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Introduction

Reflections on the Interplay between Postcoloniality, Globalisation, Decolonisation, and Development

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In his book, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, which was based on the iconic and controversial television series under the same title, Mazrui makes a gloomy observation about Africa:

Africa is at war. It is a war of cultures. It is a war between indigenous Africa and the forces of Western civilisation. It takes the form of inefficiency, mismanagement, corruption and decay of the infrastructure. The crisis of efficiency in the continent is symptomatic of the failure of transplanted organs of the state and the economy. Indigenous African culture is putting up a fight. It is as if the indigenous ancestors have been aroused from the dead, disapproving of what seems like an informal pact between the rulers of independent Africa (the inheritors of the colonial order) and the West – a pact which allows the West to continue to dominate Africa... It is as if the apparent breakdown and decay in Africa today is a result of the curse of the ancestors. Or is it not a curse but a warning, a sign from the ancestors calling on Africans to rethink their recent past, their present and their future and calling on them to turn again to their traditions and reshape their societies anew, to create a modern and a future Africa that incorporates the best of its own culture? What is likely to be the outcome of this drama? Is the Westernisation of Africa reversible? Was

the European colonial impact upon Africa deep or shallow?
(1986, p.12).

Mazrui's observations and ensuing questions above were made over thirty years ago. Yet, though with some progress today, many of the highlighted maladies remain conspicuously manifest and the questions even more complicated by subsequent developments.

Thinking about Mazrui's dramatic inclusion of the ancestor factor into the debate on Africa's predicament, I am reminded of a black American comedian who quipped that there is all proof for the non-existence of ghosts. That if ghosts existed, then those of black people would be giving a hell of a time to living whites that had tormented them in life. With or without considering feelings of ancestors, each generation has to constantly face and engage with questions surrounding their existence and, now more than ever before, that of generations to come.

The situation of Africa over time can be compared to a knot twisted through a multitude of loops in several layers, thereby making disentanglement a complex undertaking. Indeed, any attempt at tracing the reason for Africa's situation to one single cause is misguided. This book joins the debate with particular focus on the interactions between identity, postcoloniality, and globalisation. We find these to be some of the overarching shapers of many realities in Africa today, a framework through which we can make sense of much of what we see or/and experience in Africa's definition and pursuit of development.

Why postcoloniality, globalisation, decolonisation, and development?

Postcoloniality and African identity are two inseparable notions. The identity of Africa as is known today, especially the sub-Saharan region, is mainly a product of external forces and dynamics (Mbembe 2001; Taiwo 2010). Many of the forces from within play a secondary role.

The name, Africa, around which the peoples of the continent have quite emotionally shaped their collective identity, is of con-

tested origin. Of the several explanations, the most probable root is said to be Roman² (Gilbert and Reynolds 2012) – and later deeply imprinted by the agency of European literature and cartography. It is not just the name of the continent, but even the countries within are mostly colonial products in geographical demarcation and name. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o explains,

... after 1884³ the African landscape becomes covered with French, British, German, Italian or Portuguese memory. It is in the naming of the landscape that we can so clearly see the layering of one memory over another, a previous native memory of place buried under another, a foreign alluvium becoming the new visible identity of a place (2005, p.158).

It could be asked, as by Shakespeare, that, ‘what is in a name?’ Wouldn’t a rose smell the same even by another name? The foreignness of the name in itself is not a problem. Indeed, many lands bear foreign names that do not necessarily shape what they become. What is important in the case of Africa is that it is not only the name that is foreign, rather, it is many of the things that shape Africans’ self-perception and identification. Ngũgĩ indicates above that naming tends to go together with the implantation of the memory of the naming agent or/and the roots of the name.

Identity transformation in Africa through Euro-imperialistic processes involved an othering process whose end product was the detachment/alienation of the African from themselves as much of what was African was demonised and discouraged. Much of the indoctrination and estrangement from self that Woodson (1935) explains in *The Mis-Education of the Negro* in the black diasporic context is akin to what happened (Rodney 1973) and still happens in Africa through education systems, religion, and the media.

Progressively learning from other cultures is okay, and that is how societies grow. However, in Africa’s case, the product are

²This explanation has been vehemently questioned by the Afrocentric School of thought, especially by Molefi Asante.

³In reference to the Berlin Conference at which Africa was divided up amongst European colonial powers.

people in an identity crisis, neither African, nor Western, but bearing a superficial and self-confusing blend/incongruity of elements from within and out. Mbembe articulately characterises their knowledge and practice as a:

... product of several cultures, heritages, and traditions of which the features have become entangled over time, to the point where something has emerged that has the look of “custom” without being reducible to it, and partakes of “modernity” without being wholly included in it. One part of this knowledge or rationality is *colonial rationality* (2001, p.25).

Overall, Western influence stands dominant in shaping views on self, culture, governance, consumption, and social relations. Over time, Africa has been depicted in varying forms through Western scholarship and media as “a special unreality such that the continent becomes the very figure of what is null, abolished, and, in its essence, in opposition to what is: the very expression of that nothing whose special feature is to be nothing at all” (*Ibid.* p.4). The demonisation, defamatory stereotyping, and castigation of African traditional beings and doings made/make it difficult for Africans to hold onto them (Mudimbe 1988), except in a few communities like the Maasai, Karamojong, San, Pokot – who were accordingly side-lined as backward/primitive⁴. Accordingly, as illustrated by Davidson (1992) in explanation of colonial nation-state building, to become civilised Africans and to escape the tag of primitiveness, they had to cease to be Africans. Development would come to mean adoption of imported models and tradition to mean stagnation.

Indicators of such alienation can be seen in almost every aspect African peoples’ lives and communities. Perhaps the most vivid are the names of individuals and widespread preference for English, French, and Portuguese, not only as official languages but also languages of private use. One might argue that the ethnic di-

⁴The three part 1980s comic film *The gods must be crazy* and, more recently, the novel *The White Maasai* (2005) are typical of this form of characterisation.

versity in most African countries dictates the use of an external unifying language as a way of curbing ethnic superiority complexes and conflict. It can also be argued that such languages enable countries and peoples to globally relate and connect (Mulesa 2017).

Whereas the above reasons explain *some* aspects about language choice in ethnically diverse post-colonies, they do not justify the tendency for African people to hold colonial languages as superior to the native ones. The dynamics leading to the production of such behaviour have been extensively explained by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in *Decolonising the Mind* (1981). In Uganda, for example, it is common to find two people from the same ethnic group speaking to each other in private conversation in English – yet they can speak their native language! It is also common practice to despise and laugh at those who speak 'broken' English or with a native flavour, but not those who speak 'broken' mother tongue. In Kenya, speaking English with a local flavour is denounced as 'shrubbing' English (Mukoma wa Ngũgĩ, cited in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 2017). This is a product of socialisation processes that reward English proficiency highly while punishing 'vernacular' speaking severely. My own experience of being punished by wearing big cow horns around my neck for speaking Luganda at school is shared by many other Ugandans.

Fanon explains this psycho-socio phenomenon and its outcomes succinctly in *Black Skins, White Mask*:

Every colonised people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilising nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonised is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle (1967, p.9).

Yet language is more than a communication instrument; thus to mean that this self-negating identity transformation process in the realm of language has wider ramifications. This is because:

Each language, no matter how small, carries its memory of the world. Suppressing and diminishing the languages of the colonised also meant [means] marginalising the memory they carried [carry] and elevating to a desirable universality the memory carried by the language of the conqueror. This obviously includes elevation of that language's conceptualisation of the world, including that of self and otherness (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 2005, p.159).

Bearing the above dynamics in mind, it is of little surprise that Africa (especially Sub-Saharan black Africa) comes across as a highly dependent continent, especially on the West (global North). Both directly and otherwise, the tentacles of Western control extend beyond language and its bearings to infiltrate almost every aspect of the African world. Africa's dependence can be seen in knowledge about the world; knowledge about itself; development finance; governance systems; weaponry; development paradigms; innovations; and generally not producing much of what she consumes. Over time, it is becoming more and more vivid that the administrative independence gained from colonial masters has given birth to a more sophisticated dependence network beyond Kwame Nkrumah's prediction in *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (1965).

Dependence on aid that is sometimes not in the best interest of Africa (Moyo 2009) and lack of meaningful voice in international bodies such as the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank makes the neo-colonial entrapment more complex and difficult to escape from (Murithi 2009). This phenomenon played out vividly in Zimbabwe (Britain and the West Vs Mugabe); in Libya (NATO forces/the West Vs Gadaffi) and in Uganda during the debate on the controversial Anti-Homosexuality Bill.

Uganda came up very strongly (with extremes though) against homosexuality and the President signed the Anti Homosexuality Bill into law with fanfare. When asked on CNN about what his message to the Western world and human rights groups was, he responded: "respect African societies and their

values. If you don't agree, just keep quiet. Let us manage our society the way we see [fit]. If we are wrong, we shall find out by ourselves – just like we don't interfere with yours"⁵.

During the signing, his claim was that Western threats to withdraw aid from Uganda were contemptuous. “You cannot see a mature man like me with a bald and tell me how I should run my house”. But when Western countries and bodies actually started withdrawing aid, the Act was eventually curiously thrown out by court on technicalities of lack of quorum in Parliament when it was passed, and the president also started speaking in tongues – advising parliament to go slow on the matter. The morality of the Anti-Homosexuality Act notwithstanding, the above case exemplifies the illusory nature of Africa's independence – a state reminiscent of the confusing proverbial cow in Baganda speak that sleeps near the fireplace; when you hear it breathe you are deluded that it is blowing into the fire.

Increased global contact through improved means of transport and communication technologies has come with mixed implications. For the West, it has helped in spreading/reinforcing influence and expanding markets. Of course, it has also produced terrorism and compounded migration. It has been widely suggested that the world is now a ‘global village’ and that national borders have been thinned. Scholars such as Peter Singer (2016) have thus said that it is *One World Now*.

There are more opportunities for knowing and learning from each other, for mutually beneficial cooperation in various facets of life, trade, and, as such, for improved well-being. However, it is increasingly becoming clear that, with all its opportunities to the South, globalisation has also increased economic and social disparities (Singer *Ibid.*). Because it operates within an imbalanced capitalistic international structure, it mostly advantages the powerful North. These imbalances are manifest in trade relations, the flow of goods, knowledge, and cultural influence. If it is a village, then at least it is not so in the African sense of a village as a community of recognition of each other

⁵Interview with CNN's Zain Verjee at Entebbe State House on 24th February 2014.

and genuinely caring about the wellbeing of each other (Omo-Fadaka 1990). It is a capitalistic village where the fittest survive and the weak either submit to the whims and wishes of the former or perish. Whereas it is made to appear as though there is choice in the interaction, if any, such choice survives within highly constricted space.

Its guises of benevolence notwithstanding, globalisation operates in a mostly homogenising manner with a conspicuous one-way flow of cultural values, epistemologies, technologies, and development ideas/strategies from North to South. It has thus provided functional space for neo-colonialism and marginalisation, both intended and inadvertent. Most African cultures are at risk of disappearance; not all because of obsolescence or irrelevance, but also because of the decimating interplay between colonial imprints on the African psyche, lacunas in self-governance, and malignant hegemonic global forces.

Ironically, as characterised by Marxist dialectics by which every social system contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction, globalisation not only acts and manifests as a conduit of neo-colonialism but also as a vital vessel of decolonising agency. Increased knowledge through enhanced cross-border interconnectivity and internet (especially social media) has led to higher consciousness and provided more space for expression, counter-agency, and resistance. In recent times, this trend has been more vividly evidenced by the dramatic spread of decolonisation campaigns, especially emerging from institutions of higher learning. Most prominent among these were the Rhodes Must Fall movement that started at the University of Cape Town in South Africa, later giving birth to campaigns for decolonising the curriculum at Oxford University, University College of London, and lately at Cambridge University.

Whereas in some instances decolonisation has turned into a buzzword to be deployed in scapegoating the West for the South's own messes and in fits of paranoia, it is as well self-evidently a project whose significance to African development cannot be ignored without debilitating consequences. For instance, a self-othering image cannot inform meaningful development as it

soon loses sight of context and employs outsider lenses in assessment of what is good for self. This way, as Fanon (*ibid.*) observes, the mentally colonised relegate themselves to a position of everlasting mimicry and followership without contextual innovativeness and imagination of alternatives. All their aspirations are configured in terms of getting to where the other is, yet the other keeps moving ahead of the imitator's pursuits.

It is these dynamics that this book engages with in view of seeking both theoretical and practical understanding of the undercurrents of the realities of postcoloniality and globalisation in Africa and possibilities for decolonisation as part of an integral development process.

Overview of the Chapters

This book is divided into eight chapters focusing on the psyche of the postcolonial African and its implications to self-development; injustices in research in Africa and how they can be addressed; the appropriateness of higher education in Africa; integrating the values/practices of *obuntubulamu* in research; how perceptions and depictions of Africa as compared to the West influence staying or migration from Africa; cultural interaction in the era of globalisation; and environment-identity intersections in Africa.

In chapter Two, Danson Sylvester Kahyana examines p'Bitek's depiction of Ocol in *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol* as a mentally colonised African who agonizes over being born black, and who desires to destroy African culture which he erroneously sees as a stumbling block to western civilisation/development. The chapter advances that in *Song of Lawino* and *Song of Ocol*, p'Bitek creates a 'diagnostic poetics' – creative writing aimed at establishing the disease afflicting western-educated Africans who despise their roots and aspire to be white. Kahyana pays close attention to how p'Bitek develops the character of Lawino and that of Ocol using devices like figurative language and satire. The discussion is located in Postcolonial Studies – an area which, among others, explores the colonisation of the African psyche and of African cultures by Western imperial

powers and cultures, and how this colonisation continues to have its grip on African people long after the attainment of flag independence.

Moving from the generic purview of (post)coloniality and its bearings in Africa interrogated by Kahyana, in chapter Three, Jimmy Spire Ssentongo and Mary Cecilia Draru specifically turn to the performance of research by African academics. They analyse how Ugandan academics are negotiating the age old academic tradition of 'Publish or Perish' by differently curving their own identity in academia. The 'publish or perish' adage has marked the academic career track not only in Europe and America where it originates from but also in Africa. The major publication outlet target for many African academics are international high-impact-factor journals (with which promotion is smoother and academic reputation higher), most of which are based in the West and hardly accessed by local Africans.

The contextual relevance of the 'publish or perish' performance has remained largely unquestioned, especially on the African continent. This positions the practice as an uncritical imitation/conformist exercise and affects the relevance of African academics to their local contexts. The authors interrogate the 'publish or perish' adage/norm, examine the paradigm on which it is based and how it differently affects career tracks of African academics and their colleagues in the West. Basing on the theoretical stance of 'research justice' within Southern Theory, they agree that research is an indispensable part of academia but differ on the methods of disseminating the generated new knowledge and the measurement of impact factor of the published knowledge. Publication of knowledge should not only be contextual but also accessible and relevant to the target audience. They argue that the impact factor is most importantly how knowledge influences attitudes and practice of the target audience (or what should be the target audience). The chapter is based on the authors' personal experiences of several years in performance of the norm, conversational interactions with peers, plus empirical qualitative research carried out among women academics in four Ugandan universities using in-depth interviews

and, as such, though generic, pays some more attention to the peculiar gender circumstances of African women academics.

Still focusing on higher education, in Chapter Four, Johnnie Wycliffe Frank Muwanga-Zake interrogates the suppression of African values in the sector. He observes that several factors account for the absence (or scantiness) of African values in the curricula of Higher Education (HE) in Africa. The major one he identifies is incapacity to add values to epistemological and ontological frameworks that have mostly been imported into HE. It is the same frameworks that provide employment around which education systems in Africa are designed; mainly to serve the interests and needs of the employers who are ultimately foreign. The frameworks label African values backward and irrelevant to the employers' needs for social economic interests. Thus, a gap between the values in HE and those desirable in local African communities and environments leads to erroneous conceptions of the purposes of HE, and to graduates who hardly fit into African communities. Under-utilization of local resources and unemployment of graduates are thus expected.

The author suggests that Africa has to derive and frame its own development for which it should design an education based on African value systems, though this does not imply a complete exclusion of foreign values. A way forward is to research values and needs of local African communities and environment, so as to make HE curricula relevant and compatible with African values. Ultimately, local communities would participate in curriculum design and Quality Assurance.

Chapter Five shifts to explanation of the doxological dynamics around considerations for migration from Africa to the West for 'greener pastures'. Moses Balyejjusa Senkosi and Abisagi Ndagire Kasoma start by noting the sizable number of Africans migrating, either temporarily or permanently to Europe and North America. The pull factors such as employment opportunities, high quality education and high standards of living make Europe and North America attractive environments, while the push factors such as poverty and unemployment make Africa an unattractive

environment. This has resulted in an ‘attractive-unattractive’ dichotomous characterisation, and thus migration to Europe and North America. Although this is the case, current literature does not specifically explain how this ‘attractive-unattractive’ identity dichotomy was and is being constructed and how it informs migration. In this chapter, it is argued that a combination of both historical and contemporary factors is responsible for this identity configuration. These factors include colonial experiences (historical) and development-underdevelopment perspectives (contemporary).

The authors argue that the colonialists represented Africa as inferior in terms of intelligence, knowledge, education, health care, religion and standards of living. Presently, the media and literature, both academic and non-academic, present Africa as underdeveloped or developing, while Europe and North America are presented as developed in terms of security, education, health systems and physical and social infrastructure. This negative characterisation of Sub-Saharan Africa is also in relation to livelihood opportunities, physical and social infrastructure and systems. They conclude by noting that the ‘attractive – unattractive’ identity dichotomy has not only stifled Africa’s development efforts but has also continued to promote the developed countries’ legacy over and above Africa’s. Unless Africans break and transcend the chains of the past and contemporary representations, and re-create their own history (self-image), the numbers of immigrants from Africa to Europe and North America will keep rising.

One of the decolonising attempts that Muwanga-Zake makes in chapter Six is to argue for the validation of Bantu discourses in research, particularly the idea/practice of *obuntubulamu*. Dominant discourses, particularly of Western countries, confer power upon academia, research supervisors and publishers with the privilege to determine research paradigms, acceptable knowledge and epistemology, and to interpret research findings that are associated with elitism and universal truths in Africa. Unfortunately, applying foreign discourses often tends to compromise African ones to the extent that findings ultimately are hardly applicable and beneficial anywhere. This is exacerbated by

misinterpretation and misuse, sometimes deliberately, of almost everything African, including African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).

Muwanga-Zake's treatise further suggests that valid research discourses and paradigms such as *Obuntubulamu* that are aligned with Bantu cultures would enhance the research capacity and contribute towards the development of African Bantu communities as well as IKS.

Lino Ika takes on one of the most sensitive subjects in modern times; that is, cultural interaction in the era of globalisation. Globalisation influences social processes which spread across cultures of ideas, goods, and people at unprecedented speed, scope, and quantity thus profoundly implicated in cultural identity formation. The cultural identity and globalisation debate continues to generate mixed outcomes; thus culture has acquired enormous implications for everyone's conception of self. However, people are not passively accepting the influence of globalisation, but raise concern for seeking to maintain their identity by constantly searching and defending their cultural roots. They create, innovate, and integrate new cultural identities of global significance to local knowledge. Using a qualitative case study design, the study that informs Lino's chapter involved interviews with elders, youths, clan and district leadership. The Lugbara cultural identity experience that is the focus of the chapter shows that we may not retain our 'pure' traditional cultural identities, they still can be different and plural. But this would require that we neither get too deeply immersed in our cultural identities nor too much removed from them.

The chapter advances four pre-requisite acknowledgements to attaining a plural cultural identity: it doesn't mean diversity alone, it is an engagement with diversity; it must seek understanding across the differences, it is not just tolerance; it is not only relativism, it must hold our identities not in isolation but in relation to others; and it must be negotiated through dialogue. The author argues that the above negotiation works best in an environment of liberty and equality amongst the peoples/agents of the interacting cultures.

In chapter Eight, Marsiale Kamugisha observes that environment plays a significant role in supporting humanity including other forms of life, yet, it is being overwhelmed by anthropogenic actions. Consequently, there is loss of self-identity, connection to nature and the divine, on top of dwindling natural wealth. Where Africans fail to understand their identity and reference to nature and other persons, there is conflict over natural resources. This contradicts the traditional spirit of African society in which Africans demonstrated strong bonding with nature as a fountain of livelihoods, maintenance of unity, social cohesion, peace and security. Today, there is a terrific paradigm shift in which Africans are living a kind of life opposed to the African cosmological views of nature. The passionate heart for sustaining natural wealth through conservation and propagation in view of preserving something for future generations is increasingly disappearing at the hands of the citizenry's bad ecological practices. This is being exacerbated by negative forces of increased urban life on nature and hasty as well as irrational change of African lifestyles. In view of coming up with some suggestions, in the chapter, there is further analysis of the continued loss of focus by Africans on how to interact with nature and handle existing consequences.

The overarching theme that binds together the different chapters is how to theoretically understand the dynamics behind Africa's colonial history and postcolonial performance/identities in the wake of globalisation. The theoretical analysis is then used to draw out ideas on how Africa can move forward on a self-decolonisation path to meaningful development.

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