O. Bodunrin, 1981a. ‘The question of African philosophy’ in *Philosophy*, 56:161-179.

30 See Leopold Sedar Senghor, ‘Black Woman,’ in *Western African Verse: An Anthology*, chosen and annotated by Donatus I. Nwoga (Harlow Essex: Longman, 1967), 95-97.

to recapture African identity and the African way of life by establishing a new philosophy, which promotes the development of the entire person.

Kwame Nkrumah believes that traditional Africa had to be recaptured by divesting Africa from colonialism and the capitalistic mode. This process, he claimed, involves a social revolution that will change Western and Islamic influence by giving them a new perspective on Africa:

“Social revolution must therefore have, standing firmly behind it, intellectual revolution, a revolution in which our thinking and philosophy are directed towards the redemption of our society. ...the emancipation of the African continent is the emancipation of man. This requires two aims: the restitution of egalitarianism of human society, and second, the logistic mobilization of all our resources towards the attainment of that restitution.”³¹

Nkrumah imposed and advocated Marxist theories of communism in hopes to advance the government and the economy; however, his theories, eventually this didn't only become unsuccessful in Ghana, but it imposed upon Africans a strict economic systems and way of life. And as a result of its failure, the Ghanaian government moved toward a free market economy after the Nkrumah era.

Metaphysical philosophy, an African idealism, is the study of reality. It attempts to fathom what is real, what is not real and what the ultimate nature of reality is. The term “metaphysics” is derived from the Greek word *metaphysika*, which literally means ‘those things which lie behind physical phenomena.’ This form

31 Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization and Development with particular reference to African Revolution*, (London: Heinemann Educational Books Limited, 1964), 78.

of African philosophy asks questions such as, ‘why does lightning kill people and destroy property?’ ‘Why are some people successful whereas others, despite their efforts, fail?’ ‘Why do innocent and good people become ill and die?’³²

Metaphysical discourse in African philosophy is based on the perception of reality, which is determined by history, geographical circumstances, and cultural phenomena such as religion. This kind of metaphysical realm of discourse deals with systems and linguistic conventions rooted in an African worldview.³³ The bulk of African metaphysics falls within the supernatural realms, which searches for meaning and reality in the complex relationship between the human person and his/her environment. Understanding this trend of thought is crucial for examining the social implications of every African leader, i.e., people who believe in witchcraft, God, or have a particular concept of reality which includes personality, responsibility, the nature of matter and so forth. The metaphysical perspectives cannot be ignored because they are essential when issues such as development, education, government and legislation are discussed.

Epistemology, the study and theories of nature and the scope of knowledge, evaluates ways Africans acquire knowledge according to the socio-cultural contexts. To call Epistemology *African* is to discuss *African articulation and formulation of knowledge*.³⁴ This category of philosophy is viewed as universal, meaning that

32 See Lesiba J. Teffo and Abraham P.J. Roux, ‘Metaphysical Thinking in Africa’ in *African Philosophy Reader* ed., P.H. Coetzee and A.P. J. Roux (New York, NY: Routeledge 2000), 134—143.

33 Ibid., 136-148.

34 Didier N. Kaphagawani and Jeanette G. Malherbe, ‘African Epistemology’ in *African Philosophy Reader* ed., P.H. Coetzee and A.P. J. Roux (New York, NY: Routeledge 2000), 206.

knowledge is true to all people, anywhere, at any time; or it is relativist, claiming that every ethnic group's knowledge is absolutely unique, and so its analysis of knowledge will be unique.³⁵ It is important to study epistemology in African socio-political context because it is the foundation by which government leaders within the community and the continent defines and develops social-economic policies. This concept of rationality enables African leaders to achieve social-economic and political goals while becoming successful in every arena of life. The African community, in its socio-cultural context, must formulate a regulative idea which directs its thinking and provides the standards by which to measure different intellectual ideas of a certain kind as good or bad for each individual nation and region.

African communitarianism is a social model of organization which stresses ties of affection, kinship, and a sense of common purpose (as opposed to a morality of contractual ties entered between individuals). These common ethics support an ongoing process associated with people living within the communalistic structure who have a special commitment to the community and to the individual. By such commitment, they are developing a distinct sense of community life, which usually lacks individual accountability; therefore, the responsibility of a leader to promote the socio-political development of a nation is unnecessary. For example, the responsibility and accountability of government officials as elite leaders continues to shift within the communal or collective life.

³⁵ Ibid., 205-213.

This shift within each African government and leadership team implies that leaders within the political arena might blithely seek the interests of their own ethnic classes instead of the development of all peoples within each country. Moreover, this paradigm indicates that culture, community, and traditions are all important ideas of self-understanding; and therefore, culture signifies that the community's resources and its moral world are represented through a cultural concept in which people draw boundaries between members and strangers.³⁶ The communal or social identity of a community's characteristics and way of life from one tribe to another must symbolize individual strength, responsibility, and accountability. Such strength, responsibility, and accountability ought to illustrate the existence and growth of individual identity while ultimately expressing the right and covenant-based ideology that represents a West African philosophy of right.

³⁶ Pieter H. Coetzee, 'Particularity in Morality and its Relation to Community' in *African Philosophy Reader* ed., P.H. Coetzee and A.P. J. Roux (New York, NY: Routledge 2000), 276.

CHAPTER IV

WEST AFRICA AND WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

This chapter combines the fundamental traits of West Africa and Western philosophy to create a new and holistic socio-political philosophy of development that is the West African Philosophy of Right. “Right,” as Howard Davies and David Holdcroft puts it, is an entitlement given to everyone. “We have many institutional rights, the most important are the legal rights conferred by statutes and the decision of courts, such as the right to make a will, to dispose of property that is lawfully owned, and to stand on a picket line when on strike, etc.”³⁷ There are several kinds of universal rights that exist within the African communalistic structure. For example, moral rights include freedom of speech and freedom to worship.

There are African philosophers who object to the theory of philosophy of right in an African context; they claim that an African theory of philosophy must focus on justice and compassion instead of right. Richard H. Bell, a proponent for justice and compassion, argues that the question of right leaves out the issues of justice and compassion when he writes:

“The moral issues are, first, the relationship of individual identity and community and emergent views of justice surrounding liberal individualism and communitarian thinking. The discussion explores whether there is a

³⁷ Howard Davies and David Holdcroft, *Jurisprudence: Text and Commentary*, (London: Butterworths, 1991), 230.

different sense in which the concept of “justice” in the African context is being used, distinguishing between individual ‘right-based’ and more communal ‘compassion-based’ moral thinking and implications of each for rethinking civic order. The second set of moral issues has to do with the philosophical significance of suffering and poverty in African context, and how these two concepts affect our thinking about justice and human development.”³⁸

The point that Bell makes is that there are inconsistencies of rights, that is, what constitutes an individual’s right undermines traditional African values, i.e., the community-centered paradigm. However, human feeling should not be formed on compassion and justice alone; rather, an in-depth study must be conducted to clarify the traditional African values and the meaning of individual right. It is important to study the ways in which the community-centered life dominates and suffocates individuals’ rights by setting them in opposition, and in doing so slows down African’s socio-political development.

Julius Nyerere stresses the importance of compassion and justice while insisting that the traditional African society is based on a distributive welfare and justice.³⁹ West Africa’s collective society primary value is placed on the social entity of the community, instead of being placed on both the individual person and the community. Consequently, this individual driven relationship does not show compassion and justice to those

³⁸ Richard H. Bell, *Understanding African Philosophy: A Cross-Cultural Approach to Classical and Contemporary Issues*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 11.

³⁹ Julius Nyerere, ‘Ujamaa: The Basis of Africa Socialism’ in *I am Because We Are: Reading in Black Philosophy*, ed., Fred Lee Hord and Johnathan Scott Lee (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 66-67.

citizens living on the margins of society, for example a widow and her children. Rather this type of system tends to recognize the socio-legal right of a dominant group of people. Thus, according to Nyerere, those dominant in the society have the power to decide which class of people within a community must be protected. For example, the death of the father within an African family might result in the wife and her children being abandoned by the family without any claim to the family property. This kind of treatment lacks compassion and justice.

Bénézet Bujo, a historian and African cultural expert, attempted to defend the community-centeredness of the African person by insisting that the name given to an individual safeguards his or her independence and identity. Bujo challenges African socialism to some degree when he claims that within the individual there is a historical being responsible for his or her action. He insists that the interdependence existing within the community places emphasis on the individual; therefore, the individual must be supported because without the individuality of a member, the community would totally disintegrate. Interaction, in African cultural context, makes it clear that the individual is an incomplete being who is basically dependent on community.⁴⁰

On the contrary, Bénézet Bujo's theory fails to indicate how the private world of a person in a society dominated by community-centered principles would provide opportunity for the individual to flourish. Moreover, Bujo does not provide a detailed and balanced theory that exists between the individual and the community. However, Bujo claims that if too much emphasis is placed on the individual person and their rights, it usually contributes to the breakdown of the traditional society, i.e., resulting in an

⁴⁰ Bénézet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model and the Dialogue Between North and South*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publication Africa), 148.

individualistic structure that exists in the U.S. Thus, it is much more difficult to talk about individual rights in an African cultural-specific context. Furthermore, the establishment of a West African worldview, one that focuses on the concept of individual rights, covenant authority, and communal accountability will help create a balance between the individual and the community within West Africa.

West African Philosophy of Right is rooted in certain aspects of the African reality that advocates the importance of the equal rights of all individual, covenant authority, and communal accountability within the society. This philosophy of right advocates that the community-centered conscience makes it difficult to handle individual freedom. As a result, it proposes that the development of a philosophy of right within the community will address the already existing deficiencies of an individual within the community. This philosophy of rights has three important components, (1) the equal rights to life, liberty and property, (2) a horizontal covenant authority among ethnic groups, and (3) communal accountability.

The first component of this philosophy, the right of the individual, for the purpose of this work expresses John Locke's thought that all men have a equal right to life, liberty and property. The equal right of the individual permits the government to protect the life of each citizen, thus allowing them to live in harmony as lawful citizens under the rule of law. This idea allows for the civil government to be seen as an instrument that equally provides protection and restrains evil within the society, while its military leaders and power are the peacekeepers of the land. Moreover, this idea of 'the right to life' institutes a foundation promoting and protecting a societal sphere of jurisdiction and interdependence among the citizens by exhibiting free and responsible polity, economy and society.

Liberty in a general sense is usually associated with the concept of political philosophy and individual immunity from arbitrary exercise of authority. The idea of liberty as an individual right, in the context of this work, is to protect the individual and all institution, its freedom of speech, consciousness, expression, and the right of every person to exchange and receive ideas and information through any media. This idea also advocates equal protection under the law with emphasizes equal rights for women, the right of persons belonging to minorities and disadvantaged groups (i.e. widows, divorced women, children, senior citizens, mentally and physically disabled people, etc.). Overall, the idea of equal liberty in this text seeks to establish a relationship among the individual, the institution and the government where all involved will be seen as one family with each recognizing and identifying with their unalienable rights and responsibilities to develop Africa.

The equal right to property is a very important issue that has a weak structure in the West Africa legal system and therefore needs attention. Property, the ownership and interest in land or other resources is a vital part of happiness and economic success. This idea of equal right to property in this text refers to the real or intellectual goods that are commonly recognized as being the rightful possessions of a person or group, such as private property rights, which encourages the property holders to develop the property, generate wealth, and allocate resources based on the operation of the market. The ideal of equal access to private property is central to capitalism, because the modern conception of property as a right enforced by the rule of law produces more wealth and better standards of living.⁴¹

⁴¹ William Ebenstein and Allen Ebensten, *Great Political Thinkers: Plato to the Present*, Six edition (Belmont CA: Wadsworth Group/Thomson Learning 2000), 380-407.

The equal right to property is important because it is one mean by which every individual gains wealth. The right to property provides ownership associated with property that establishes the goods as being “one’s own thing” in relationship to other individuals or groups, which traditionally includes: the control use of the property, benefit from the property, the transfer or selling of the property (produces wealth) and the exclusion of others from the property. The individual right to property creates a stronger legal system that strengthens their property rights structure by advocating that each West African government dissolve the extra-illegal economic (black market) activities, and establish a one system rule that incorporates dead capital (the result of extra-illegal activities) by means of legally enforcing and securing transactions of property right so that the national capital is increased.⁴² This change will toughen the economic assets, integrate dispensed information into one system, make people accountable, make assets fungible, create a network between the people by protecting transactions and will create a conceptual world of real estate (which results in live capital) emphasizing the importance of titles, deeds and contracts.

The horizontal covenant authority among ethnic groups, in this text, defines a West African concept which discourages hierarchical power among ethnic groups within each West African government. This is an ideal concept demanding that all ethnic groups must be elected into power by the people and must be equally represented based on the population of each ethnic group. The horizontal covenant authority serves to establish

⁴² Francis O.C. Njoku, *Development and African Philosophy: A Theoretical Reconstruction of African Socia-Political Economy*, 174- 175

harmony all among ethnic groups. This West African philosophical worldview recognizes the importance of a horizontal covenant leadership; that is, it fosters a basic attitude that motivates West Africans to enter into covenant relations: “the need for peace/stability and protection of life. Peace, stability of possessions and protection are common good—in an atmosphere of familiarity typical of brothers or people sharing the same life. People want to progress or develop; they want to flourish.”⁴³ The intent of this new paradigm is to establish a kind of self and community discipline, responsibility, accountability, greater freedom and practical reasonableness; one that will free West Africans, especially West African leaders, from corruption and the old community-centered worldview and from the dependency theory that is not implemented in their leadership style.

This concept of a horizontal covenant authority among ethnic groups insists upon a stronger system that binds West Africans in unity. To understand such a unity; a covenant; briefly, constitutes a pack between two or more entities. A covenant is (1) an agreement; a contract; (2) Law (a) a contract drawn up under a seal, especially undertaking to make regular payment to a charity; (3) in Biblical terms, the agreement between God and the Israelites. ⁴⁴

Overall, a covenant is an agreement that is strongly binding on the parties involved, so the goal in West African cultural context is to form a horizontal covenant relationship among ethnic groups to form a union that is rooted in blood or family spirit—the strongest relationship formed by African standards.

⁴³ Ibid., 175.

⁴⁴ Francis Njoku, ‘An Understanding of Life Within the Perspective of African Theology,’ in *Encounter: A Journal of Life and Religion* 1 (No. 1, 1992), 44-57.

This idea of a horizontal covenant authority among ethnic groups will inevitably become the paradigm for democracy in a cultural-specific context unique to West Africa's socio-political and economic development. To understand this concept, we must do justice by examining the definitions of authority and leader. Authority, according to the *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, refers to power or an individual or a collective group of people to whom power has been given or has assumed power, i.e., the person in command, government agency, a leader, etc. A leader with legitimate power is certified with certain conditions to issues rules, laws (and commands) which bind acts. Thomas Aquinas writes that law is "a rule and measure of acts, whereby man is induced to act or is restricted from action." Moreover, he defines laws "as nothing else but a dictate of practical reason emanating from the rule who governs a prefect community."⁴⁵ Therefore the root of legal authority derives from the ability to solve coordination problems. This is a requirement for the common good; in other words, it is a moral requirement that aims at achieving the common good, which demands a morally coordinated action.

According to Francis O.C. Njoku, "the first person perspective is that of insiders—a member of the covenant wills—who is invested with authority to advocate the cause of the covenant. He (she) is to protect covenant wills of which he (she) is a member, to safeguard emergent rights, according to the rules which are the offshoot of the reality of the covenant of which he is a part."⁴⁶ Those selected persons or group of people, i.e. governmental officials, businessmen and women, civil servants, doctors, etc., are entrusted

⁴⁵ William Ebenstein and Allen Ebensten, *Great Political Thinkers: Plato to the Present*, Six edition (Belmont CA: Wadsworth Group/Thomson Learning 2000), 237.

⁴⁶ Francis O.C. Njoku, *Development and African Philosophy: A Theoretical Reconstruction of African Socio-Political Economy*, 175.

with the authority to protect the welfare of the individual and the community. Thus, their aim is to achieve the common good of the society by fostering socio-political development. Members of the first perspective must protect individuals and the community's freedom and rights, while also maintaining their freedom and rights to own property.⁴⁷

The third perspective, one that completes covenant authority/leadership and philosophy of right, is invoked to safeguard covenant relations. The third perspective "in a covenant is only a guarantor, and is there to moderate and executes legislative authority and the individual's isolated claims, making sure that no one cheats the other."⁴⁸ This covenant is seen as the court; that is, it judges and executes disciplinary actions over the first perspective as well as the common people within the community, public and private arenas. This model fosters self-discipline, responsibility, accountability, greater freedom and practical reasonableness by implementing the laws drafted by those selected members who are part of the covenant will.

The communal accountability in this text refers to a collective obligation and willingness of each West African nation, leader, and citizen to accept responsibility, account for one's actions, and exhibit loyalty that will build a stronger nation, by discouraging corruption and embezzlement. This union, according to West African cultural context, invariably guarantees an atmosphere of safety and goodwill that exercises trust, responsibility, accountability, individual freedom, practical reasonableness and a greater freedom from corruption. Such a covenant creates leadership based on a higher standard of the right of the individual, covenant authority, and the community. The communal

⁴⁷ John Lock's foundation of civil society is very relevant here. People do not relinquish their freedom; the community/leader/authority only acts as a mediator.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 176.

accountability aim is to reinforce the right of the individual and the horizontal covenant authority between ethnic group because it is the umbrella that brings West African together as they strive for economic, political and social development. Overall, communal accountability binds religious trust, instituting a system that not only promotes accountability but also realizes that the standard of rationality is not found within the individual or the community but within the divine.

CHAPTER V

WEST AFRICA: THE INTERNAL-CLIMATE AND EXTERNAL-INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGES AND ADVANTAGES

This chapter briefly discusses the internal and external economic disadvantages and advantages West Africa must combat as it strives for economic growth and development. Dependency theory, West African leaders' dominant source for development ideas,⁴⁹ points out that West Africa must combat both negative physical attributes, such as geographic and climate deficiencies and negative social problems, like corrupt leadership. Disadvantages unique to the region include underdevelopment and lack of capital, which slows the process of economic development. External-international economic disadvantages include distance from large world markets and lack of integration into the world economy, such as country sanctions.

Internal disadvantages such as linguistic fragmentation, the imprint of Islamic civilization, and colonization have further suffocated Africa's economic and political development. The smooth coastline of West Africa has offered few harbors where ocean-going ships can enter, and in many places the shallow coastal waterways have meant that large ships are unable to get near the shores. West Africa's shallow coastline and lack of natural rivers, similar to Europe's Danube, has hindered its market productive and economic development. Other regions of the world, i.e., Europe, with deep harbors and navigatable rivers, such as the Danube, have in part contributed to the higher trade and economic development because the lands in the

⁴⁹ John Rapley, *Understanding Development: Theory and Practice in the Third World*, (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 18-19

coastal regions are more receptive to shipping and commerce.⁵⁰ Throughout Africa, especially West Africa, low and irregular rainfall over many parts of the region fills rivers and streams to a navigable depth only intermittently, and even when filled, many rivers and streams become navigable only by smaller boats or barges, not ocean-going vessels. This combination of geographic features has had unfavorable if not devastating consequences for economic and cultural development within West Africa.

The internal-climate disadvantages and the external-international economic disadvantages unique to the African, especially the West African, are: (a) the inability to produce massive amounts of food, therefore limiting the region's capability to achieve economic development; and (b) the unfavorable climate and geographical barriers surrounding tropical West Africa, such as the depth of navigable rivers and streams and the difficult terrain along with the sporadic rainfall patterns, have made economic development difficult for the people of Africa. The geographical barriers surrounding tropical Africa have been formidable, though not absolutely impenetrable. These conditions have affected the economic development as well as the culture of its people.

Rainfalls in tropical regions such as Western Africa consist of a long, dry season followed by torrential downpours of rain, increasing erosion. This type of weather season fosters a disease-friendly environment where many deadly insects flourish. The drastic climate changes common to this region produce limited to no mountain ranges to collect snow, and as a result, the climate does not provide the

⁵⁰ Thomas Sowell, *Conquests and Cultures: An International History* (New York, NY: Basic Books), 99.

melting of snow that would eventually supplement rainfall in maintaining the flow of streams and rivers.⁵¹ It has been recorded that about two percent of Africa's land mass consists of islands and peninsulas. As a result, there are limited navigable rivers, since the entire continent is more than 1,000 feet above sea-level.⁵² Moreover, the highly variable rainfall patterns present serious natural problems for the region because geographical studies have shown that there is plenty of water available "where it cannot be used" and a scarcity "where it is most needed."⁵³

Other internal features unique to the West African continent are the poor distribution of water and transportation, corrupt leaders, poverty with its lower income per capita, the promotion of Islamic Jihads, a high illiteracy rate, lack of technology, and major diseases (i.e., AIDS, malaria, etc.). These obstacles limit West Africa's economic development. The lack of significant transportation networks to allow transfer of goods produced within different West African regions, along with the lack of trust and accountability among the natives to rule themselves represses economic development. Among other goals, Africa needs to build its transportation system to foster economic development. A strong infrastructure and transportation system would increase the amount of goods carried, the speed, distance, and efficiency of delivery. The development of Africa's transportation is a key step to economic modernization.

51 Martin A. Klein, "Introduction: Modern European Expansion and Traditional Servitude in African and Asia," *Breaking the Chain: Slavery, Bondage, and Emancipation in Modern Africa and Asia*, edited by Martin A. Klein (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 22.

52 Roy E. H. Mellor and E. Alistair Smith, *Europe: A Geographical Survey of the Continent* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 3.

53 Robert W. Patch, *Maya and Spiritual in Yucatan, 1648-1812* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 42-43.

External-international economic disadvantage unique to Africa is, for example, the lack of a strong infrastructure committed to the people during post colonial rule. In most of West Africa, the government continues to experience what Samuel Huntington called the transition period, which in part is a direct result of the civil unrests, international sanctions, and limited production of goods and services. West Africa's governments are still toppled by military coups by the dozen. This swift disappearance of newly attained democracy, as brutal dictatorship took over, led to a cynical phrase. The pre-colonial era also saw western missionaries attempt to bring Christianity to the African people and to change their way of life—by abolishing slavery, but also by changing their sexual morals, literacy, cleanliness, and numerous other features of Western civilization.⁵⁴ The limited access of West African nations to international trade, the complexities of international exchange rates, and international aid, i.e. mass production of food from the west being poured into Africa, creates competition for local farmers. Thus, the instability and lack of strong infrastructures within West African governments prevent foreign investments.

West African advantages in comparison to the rest of Africa can be found in regions of equatorial West Africa, such as Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Liberia, Sierra Leone etc., and their neighboring states. This region has some of the continent's most fertile soil, ample rainfall, and the Niger River system. In East Africa, some of the more geographically favored areas include harbors,⁵⁵ such as the large natural harbor on the offshore island of Zanzibar and mainland ports of Mombassa and Kilwa.

⁵⁴ Thomas Sowell, *Conquests and Cultures: An International History*, 123.

⁵⁵ R. Allen Brown, *The Normans* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 60.

Africa, compared to other continents around the world, has the following natural resources: gold, iron, copper, rubber and diamonds. The West African people are also producers of palm oil, cocoa, peanuts, and tobacco. They have a large pool of manpower, given that the majority of their population falls between ages 15 to 30.

In addition, equatorial West Africa has countries that are rich in oil, while others are entirely agricultural. Unlike other regions in the world, such as Europe and Asia where population growth is declining, West Africa continues to maintain a steady birthrate. Despite the major civil unrests, the AIDS pandemic, which continue to occur throughout Africa, its economic growth and development are headed in the right direction. This gradual progress today permits the way towards a greater improvement possibilities for development tomorrow.

CHAPTER VI

WEST AFRICA CAPITAL: CAUSES OF EXTRA ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES

During the Enlightenment period, philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau were among the first to provide a political basis justifying of the idea of rights. In particular, they defined the notion of sovereignty and natural rights. As the thinkers of the Enlightenment reasoned with the conception of law as a relationship among individuals, rather than families, they increasingly focused on individual liberty and property as a fundamental right. John Locke had the idea that all men had natural rights of life, liberty, and property (estate), and these ideas led to the advancement of democracy and freedom in the West.

In contrast, many traditional attributes in West African culture places emphasis on the right of the community above that of the individual. As a result, the individual within the communistic structure is constantly suppressed. This attitude toward individual rights, along with many other attributes, hinders the accumulation of capital in West Africa. The traditional African way of life that supports a more collectivist society advocates the importance of the community rather than stressing the importance of the individual ownership of private property (estate) and the government providing equal protection of that right. Moreover, this collectivist's tradition tends to weaken individuals' accountability and their desire to increase wealth through private property. Therefore, the belief that the individual rights within the community is subordinate to that of the

community, which may be a group of individuals, a whole society, a state, a nation, a race, or a social class, stands in contrast to the idea of the self-reliant individual.

The West African cultural model for the individual not only prevents the full development of the individual within the community, but creates a society where responsibilities are shifted within the community structure. In this regard, the creation of wealth and the lack of capital or the extra illegal activities (black market) in West Africa are important issues that need to be discussed in order to provide a basis for sustainable economic development. Freedom and the power to consummate entrepreneurial activities is a primary motivation of capital advancement in many countries, for example individual Western nations. The freedom and power given to succeed entrepreneurially requires reliance on individual creativity and courage, leadership and morality, as well as intuition and faith. The theme of De Soto's book, *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*, is that people in developing countries lack an integrated formal property system, such as the informal ownership of land and goods. De Soto, for example, claims that the foundation for economic success of American and Japanese capitalism rely on a clear system of property rights which was created during the 'frontier' times in America and in Pre-WWI feudal Japan. De Soto attributes the modern developmental theory's failure to realize this process of creating an integrated system of property rights as the downfall of West Africa's ability to create viable theories and policies.

De Soto's thinking strongly resembles that of the Austrian School of economics. The ideas of economists, such as Friedrich von Hayek and Ludwig von Mises, are reflected

in the economics of the World Banks and other development agencies.⁵⁶ Policy advisors in many U.S. private “think tanks” such as the Cato Institute today tends to support De Soto’s theory. However, they fail to tackle the problems, such as extra illegal capital, the black market that exist throughout the West Africa. Extra illegal capital contributes greatly to capital decline in the all West African nations due to the lack adequate government infrastructures, investment and resources, and as a result, it is impossible to create and produce capital growth. It is difficult to create conceptual capital when resources are made unavailable, however natives of most of West African countries do not even have access to property, food, and the basic resources that could produce capital.

In order to achieve sustainable economic development in West Africa it is important for the West African governments to take De Soto’s view into account and develop a strategy that dissolves the extra illegal (black market) activities and make resources available by creating a single legal system emphasizing limited government. This can be done by creating a stable but flexible exchange rate, making natural resources available and thereafter instituting a one system rule of law that incorporates dead capital (the result of extra illegal activities) into the formal economy by means of legally enforcing and securing transactions of property rights. Although this process is extremely complex, its effect will help each West African nation in the long term. In this way, national capital is increased and capital formation is encouraged. West African governments must began to strategically develop its economic potential of assets, integrate the black market information into one system, make people accountable, make assets fungible, and create a network of trade between the local people and neighboring nations by protecting

⁵⁶ De Soto, Hernando. *The Mystery of Capital: why capitalism triumphs in the West and fails everywhere else*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), 100-200.

transactions and property right. Finally, there must be a system that creates a conceptual world of real estate (which results into live capital) that emphasizes the importance of titles, deeds and contracts, the development process can be accelerated.

CHAPTER VII

SYNTHESIS: KEY ELEMENTS IN WEST AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

The first important component of what defines the proposed West African Philosophy of Rights is the equal rights of all individuals, which refer to John Locke's thought that all men have an equal right of life, liberty and property. This type of right advocates and maintains political and economic independence and stresses the equality of all individuals in terms of their individual initiative, action and interests. The equal right of the individual discourages a strong individualistic society. However, it encourages that each West African government use their legal power or privilege to justly protect every West African's inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of property, which eventually promotes economic growth.

The second key component of the African Philosophy of Rights is the support of a horizontal covenant authority among ethnic groups. Throughout West Africa it is evident that majority of the war conflicts occurring within the region is attributed to the ethnic clash, and thus it is vital that each West African nation promotes a horizontal covenant authority among individual ethnic groups. Furthermore, West Africa's wars and disputes are a direct result of the ethnic favoritism, corruption and the dictatorship of one tribe over another. Therefore it is important that each West African nation promote a horizontal covenant authority among individual ethnic groups.

The third component to complete this philosophy of right is the ability for West Africans to commit to communal accountability. Communal accountability in this text refers to a collective obligation or willingness of each West African nation, leader and citizens to accept responsibility, account for one's actions, and exhibit loyalty to the people while building a stronger nation, by discouraging corruption and /or embezzlement. This union, according to West African cultural context, invariably guarantees an atmosphere of safety and goodwill that exercises trust, responsibility, accountability, individual freedom, practical reasonableness and a greater freedom from corruption. Such a covenant creates leadership based on a higher standard of the right of the individual, covenant authority, and the community. The communal accountability aim is to reinforce the right of the individual and the horizontal covenant authority between ethnic group because it is the umbrella that brings West African together as they strive for economic, political and social development.

As the individual rights, covenant-authority and communal accountability model is put in place, the African governments will have to introduce laws that protect private property and small businesses, and enforce rules and contracts geared toward economic development. In addition, a government based on covenant-authority will ultimately aim at promoting individual freedom and rights. Such a paradigm will foster an accountability system that promotes development assistance and foreign investment in regions throughout Africa, leading to their accelerated investment. While it will provide an opportunity for foreign investment, it must also promote policies that prevent exploitation of these countries and their people. It is important that the developed and developing nations realize that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and the operation of transnational companies will help reduce poverty and advance economic development by creating jobs, transferring new

technologies, and building linkages with the rest of the world. The involvement of FDI will also help expand policy reforms aimed at improving the investment climate in African countries and the rest of the developing world.

The goal of this new paradigm unique to traditional Africa will foster a free market system, where the economic decisions regarding transfers of money, goods, and services take place on a voluntary basis, free from coercive influences. This will advocate the community-centered notion, but it will cultivate a system where economic decisions involving coercion will be determined in a decentralized manner by individuals trading, bargaining, cooperating, and competing with each other. It will develop a national system of economic development that will allow the government to act in a defensive mode by forbidding coercion among market participants, but does not engage in proactive interventionist coercion; this state of affairs is known as *laissez-faire*. This paradigm establishes a legal system that grants and protects property rights while providing owners the entitlement to sell their property in accordance with their own valuation of that property. This also will offer individuals the opportunity to value what they are purchasing as opposed to what they are giving in exchange for a commodity.

CHAPTER VIII

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A NEW AFRICAN WORLDVIEW

To conclude, this thesis has shown that sub-Saharan Africa must have a new worldview. This new worldview constitutes an African philosophy of rights and integration of the traditional African way of life with individualism, a fundamental principle founded in Western philosophical thought. The traditional African way of life promotes cooperation and harmony within society. Western philosophical thought promotes a free-market system and that environment fosters economic development.

With leadership that bases policy initiatives on a covenant-authority principle; foreign investors will opt to invest in the region. This will cultivate an economic development that is geared toward a trickle down effect, and will start with African businessmen and businesswomen. This concept insists on individual rights, covenant authority, and communal responsibility, and it combines African community-centered lifestyle in its cultural-specific context and systems of rights to form a new philosophical thought that is unique to Africa. Indeed, this new school of thought supports the authenticity of the traditional African lifestyle as it fosters Africa's socio-political and economic development.

The list below consists of recommendations for a new African World View, one that will maximize human satisfaction and produce sustainable economic development.

The Sub-Saharan Community must:

1. acknowledge our duties and responsibility as individuals to God, our families, communities, nations and to the African and international community.
2. promote traditional African values in corporation with classical liberalism and conservative public policies based on free enterprise, limited government, ownership of private property, the rule of law, individual freedom within the collectivist-centered paradigm, and a strong unity among African nations.
3. promote integrity, accountability, justice, basic human rights among all existing leadership teams within each Africa nation and hereafter discovered.
4. advocate the person-centered philosophy—we (Africans and non-Africans) seek to establish a relationship where all will see her/himself as people of one family with each individual recognizing her/his unalienable rights and responsibilities to develop Africa.
5. join with non-Africans and Africans, both in Africa and throughout the world, to form a covenant-communion relationship, which creates a society where democratic principles are valued, honored, respected and upheld by each African government.
6. change the intellectual climate of Africa by establishing sub-committees in every African nation to create a community of accountability for politicians, policy makers and the common people.
7. advocate the adoption of an African philosophy, which promotes a collectivist communitarian society that is geared toward a covenant-driven philosophy of right—which asserts the communalistic paradigm, while valuing, honoring and respecting individual rights.
8. protect Africans unalienable rights within the African communalistic paradigm, in hopes that these rights are not suppressed within each African community, society or by the government.
9. advocate equality, with emphasis on equal rights for women, the right of persons belonging to minorities and disadvantaged groups (i.e. widows, divorce women, children, senior citizens, mentally and physically disabled people etc.).
10. advocate equal protection under the law, and the freedom of everyone to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion and use their own language and/ or dialects in respect of the national language.

11. advocate the right of every person to freedom of expression, including to exchange and receive ideas and information through any media now known or hereafter discovered, but within the communalistic paradigm.
12. advocate for equal access to education, the eradication of extreme poverty and the liberation of Africans from want and dependency on the West.
13. advocate that the common people join a covenant-communion relationship with elected government officials, where they form a contract to respect, honor, value and uphold the rule of law that is put forth by each national government, granted it secures human development, basic human rights, justice and equality.
14. advocate our duties as humans to have dominion over the earth by cultivation (development), conservation (replenishing) and having compassion (caring) for the earth
15. advocate each African government to dissolve extra- illegal economic (black market) activities, by instituting a one system rule that incorporates dead capital (the result of extralegal activities) by means of legally enforcing and securing transactions of property right so that the national capital is increased.⁵⁷
16. advocate that each African government promote the economic potential of its assets, integrate dispensed information into one system, make people accountable, make assets fungible, create a network between the people by protecting transactions and creating a conceptual world of real estate (which results into live capital) that emphasized the importance of titles, deeds and contracts⁵⁸.
17. establish regional council at the grass root level within each African nation in order to mobilize, educate and empower local Africans to participate effectively in the democratization of their nation and the continent.
18. promote democracy in Africa through leadership development in order to ensure good governance, and that democracy would mean the exercise of power with responsibility.
19. advocate that the government guarantee that our people will enjoy peace, freedom and social justice by instituting true democratic control and mechanisms that emphasize consent of the governed.

⁵⁷ De Soto, Hernando. *The Mystery of Capital: why capitalism triumphs in the West and fails everywhere else*. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000), 150-200.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 40-100.

20. contribute a new conservative but relevant African Philosophy of Right that creates an active movement of people identifying and protecting the needs and development of the human person to provide peace, stability and protection of life.
21. contribute, by getting high quality intellectual ideas into the free marketplace of ideas, generating and disseminating ideas that are original and innovative, meeting the challenges of the times to influence the ideas and policies of each African government to encourage relevant reform in practice.
22. The developed nations produce less food locally, therefore providing a larger export market for developing countries. Food prices would rise without the artificial subsidy and therefore would increase profits for food exports from the developing world.
23. The developing nations should adopt a more balanced agriculture policy, producing food and grain for export; this would provide a surplus that would shield countries from famine and raise incomes in rural areas.

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