Afrikology and Community: Restorative Cultural Practices in East Africa

by

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Abstract

This article explores the characteristics or 'nuts-and-bolts' of the epistemology of Afrikology as a universal scientific epistemology that goes beyond Euro-centricism or other ethnocentrisms, using cultural case studies from East Africa. Looking at three specific case studies, it makes an attempt to find out what Afrikology looks like. The author argues that the liberal paradigm imposed on African communities has undermined the hermeneutic power of Africans to interpret the world through their own symbols - which has led to a crisis of meaning via life, person, and community. In realising the falsity of the dichotomisation of complex human relations by certain restraining epistemologies, communities are attempting to correct this under a system of restorative practices that include; justice, medicine, and cross-border restorative cultural activities through Afrikology. Hence, through practical means and community-centred interactions, the author works to demonstrate how communities are moving away from the perspective of African "victimhood" and cultural pluralism by experimenting with cultural clusterism, adapted to the epistemology of 'thinking from the heart' as an approach towards renewed community-centred empowerment, and restorative cultural intellectualism.

Introduction

Natural resources supply raw material for getting the work of the world done. Cultural resources organize co-operation among people for getting the work of the world done.

- Dani Nabudere, 2006

The foundation of this article is the timeless supposition that we are culturally more together than we are alone. Our theme aims to explore the practicalities of culture in peace creation, and in the workings of Afrikology as an epistemology in East African communities, or to put it simply, Afrikology and cultural clusterism in action to ask what are the operational aspects of Afrikology, and what is the DNA composition of the cultural clusters in Mount Elgon cross-border communities of East Africa (Mount Elgon is a volcanic mountain on the border of eastern Uganda and western Kenya, hence, the oldest and largest solitary volcano in East Africa)?

To begin with, the first articulation of Afrikology declares that: "it is a true philosophy of knowledge and wisdom based on African cosmogonies. It is *afri-* because it is inspired by the ideas originally produced from the cradle of humankind located in East Africa which emanates from the source of a universal system of knowledge originating in Africa. Thus, the philosophic product is therefore not relativistic to Africa, but universal in its essence, with its base in Africa. It is also *–(ko)logy* because it is based on the *logos*-the word, which was uttered to set in motion the universe in its originality. It was from this word that human consciousness first emerged and it was from that consciousness that humanity emerged as thinking and acting agents with language with 'word' as the active cultural achievement. As professor Dani Wadada Nabudere (1932-2011), the epistemological and philosophical grandmaster of Afrikology, states in *Afrikology: Philosophy and Wholeness* (2011), he states:

Afrikology is not African-centric or Afrocentric. It is a universal scientific epistemology that goes beyond Eurocentricism, or other ethnocentrisms. It recognises all sources of knowledge as valid within their historical, cultural or social contexts and seeks to engage them into a dialogue that can lead to better knowledge for all. It recognises peoples' traditions as a fundamental pillar in the creation of such cross-cultural understandings in which the Africans can stand out as having been the fore-bearers of much of what is called Greek or European heritage as fact of history that ought to be recognised, because from this fact alone, it can be shown that cross-cultural interactions has been a fact of historical reality[2].

Professor Nabudere argues meticulously that for centuries the African personality has been bedevilled by the burden of foreign domination that has affected her self-understanding. Subsequently, Nabudere urges that the process of re-awakening and recovery in Africa has to be one of a historical deconstruction in what he calls "consciousness raising," not by others, but by Africans themselves, tracing the origins and achievements of their civilizations. This, he insists, requires the adoption of Afrikology as an epistemology that recognises orality as a valid source of knowledge. He therefore, encourages researchers and practitioners alike to adopt a holistic approach towards recognising that orality can only be interpreted under a platform that accommodates multi- and interdisciplinary approaches. Appropriately, this is what he calls 'act locally, think globally.' Implicit in this epigram is the belief that it is local struggles in the villages that can guarantee African-rebirth, resurgence and renaissance and ensure that local communities reject neo-traditionalism that had been instituted by the colonial state.

However, Nabudere at the same time warns that this should not be seen in isolation, but in solidarity with other local groups elsewhere in the world. The argument here seems to be that if the driving force towards globalization is domination, then globalised resistance based on "global consciousness" ought to be its antithesis. The imperative, as such, for the authentic liberation of Africa, as argued by philosopher Mogobe Ramose, requires neither a supplicated apologia nor interminable obsequies in defence of being African. "The African must simply be an African, that is, a human being second to none in our contingent but complex universe"[3]. The brutal and systematic assault on communities across Africa and the subsequent systems (cultural, religious, epistemological, curricula's, governance etc.) imposed on communities denotes that this is essential.

The Dialectical Impact of Colonialism in Africa

For Africans the world over, the advent of colonialism by Europeans was a tragic experience. In 1885 during the so-called 'Berlin Conference', Africa was scrambled up among occupying powers with the sole aim of violently looting as much as they could in their areas of influence. Thus African states were created to facilitate and ease the efficiency of rapid colonial exploitation. The colony became a laboratory of caprice where all sorts of clinical trials (political, social, and cultural) were performed, causing untold suffering to African communities- effects of which still remain visible to this present moment[4]. The dialectical inter-phase that occurred during colonization also left Africa ruined psychologically and intellectually. The experience left two broad "legacies" on Africa; first was the denial of African identity and second, the foisting of Western thought and cultural realities and perspectives on Africans. In Egypt for instance, the late Palestinian-American academic Edward Said has observed that when the British ruling class tried to assume political power over Egypt, it did so by first establishing British *'knowledge of Egypt'*." Said further elaborates that:

The British were initially not concerned principally with military or economic power over Egypt, but their knowledge of the Orients, including Egypt, was conceived as a form of power. The objective was to have such knowledge about the "distant other" in order to be able "to dominate it and (exert) authority over it." This in effect meant denying autonomy of knowledge over the object of domination since to do so would have recognised the existence of knowledge of the object over itself. The object's existence could only be recognised, in the words of the Colonial representatives, in as much "as we know it[5]."

As such, the current cultural value crisis among Africans is the result of the impact of liberal philosophy and its associated discourses. For so long the liberal paradigm has undermined the hermeneutic power of African people to interpret the world through their symbols. One common factor among liberal theories is the value that they place on individual freedom to pursue interests and goals.

This is perhaps why classical liberals such as the British philosophers John Locke and John Stewart Mills placed strong emphasis on freedoms from social control. From this foundational value of freedom follows the welfare state, wealth, and power manifestations of a mind-set focused on individualism. Therefore, the concept of the world and the manner of living which informs Western societies can best be described as materialistic which has been aggressively exported to all parts of the world where their civilization has gone in search for material resources to ultimately meet its expansionist philosophy.

Epistemological Dependency Culture in Africa

Today in East Africa, in spite of flag independence in the early 1960s, nations are still dependent on Western political constructs, socio-legal ideas, and judicial and epistemological philosophies. Like elsewhere in Africa, this is because the structures of all nation-states (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi) oozes from an engineered political metaphysical past, where people never dialogued on their differences as a basis for federating. They were simply conscripted into geopolitical constructs that they neither chose nor bargained for. Therefore, colonialism as such, designed and inspired many of the problems our communities face today; this includes those now being rotated as universal rights and the deliberate portrayal of women in Africa as victims of traditional culture and thus in need of rescue.

The identification of African women as subordinate victims, devoid of any form of agency to resist or challenge oppression, has roots in historical, economic, social, cultural and political structures designed and defended by Eurocentric philosophies. Ugandan scholar Mukasa Luutu has argued elsewhere that this perception of African justice systems implies that indigenous Africa was insensitive to human rights and as such, the concept of human rights and its protection originated from Western civilization. On the same basis, human rights have been misappropriated and patented as an organic attribute of Western society and values; this has portrayed the West as the mode, the yardstick and arbiter over human rights concerns in the world.[6]

One other key problem characterizing the post-colonial state in East Africa has been its tendency to fragment its own communities into hostile factions. Instead of politically uniting its people within and across its borders, the African political elites have resorted to colonial tactics of 'divide and rule' and the ideology of 'neo-tribalism' by exploiting the ethnic diversities of their communities to their benefit and to the detriment of unity in the so called 'state'. It is common place in East Africa to be asked by state operatives: *We, toa kipande* or *kitu kidogo* or at times if you are very unlucky *toa kitu yote* (produce your identity card or money). Instead of utilizing the rich ethnic and cultural diversities of communities as building blocks to a people's African unity, they use these diversities to divide the people even further in order to, yet again, enrich themselves. In so doing they perpetuate neo-colonial domination and fall prey to powerful global force.

They are therefore deliberately failing to deconstruct the exogenously hegemonic agendas wearing economic, religious, charitable and other guises programmed into the colonial state, preferring instead to reconstruct it in every way the former colonialist would have wanted - one that supports them and not communities.

Under the liberal heritage (guided by European thought on development and human rights for the last four hundred years) that has been hurriedly imposed on African communities, by exogenous forces in collaboration with local elites, African thought and society has subsequently experienced a crisis of meaning, of life, persons, and community. This is because this liberal heritage imposed on Africans its notion of the world, values, and manner of living. According to this heritage, social evolution constitutes the basic principle of the world and its main assumption is that technical knowledge is therefore the only key to human development. This Western view of development is based on the idea that humanity moves in a linear fashion and that this movement or progress is unidirectional and irreversible. One implication of this view is that there is and can only be one path or direction that humanity can take, and that this is the one provided by advanced Western countries.[7] And as Malawian philosopher Harvey Sindima has pointed out, this is the understanding behind the concepts of 'modernity' and 'progress'[8]. Professor Sindima rightly concludes, that "centuries have shown that the alliance between progress, science, and technology has not eliminated misery; on the contrary destitution has emerged and the future of all creation hangs in the balance"[9].

The Legacy of Liberalism on African 'Intellectuals' and Policy Makers

Nowadays in East Africa, Eurocentric ideas are still very prevalent and their liberal notions pervade all aspects of life, particularly in urban areas. 'Modernity' or 'catching up' with the West: its technology, infrastructure and even way of life seem to be the primary objective towards which many countries are busy striving towards. This precarious mentality has been worsened by a brigade of natives under diverse name tags such as "intellectuals," "change agents," or even "modernists," euro-centrically trained, it seems, in the fine art of social, political, and worst, it is all cultural banditry. They tend to reject and at times even deny Africa's own cultural and intellectual achievements. In another arena, one critic captures this self-denial psyche well: "It was African scholars who were affected by Eurocentric education or who had not been exposed to the rich cultural history of Africa that denied the existence of African philosophy during the "Great Debate" of the seventies and eighties."[10] Sadly, there are certain writers such as Kwasi Wiredu of Ghana in his 1980 publication *Philosophy and an African Culture,* who have busied themselves with the appalling task of watering down the insulting language of Eurocentric writers and their condescending attitudes towards African tradition - by supporting their fundamental insinuation that Western tradition of thought is essentially superior to the African tradition of thought. They have gone even further by saying much more than this. Their conclusion is that African people may never develop any respectable tradition of thought unless and until they can copy Western paradigms.

Culturally Rootless Leadership and Community Fragmentation in East Africa

Today, one pertinent problem that continues to characterize our so-called states in East Africa is their tendency to fragment their own communities into hostile factions. Instead of politically uniting their people within and across its borders, our political elites have resorted to colonial tactics of 'divide and rule' and the ideology of 'neo-tribalism' by exploiting the ethnic diversities of our communities to their benefit and to the detriment of unity in the so called 'state'. In so doing, they perpetuate neo-colonial domination and fall prey to a powerful global force.

It is fair to point out, as such, that the current economic, political and intellectual elites suffer from an acute sense of cultural relevance before the generality of their people. Thus they espouse visions and programs of modernity and development driven by imported cultural benchmarks. This is a direct result of the impact of Western ways of thinking and doing things and its associated discourses on them, which instils an allergic instinct against African cultural rootedness which is fashionably castigated as 'backwardness', 'ignorance', 'superstition', 'primitive', 'parochial' etc. In a word, the African state can be summed up in what Professor Patrick Chabal has called a 'non-organic state'. Chabal argues that the African state is both 'overdeveloped and soft', yet tt is overdeveloped because it was fastidiously and artificially put into place, although all the textbook institutions of a state and its government are present. It is soft because, although powerful, it cannot administer welfare. This observation later gave rise to his book *Africa Works* (1999) penned with Jean-Pascal Daloz, in which he argued that, after all, there might be a way of perceiving Africa as quite efficient - if only we were to remove the Western lens.[11]

The Changing Global Political Culture: From Globalisation to Glocalisation

All over the world today, there is something taking place, a 'wind of change' of some sorts and we are seeing a large shift of socio-cultural and socio-political attitudes where communities are retreating to the local as the only source of security where little seems to make sense anymore. With society at the international and national level seen as abstract and unrealistic, the local is increasingly being viewed as real and practical. In a world where once every local phenomenon was examined from the point of view of its national and international ramifications, the reverse is likely to be the case today. British political sociologist Frank Furedi captures this change well: "ironically, the more the world is becoming internationalized, with every region brought into an intimate relationship with the world market forces, the more the singularity of the experience of the parish-pump is insisted upon"[12].

Social Movements and Community Interactivity

In the Mt. Elgon area of East Africa, this restorative exodus has also caught on. As if responding to American economist Herbert Stein's caustic aphorism "If something cannot go on forever, it will stop"[13], Community Sites of Knowledge (CSK - depositories of indigenous knowledge systems) are increasingly becoming nurseries for alternatives socio-cultural and political leadership, leading to organic restorative practices at the centre of efforts to address persistent questions of marginalization, discrimination and social and cultural exclusions. This is in large measure a response to the declining political and cultural capacity of the state, triggered by the slow realization that democratization will not come from periodic elections, which political parties have for so long mistakenly viewed as their exclusive domain of operation. Political parties across East Africa, instead of being a force for democratisation, have instead been empty vehicles for ethnic barons or cabals of kleptocrats without a committed agenda for cultural restoration or political or social reform. Thus, political parties have been instruments of convenience for powerful individual politicians rather than as a way help forge cultural consciousness, resulting in further fragmentation of the state and more violence at the heartbeat of many communities'[14].

Newton Garver in his article *What Violence Is* (1968)[15] has suggested that violence is not only a matter of physical force, but also psychological in that it affects how people are able to make their own decisions. Garver's account is valuable, because it gives a useful way of viewing a vast range of very diverse and often spectacular human behaviour, hence, a way to see through the diversity and spectacle to certain essential features in respect to Afrikology and its application in communities.

Garver roots his account of violence in a specific moral practice, namely, the evaluation of behaviour in terms of fundamental human rights. He argues that we get an even greater resolution of diversity if we focus on the question of what is common to physical force and psychological force, the two basic kinds of violence. Much of who we are depends on our ability to act in concert with each other. This is true of our physical survival. Few of us could live for more than a few days, and none of us would have matured into adults, without the on-going support of various forms of interactions. This interdependence, according to Garver, is also true of our community and cultural life. Our language, our knowledge, our arts, all of our social structures, and even much of our sense of self are a function of our capacity for interactions. I think it is fair to say that most of what we value in life is also creatively woven out of our capacity for complex, diverse, sustained and systematic interactions. One fundamental purpose of Afrikology is to enhance our ability to interact with each other, so as to improve our lives. It enriches us by amplifying our ability to satisfy our desires and power, through concerted activity. In contrast, it is clear that diminishing each other's ability to participate in such forms of interactivity impoverishes us all. But through the enhancing qualities of Africology, such violence can perhaps be altered to become a transforming art of interaction.

Afrikology in Communities

Over the past few years, all major social science paradigms from structuralism to Marxism, world systems theory and globalization that have sought to explain the predicament of African societies in terms of structures and epistemologies have been countered and critiqued by a perspective that places primacy and emphasis on the human heart, creativity and resilience. Here, the important features of Afrikology can assist the epistemological struggle in understanding that social and cultural change in Africa has been in its capacity to explode, often victimizing in exchange for a balanced understanding of communities at work on the continent. Commenting directly on the heritage of social science and humanities' enterprises in Africa, Nabudere, as part of his intellectual trajectory for the 21st century, and in direct reference to Afrikology, has referred to two diametrically opposed orientations. First, the Eurocentric and subservient to European social sciences and second, the Afro-centric, steeped in African knowledge from the past through a universal perspective with a core that utilizes the creative process of social transformation, cultural restoration, need, and idea/perceptions understanding.

About the Case Studies

As a way into this conversation, what comes to mind and heart immediately are three recent compelling community accounts. The first is a dialogue in search of meaning that focused on '*language, culture and women's rights*'[16] that took place deep in the villages at the heart of communities in Uganda and Kenya. It was through this Afrikological podium that we discovered a discourse that the old traditions and cultures were able to interrogate modernity and vice-versa within their own varied contexts. Such a dialogue between the two worlds had been an on-going struggle and counter-struggle that has to be recognized and understood. The two constituted a dialectical relationship that has to be interrogated. Thus, we came to the conclusion that modernity has not fully managed to contain and destroy tradition, but in some cases the latter has outlasted the former, although with an odd modification. This interrogation seeks to highlight the strategies of survival adopted by traditionalism against the destructive impact of a globalizing and universalization of modernization which offers no new benefits to those affected by modernization.

The second narrative comes from the *Iwokodan* community site of knowledge based in Palisa, Uganda as it searches for judicial balance through the workings of restorative justice in redressing inter and intra-community transgressions. This arises out of a realisation that Western analytical philosophical paradigms which inform social sciences and the humanities tend to polarise situations (this is in a way what dialectics has meant for Western thought via Plato and Hegel). Philosophically, the *Iwokodan* has taken a restorative approach which has led the community to organise itself so it could rediscover its sense of *utu* or humanness cultivated in an Afrikological epistemology of unity and complementarities in relationships with humankind and nature.

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African philosophy, which is represented in the basic idea of 'Ubuntu,' or the need to take into account 'reciprocal relations' that guide peoples' are therefore crucially important in defining a comprehensive solution to global and local situations, which in African conditions, happen predominantly in rural environments, such as the *Iwokodan* community knowledge site.

The third account captures Afrikological efforts by cross-border communities around the Mt. Elgon area in search of collective identities through cultural clusterism, organized through a *peace and cultural animation festival* held in November 2012 in Kapchorwa on the slopes of Mt Elgon. Cross-border conflict in the Mt. Elgon area has many dimensions with various correlated causes and factors. And although land has been a major contributing factor to the conflicts, other social and economic factors have also played a role in fuelling the conflicts. In addition, the conflicts have had negative social, cultural, and economic impacts on all cross-border communities living in the area. For example: displacement, physical harm to individuals; the destruction of property; death resulting in a high incidence of orphans and widows; rape and other forms of sexual violence and exploitation; and resulting food and general insecurity. Furthermore, these problems have affected cross-border communities already dealing with conflicts of multiple types, from mineral extraction to cattle rustling, to drought, to post-conflict inter-ethnic violence, to the creation of national parks for tourism on both sides of the mountain in Kenya and Uganda. However, until now, there has been no comprehensive effort in focusing on culture as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism, as well as restorative practices for cross-border communities as a soluble alternative in promoting peace and regional security in Africa (hence, the concepts of 'culture', 'peace', 'security' and 'development' are intimately related).

Case Study 1: Community Dialogues on 'Language, Culture and Women's Rights' in Uganda and Kenya

Having identified the verbal dependency of most African intellectuals and social activists on Western processes of development and their concepts of rights as a major obstacle to Africa's development, we can turn a substantial project-journey (absent of prejudicial biases that often exists within the 'modern' psyches). Hence, the purposes of our journeys in the rural northern and eastern Uganda, and rural western Kenya were an attempt to bring a meaningful and productive dialogue between modernity and traditional conceptions and misconceptions of human rights by engaging the so called 'intellectuals' representing the modernist view and the 'un-certificated/uneducated' rural masses/natives, representing their own traditional view.

Subsequently, the objective in part, was to create an Afrikological podium that would diffuse the hostility that exists between modernists and traditionalists, both of whom view each other's motives with suspicion. Modernists tend to view traditionalists as 'illiterate and backwards,' whilst traditionalists tend to look at modernists as *muzungu* (foreign) minded, with imported ideas and in a rush to rid tradition and replace it with modernity. In a sense, similar to Western assumptions where the "barbarian" is inferior to the "civilized", the rural dweller is accordingly seen as subservient to the developed urban intellectual.

Thus, the verbal distance that exists between the two is, among other things, manifested by their ways of understanding, perceiving, interpreting, and evaluating, as well as in their modes of articulation and communication of the issues of human rights. Here, the lack of meaningful interface between the two groups appears to be a problem, deriving from the issue of language, culture, and meaning.

As a result, this Afrikological community conversation was a direct attempt at scratching the fabric and personality of Afrikology in an effort to try and understand what is in the heart of those engaged in the conversations, not just with what is in the mind of those engaged in the conversations. Consequently, it adopted the use of dialogue as opposed to debate; this is because dialogue unlike debate emphasizes listening to deepen understanding. A dialogue accordingly draws participants from as many parts of the community as possible to exchange information face-to-face, with shared personal stories and experiences, honestly express perspectives, clarifying viewpoints, and developing solutions to community concerns. And indeed, dialogues go beyond sharing and understanding to transforming participants; and while the process begins with the individual, it eventually involves groups and institutions to develop common values and allows participants to express their own interests. Next, it expects that participants will grow in understanding and may decide to act together with common goals, and undoubtedly, in dialogue, participants can question and re-evaluate their assumptions. Through this process, people are learning to work together to improve relations, and ultimately, dialogues can affect how policies are made. And additionally, this in effect is restorative learning and unlearning that can only be cultivated by the use of an Afrikological epistemology.

The idea of the project was explained in 2011 by professor Nabudere, and came as a result of a regional conference on *Restorative Justice and International Humanitarian Law* that he helped to organise in 2008 in Nairobi, Kenya. He informed the conference that he opposed the idea raised by some participants that the question of women and human rights in East Africa were confined to the tradition vs. modernity dichotomy. He instead argued that it was a question of language and culture. "There is lack of interfacing between the researcher and the researched. The 'NGO expert' ought to meet with the community and converse the issue of meaning" added Nabudere.

Furthermore, Nabudere argued that language is a guide to social reality, and that it is the medium of expression for African societies. Therefore, from this perspective, experience is largely determined by the language habits of the community, and that each separate structure represents a separate reality. Mukasa Luutu, the Vice Chancellor of Marcus Garvey Pan-Afrikan University has supplemented Nabudere by adding that language is also a modelling system, and that "no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre, the structure of natural language". This is apparent in the use of vocabulary and the semantics of words. Clearly, from Nabudere's point of view, there is no particular language or culture that names everything or catalogues the whole compass of knowledge of the world. Underlying a word, therefore, is its relationship with other words, and the goal of analysis is to discover vocabulary sets that carry the underlying semantic components of the language and a people's culture.

Luutu has also pointed out that all education in East Africa has been colonially oriented; and it had delinked people from their communities and societies. Hence, Luutu says, "Education as such has been presented to us as modernity, which has created a further distance between individuals and their rural community". These days, the script is clear, the state through the constitution imposes cultural restrictions under the auspices of the human rights law - i.e. you are allowed to do all you want culturally as long as it is not repugnant, in some cultures homosexuality is considered repugnant, thus the law criminalises this whereas good conscience is considered good Christian values, polygamous relations are prohibited, but having mistresses is allowed.

Acholi Dialogue

A community dialogue with 12 community researchers was held in the Acholi region to focus on two key issues, viz (a) Bride Price and (b) Gender Based Violence. This dialogue was of particular importance because of the northern armed conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony's (now a fugitive from international justice) and Uganda's national army that ended in 2006 as a result of a peace agreement signed in Juba, in the then Republic of Sudan. It was one of the longest armed rebellions in Uganda's history and one of the worlds' worst humanitarian disasters. It began soon after President Yoweri Museveni usurped power in 1986 through a five year armed-guerrilla war. It led to the deaths of thousands while at the same time leaving around two million people internally displaced. The 23 year civil war also led to a near collapse of family and traditional structures; communities in this area registered high levels of poverty and crime rates, and they became dependent on the state and the donor community. It also led to the prevalence of HIV and AIDS in the area. As is mostly the case in conflict situations, of all the structural and physical violence this community experienced, it was women and children who suffered the most.

A first dialogue question was "who was Kony's mother?" asked by a local woman Councillor, in perhaps trying to understand Joseph Kony's background, and maybe to also reach her own sense of closure. This triggered a heated discussion on African feminity and the role of mothers in conflict resolutions. Riming well with an observation made earlier by Nabudere that one cardinal requirement of Afrikology is the feminine principle in African consciousness and existence. This has been an aspect, he pointed out in which Western epistemology has tried to undermine and side-line in advancing their patrilineal cultural values in Africa. Nevertheless, the discussions continued into women's participation in decision-making about war and peace, and it was agreed upon by most participants that Acholi women were part and parcel in the initiatives that led to the end of the war, and that their role has been pivotal in post conflict reconstruction of their community.

Interestingly, other calls to involve women in matters of war and peace have begun to be taken seriously in other societies around the world as well; this follows the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, which returned women's role to the forefront of peace activities. The conference suggested that governments should be encouraged to increase the participation of women in the peace process at the decision-making level, which include including them as part of delegations to negotiate international agreements relating to peace and disarmament.

Juxtaposed, violence as such produces enormous insecurity and requires one to tread carefully when asking questions concerning those affected, such as those in the Gulu District NGO Forum (a network organization that promotes a rights-based approach to sustainable development in northern Uganda). And people living in contexts of open violence have community members in this dialogue tend to watch constantly for their personal and collective security; they thus search for ways to feel and be safe and find protection as insecurity has the capacity to create the permanency of feeling uncertain. Hence, uncertainty goes hand in hand with the experience of unpredictability, and in seeking safety, we tend to suspend trust in what was happening around us, and to be insecure has meant that no longer having a clear sense of self and having to suspend trust in others. This is the plight facing Acholi children today, especially those born at the apex of the conflict, as well as those who have grew up in the camps.

It is widely recognised that periods of war or disaster can produce ruptures or crises within societies from which new orders can emerge. The Acholi community has clearly not been an exception. Through the dialogue, it was agreed that war, urban displacement, inter-ethnic and international presence, NGO interventions, government development projects, women's and children's rights promotion – were all identified as having had a dramatic impact on the Acholi community in particular *kwo town* – the Acholi community living in and around Gulu town, and how they perceive issues of rights.

In the dialogue there were mixed reactions from some participants when it came to discussing the catalysts of the cultural transformation that has taken place in their community, this led to some ambivalence and controversy over the meaning of the social changes that have taken place in their community. For example, one person took a modernist view and argued that for some, especially women and young men, town life, despite its material hardships, has been the foundation for a world that is modern and global, unlike restricted rights for women under traditional and local arrangements. And in spite of a cry from elderly men in the dialogue, rising to object her views, she argued that Acholi elders and chiefs have largely lost their power of social regulation, as Acholi women are liberating themselves. Moreover, economically, women have gained access to loans, both individually and through groups. They own property in town, such as buildings, vehicles, and land, and businesses; and women also express satisfaction at having learned to sell agricultural produce and save money.

Indeed, socially and politically, women pointed out the number of women who are now in positions of authority in prominent NGOs and in the local government system. And unquestionably, women are achieving higher levels of education and undergoing training by NGOs and government on health and other issues concerning their rights.

In contrast, three women in particular objected to these modernist observations, accusing them of exaggerations. Modernity, they observed, has had a significantly negative impact on women's quality of life because many men have died, joined armed organisations or abandoned their wives, and women in large part have been left with the primary responsibility for providing for their families, which have often expanded to include a number of dependents in addition to their own children. Also, water, firewood and grass for roofing are hard to come by as women are now forced to go out and earn money so they can buy land and or rent a house; they must also pay for their children's school fees and medical facilities that are often inadequate and very expensive. And yet another negative consequence brought about by "town life", they pointed out, was the methods of making money that have emerged, specifically prostitution for women and thievery for men.

For many older Acholi participants, however, this dominance of 'NGO moneyed culture' in town was an unmitigated evil, a corruption of Acholi society and its cultural values. As one elderly man pointed out, "before the war, wealth was not held in money, but in cattle". As a result, money itself was widely perceived as a symptom and agent of the destruction of Acholi society, as it replaced tangible, rooted resources. All money-oriented economic activity was seen by some elders who spoke in the dialogue as a betrayal of the values of Acholi culture: "Gulu town had given birth to a lost generation of Acholi, addicted to material riches, disconnected from their roots in the land and without even basic cultural knowledge".

In pre-war Acholi society, significant authority was held by a lineage, and in a group of people united by actual or perceived kinship and descent into a structure of patriarchal, generally gerontocratically. This structure was brought into crisis by the civil-war and displacement. Many elders died, and the civil war presented bigger problems for 'traditional' leadership to resolve. The authority of this lineage-based structure has also been undermined by the creation of the Local Council system, which has taken over many of the conflict resolution roles previously held by 'traditional' authorities. Their disempowerment has been further intensified by NGO initiatives which tend to favour women and youth. Finally, displacement itself has had a significantly negative impact on lineage-based leaders, as groups of people united by actual or perceived kinship and descent have been dispersed; restrictions on movement have made group meetings difficult and land also difficult to access, the dialogue noted.

The dialogue then returned to the primary subject matter and delved into the issue of meaning. The Acholi community attaches so much significance to the marriage ritual, that failure to marry is considered a curse (or an abnormality) and it is common for the elders to be called in to monitor events. Childlessness is also counted as one of the most serious misfortunes to befall a couple, with women typically taking all the blame. In such cases, the marriage could be dissolved or the husband be allowed to marry another wife. Polygamy is regarded as a normal arrangement.

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And additionally, a young man chiefly depends upon his lineage to get both the permission to marry a young woman and the ability to provide the material goods required to pay her indispensable *ot-lim* (bride price). Although marriages were sometimes organized without the consent of the young man and the young woman in the past, such scenarios are increasingly rare today, with most people embracing the modern ideal of freedom of choice. Because it was often the father's wealth that afforded the young man the *ot-lim*, there was little he could change. The items to be delivered as *ot-lim* (which is a practical way of saying thank you to the young woman's mother) are discussed and a specific date is set for the delivery. Instalments are often accepted, hence, *ot-lim* can take the form of cattle, goats, sheep, household items or money. Often, the young woman's *ot-lim* is not spent but saved to offset her brothers' *ot-lim* when it is their turn to marry and pay refunds, in the event of a divorce.

Participants then engaged in discussions centering on *ot-lim*, what it meant from a traditional point of view, and how it is being perceived in modern times. It was observed that "traditional marriages but *ot-lim* is too expensive and this is why we are seeing our boys running away from their responsibilities by impregnating girls and absconding". A participant argued that parent demand a hefty *ot-lim* if their daughter is 'educated'. A young woman ought to be a woman in spite of educational attainment, he stressed. Another thought that the problem with *ot-lim* was the distorted meaning. "*Ot-lim* traditionally meant appreciation; but nowadays it literally means paying or buying a wife (bride-price). This traditional custom established good relations among families and legitimized the children born in the marriage, but today, some women are given away to the man who pays more. This, in a way, can be seen as the commodification of women or forced marriage, which was not the original intention of *ot-lim*.

Another argued problem in-part lies with old men that are modernized or urbanized, "these men", she observed, "tend to demand a lot for *ot-lim* and they also impose items that are not supposed to be part and parcel of the *ot-lim*". And "*Ot-lim* is not bride price, we should strive to remind those confused about this definition that *ot-lim* is a token of appreciation to the bride's family and in particular the mother. We are not selling our daughters! In the old days, *ot-lim* used to be shared communally. These days it all commercialized, people even do electronic cash transfers and people start businesses with it". One blamed Acholi community in the diaspora. "They are the problem as they are the ones disorganizing our community. They disregard our traditional customs when marrying and see things in terms of modern rights and law", he said.

The dialogue then turned its attention to the issue of divorce and inheritance. It was observed that the purpose of marriage was unity, and argued that in Acholi culture, divorce was very much discouraged, and all things possible were initiated to prevent a couple from getting a divorce.

Drawing from the community conversations, it is logical that governments in East Africa, in one way or another, try and make decisions about the legal and political position of both tradition and modernity in their social and legal systems. Most of the crises that local communities are facing have been expounded by the recommendations that these communities have received from foreign and local "experts" on human rights and development. The concept of development has its roots in the notion of progress, which is fundamentally a materialist philosophy bent on unlimited growth or exploitation and accumulation. Hence, African bureaucrats and political elites have been unable to draw on their concept of community when making decisions on national policies.

Also, women's rights, no matter how we eventually refine the concept, demand that residents old and young, male and female in the urban as well as in the rural centres are heard, and not pushed aside. Rural people commonly referred to as the "illiterates" or the "uneducated" in modernist lingo, which make up the majority of the African communities, need to gain a 'voice' in the parlance of contemporary community, cultural or political science speech. Whether we use the older language of "empowerment" or the current speech of the epistemology of the 'heart' as defined by Afrikology, the philosophical language of the moment, the message is clear. People cannot plan and or speak for others; people must be given a chance to participate in meaningful ways in resolving the challenges of discrimination, whether man-made or natural. Solutions must be inclusive, not exclusive, an as a result, these dialogues about modernist verses tradition conceptions of women's rights can depended on thinking about the world in organic, incremental, bottom-up terms instead of in overarching and top-down abstractions perspectives. It has also been about accommodation and accumulation of small-scale change that adds value to our communities in how community members view women, and the discourses concerning their rights. And to paraphrase Nabudere's horizontal concept, there can be no single 'centre' that will determine the existence of all human beings everywhere, because 'one-size fits all' will no longer be allowed to dictate global or local development. All human beings have to assume responsibility for their own survival and abandon the uni-linear epistemology of looking at complex and diverse realities in a one-dimensional manner.

In the course of these dialogues, a consensus was built up in most participants that traditional role models of men and women defined their behaviour and how they perceived rights and entitlements. This was a help for both of them. For instance, it was agreed that most disagreements could be settled in the homestead, rather than making the matter public and going to court. The rules in the village were simple for everybody. The statement: "in the old days, there were not so many options in life as there are today", as one participant in the dialogue put it, indicated that participants and the community at large was suspicious of the new freedoms perpetuated by modernist advocates.

Women participants in the dialogue also recognised the importance of women's organisations in raising their voice and providing a space for them to come together and discuss their problems. Most of the organisations they referred to are those oriented around small income-generating activities or those that give out loans.

And as one woman group leader in the dialogue explained, women's voices are now heard in public, whereas before 'women were not supposed to have a voice', demonstrating the value placed by women on having a voice, being heard, both as an individual and collectively as a community. In all the dialogues, most women emphasized the need to have a voice as a key feature to the resilience of a community and its sense of identity. Thus, for the women, having a voice represented a defining their own future, thereby repositioning the feminine principle as a core constituent of Afrikology.

Case Study 2: The Iwokodan Community Site of Knowledge

Post-conflict communities are increasingly turning their attention to the legacy of indigenous practices of dispute settlement and reconciliation. The argument is that traditional and informal justice systems may be adopted or adapted to develop an appropriate response to a history of civil war and oppression. Hence, the *Iwokodan* community site of knowledge based in Palisa, eastern Uganda captures well this change.

At this site which was organised as a group united by actual or perceived kinship and descent, the community has incorporated strong elements of modernity in order to preserve their traditional justice system and traditional group governance structure. Thus, the Iwokodan is modelled on a modern government structure; therefore, it has a written constitution, with modern governance structures, and it has opted for restorative justice in the event of conflict adjudication, recognising that modern courts are not able to deal with in an increasing number of criminal cases. This has led to increased cost and delay with self-evident injustice being caused to individuals, and hence, a feeling of injustice.

The other problem according to Iwokodan local government Minister Joseph Okwalinga is that criminal litigation is particularly dependent on individual memory, and that documents that can objectively refresh memory ordinarily play a small part in the usual kind of criminal case, and thus, witnesses must rely solely on their recollection. When the process takes more than a year, and sometimes three years, for a case to come to trial, memory becomes suspect. For example, there are a number of inter and intra-communities murder cases that has been resolved cordially without reference to the high courts. Consequently, there is an increasing demand for Afrikology's holistic approach to justice among communities across East Africa, which seeks to shift the focus of the trial from the battle between the lawyers to the discovery of truth by modifying the complex rules of evidence, and in the encouraging of the defendant to contribute to the search for truth; requiring full and open discovery for the prosecutor. For defence lawyers, under the current adversarial system, courtroom victory usually translates into obtaining an acquittal, and consequently they regard discovery of the truth as incidental or even irrelevant to this pursuit, and therefore there is a dichotomy that is normally created between the need for justice and the need for reconciliation.

Yet these processes are in fact two sides of the same coin, and the Iwokodan cases vividly demonstrates this wherein a new Afrikological system can ensure speed of trial while ensuring that the truth will prevail and that a restorative justice approach offers the best result to integrate the process. The modern courts alone cannot ensure that justice prevails in all cases as experience has shown that modern courts tend to be overwhelmed by criminal cases. It is the primary responsibility of the people who have caused conflict or harm to each other or to society to face the consequences of their actions and try to address the harm done. Consequently, it is the duty of society at large to provide them with the opportunities and institutional arrangements to enable them to take responsibility, and this is what the Iwokodan community site of knowledge is attempting to do.

Case Study 3: The first Mt. Elgon Cross-border Community Festival: The Road to Cross- Border Peace - Overcoming the Legacy of Bordered Identities, Cultural fragmentation and Unresolved Conflicts

> *Today's real borders are not between nations, but between powerful and powerless, free and fettered, privileged and humiliated. Today no walls can separate humanitarian or human rights crises in one part of the world from a national security crisis in another[17]… Dr. Kofi Anan*

Cross-border communities in the Mt Elgon area of East Africa, as is the case elsewhere in Africa, have gone through such untold violence and indescribable grief that the clamour of the victims is still heard, and the sounds of the silenced-guns, sharp-spears and *pangas* (machetes) still reverberate in the minds of ex-fighters as well as those who lived through the experience of conflict. Hence, the scars of the conflicts are still visible not only on the bodies and souls of the older generations, but also on the young via the continuing stigmatization of widowed women as 'husband snatchers' and their children as cultural orphans as examples. Also, community conflicts in the area have had many dimensions with various correlated causes and factors. And although land has been a major contributing factor to the conflicts, other social and economic factors have also played a role in fuelling the conflicts. And in compounding the situation, the conflicts have had negative social, cultural, and economic impacts on all cross-border communities which include: displacement, physical harm to individuals; the destruction of property; death- resulting in a high incidence of orphans and widows; rape and other forms of sexual violence and exploitation; and the resulting food and general insecurity. And notwithstanding, these problems have presented the cross-border communities already dealing with conflicts of multiple types, from mineral extraction to cattle rustling, to drought, to post-conflict inter-ethnic violence, to the creation of national parks for tourism in both sides of the mountain in Kenya and Uganda.

As Kenyan scholar Robert Simiyu[18] has pointed out, the rhythmic nature of land-related violence in the Mt Elgon area has often coinciding with general elections and other critical moments in Kenya's national politics, which indicates that there may be more to it than just land disputes or pure intercommunity hatred. He argues that there is a possible political motive for the chaos, and this is borne out by the fact that in some instances, state agencies have been implicated in the conflicts, while in others the state has remained ambivalent. The result, Simiyu also argues that many conflicts remain unresolved (some years after they first started). It is important to also note here that the land problem has persisted since colonialism, and successive regimes have been unable to permanently resolve the land question to the satisfaction of all community members. Thus, in short, the valleys and slopes of Mt Elgon bare testimonies of the severity of the conflicts faced by cross-border communities that have been caged in imagined political boundaries.

To overcome these cross-border divisions created in the area as they threaten further fragmentation of communities and groups, we tapped into professor Nabudere's wisdom and created a situation in which we encouraged cross-border cultural-linguistic communities to regroup as much as possible into 'clusters'- for instance, linking the *Bamasaba* with the *Samia* and *Babukusu* or the *Sabiny* with the *Sabaoti* and *Pokots* or the *Iteso* with the *Karamojongs* and so forth, so that they would become strong nations capable of defending and voicing their local interests and concerns globally. Hence, it is against this background that the *Afrika Study Centre* (ASC) and the *Mt Elgon Residents Association* (MERA) with the help of *Marcus Garvey Pan-Afrikan Institute/University* and other stakeholders organised the Cross-Border Peace and Cultural festival that took place in November 2012 in Kapchorwa town on the slopes of Mt Elgon in Eastern Uganda.

The social concept and cultural context in which we undertook the cross-border cultural 'integration' tried to imagine and invent new ways to enable communities to break out of their encirclement, first by the global system and then by African elites who control state power that continue to marginalize communities. Thus, the festival is an on-going Afrikological endeavour by the ASC and local cross-border communities to deal with the destabilising effects and consequences of Western colonization and domination. After all, there has been no comprehensive effort in focusing on culture as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism and as a restorative practice in cross-border communities as a soluble alternative in promoting peace and regional security in Africa.

Particularly, in this endeavour, for cross-border communities to undertake this transformation, ASC selected four members (two female and two males) in April 2012 from each cross-border community in both Uganda and Kenya (they included: Bukusu, Samia, Sabaot, Sebei, Benet, Iteso, Bamasaba, Pokot and the Karamajong) to undergo a one month intensive 'Cultural Animation Training Programme' at the Marcus Garvey Pan Afrikan Institute/University in Mbale, Uganda wherein course participants (animators) underwent a process of self conscientisation through restorative cultural learning and in unlearning paradigms and cultural memory methodologies.

Upon completion of the training, the animators returned to their respective communities to mobilize, learn and prepare their communities for the festival. They were tasked with the responsibility of observing their cultures with deeper interest, learn and contribute to the revival and strengthening aspects that communities were keen on. Overall they were also expected to initiate some learning and documentation centre that would gather materials archived in practices and procedures of their cultures and languages. And in this way, a socio-cultural treasury of grassroots experiences, mechanisms and technologies of sustainable environment, food and human security systems would be gathered and showcased at the cultural festival, and beyond.

In this, they followed principles of:

- Learning by seeing, listening and observing-then practicing;

- Adopting a doing, using and interacting approach;

- Aquatinting oneself with holistic understanding;

- Critically adopting transdisciplinary skills in learning;

- Adopting Afrikology as a trans-disciplinary way of knowing and being in relationship to the demand for knowledge, truth and justice;

- Learning to work with culture at the University Campus and the community;

- Learning and innovating as you work in the community

The three-day festival was the culmination of a 'People to People Reconciliation' activities that begun in 2006. The basic objective of the festival activities was to enable each of the cross-border communities to present their culture including foods, traditional medicines, handicrafts, songs, dances, social practices, building technologies and other material cultures to one another. This constituted a learning experience and demonstrated to them the similarities and breaks in their cultural heritages, and therefore it became a firm basis for restorative peace and transformation. The festival also explored the themes of: (a) 'food (in) security' and regional security; (b) 'cross-cultural spirituality' and African traditional cultures; (c) remembering Dani Nabudere (the "people's Professor") which was spread over the activities of the three day festival.

Sequentially, day one was dedicated to matters of 'food (in) security' and regional security-showcasing different cultural foods from each of the Mt Elgon communities with the overall objective to stimulate interest and revive the culture of traditional 'granary model' needs; indicating the common convergence of strategies to respond to and address the common problem of food vulnerabilities and approaches to common collaborative culture of sharing of produce and seeds within the communities. Day two was dedicated to matters of 'cross-cultural spirituality' and African traditional cultures, thus creating a space for the recognition of cultural jurisdiction at play in which dialogue about intentions, values, and assumptions were brought out and negotiated. This included awareness building and understanding in which at last dialogue on issues of the 'African feminine principle' were revitalized and knowledge and benefits discussed, hence, this was intended to help find ways of better linking modern sciences to the broader heritage of human kind and indeed contribute to scientific knowledge of universal value. And the final day of the festival was dedicated to remembering the "people's Professor', the late Dani Nabudere without whom, the festival would not have taken place. The day also reflected on: Professor Nabudere's community work in the region, the continent and beyond; peace, cross-border solidarities; the international political economy, Pan-Africanism, cognitive justice, community sites of knowledge, restorative governance, the economy, and justice.

What Room for Pluralism in the African Cultural World?

At this point in our discussion, we self-consciously contend that any discussion on cultural pluralism should be centered on the suspicious enterprise of modernity in its dogmatic track that suggest that any cultural progress that comes later is inherently better than what was present before. And here, the concepts of rationality, objectivity, and generalization can be considered as the theoretical bases our plural project was erected.

Subsequently, we affirm the following four perspectives as significant aspects of investigating the suspicious enterprise of modernity. First, pluralism appears to be a cultural franchise of globalization aimed at bringing together previously isolated people together voluntarily and involuntarily into new and ever closer neighborhoods by the increasing integration of markets, the emergence of new regional political alliances, remarkable advances in telecommunications, and transportation that have prompted unprecedented demographic cultural shifts. Hence, the resulting confluence of peoples and cultures in an increasingly global and multicultural world has created tension, confusion and conflict in the process of adjusting to pluralism.

Second, as radical witnesses of centuries of alienation, and of what has been termed the legacy of one-sided cultural solutions to life and sanitized stereotypes, we are beginning to see the link between mono-cultural models that is being propagated as pluralism. For instance, Rothkopf[19] in 1997, examining the cultural ambit of education's relation to foreign policy and pointed out that the very real prospect of education is now serving as a fourth pillar of Western cultures, in particular American foreign policy in which foreign policy says no to revolutions or any change that is not favorable to the U.S while aggressively marketing the culture of the West as cool, as the most just, the most tolerant, the most willing to constantly reassess and improve itself, and the best model for the future.

Furthermore, for communities in Africa, the school environment has been the cultural site at which one begins being cultivated by the systematic denigration of one's identity, the site at which one learns how to laugh at his or her own gods while being instructed to worship other people's gods. School education, although now a human right issue (and compulsory), can therefore be considered to be the place in which the fostering of plural 'cultural democracy' is promoted and advanced widely. So, contemporary education in its simplest form can be seen as foreign cultural capital being transmitted via instructions in schools, and institutionalized by the certificates issued by particular educational systems. But, despite these shortcomings, as we have discussed earlier, communities especially in the Mt. Elgon area are moving away from the perspective of African "victimhood" and cultural pluralism by experimenting with cultural clusters fused to the fabric of Afrikology's 'thinking from the heart' epistemology as an approach to renewed community-centred empowerment, and restorative cultural forwardness.

Third in our quadrant, the wide gap between the pace of economic globalization sitting atop a pile of unresolved historical grievances and the reality of a tense, mistrustful, and anxiety-haunted African society thrusts our conscience into a new, pungent and ambivalence-filled situation that we can no longer escape. And in this respect, Hoppers (2005) painted an acute picture when she observed:

As nations and communities big and small rummage about in this confusion, one detects various degrees of hankering for a lost age of social harmony, cultural homogeneity and commonly-shared values – occasionally confusing the past state of things for a vision for the future. In the meantime, the perceived fragmentation of society, concerns about crime, persistent undercurrents of racism, and growing distrust of neighbour and government, have strengthened the attraction of many to the numerous affinity groups mushrooming everywhere[20].

Hence, she argues that in situations in which large immigrant communities find themselves surrounded by a mainstream culture, the percolation tends to encourage antipathy toward those outside the 'shared loyalty' while fermenting a hankering for the familiar though geographically distant safe-haven of a back-home of a fictitious undisturbed social harmony. Out of this emerge a form, content as well as rationale for the sustenance of a parallel, quasi resistance, proto-protest sub-culture right in the heartland of a mainstream culture.

Next, we take battle with the pluralism that promotes individualism at the expense of wholeness as understood in Afrikology or from the cultural personhood of an African being that constitutes his or her identity. And contrastingly, the African concept of a person as wholeness does not deny human individuality as an ontological fact, or as what Foucault (1970) called an 'analytic finitude'[21] but it ascribes ontological primacy to the community through which people come to know self and the world.

In this Afrikological reasoning, there is a greater wholeness to which the individual belongs, although in themselves, they can be seen as a part of a cultural whole. Holism is therefore the starting point of the African concept of a personhood, an apparently alien concept to those advancing the pluralist canon. Hence, this distinction comes as a result of the difference between the holistic and the individualistic conceptions of a cultural person or community. Pluralism accords primacy to individualistic derivative whilst 'cultural clusterism' that we are advancing here places importance on Afrikology's wholeness which is based in the traditional African view of a person that denies that a person can be defined by focusing on his or her physical or psychological characteristics alone, and instead it places emphasis on how one is defined in relation to his or her cultural world. This primacy is meant to apply not only ontologically, but also in regards to epistemic accessibility. That said, the global climate of cultural change and acute cultural vulnerability has raised new challenges for all communities in their ongoing pursuit of universal human, animal, environmental and cultural rights. And appreciably, in the wider sociological sense, tolerance as advanced by pluralism carries with it the understanding that intolerance breeds violence and social instability, and that it has also become the social term of choice to define uncommon social practice and cultural diversity.

Conclusion

As it has been illustrated here, the first step on the road to constructing cultural defenses of the mind, outlined through our cultural conversations is in the creation of concepts and meanings besides what colonialism has bestowed. Thus, the ordeals of imagination undergone by culturally violated communities that have survived colonialism, cultural genocides and enslavement and imperialisms should find space, and inform our understanding of human solidarity under impossible conditions. By incorporating Afrikological notions of human solidarity which are based on the assumption that all people share a common underlying humanity, we looked further and pictured the symbolic cultural and social resources such as clusterism for negotiating a politer human identity. As we take this further, a more profound form of tolerance emerges which resides in the capacity to develop respect, understanding and mutual recognition of others, because it simply makes good cultural sense.

Our attention would not normally be drawn towards community narratives as holding the promise, potential or epistemological lessons of Afrikology and restorative cultural action in communities. Yet our experiences in these settings and people hold seeds, buried and unnoticed, but pregnant with life-giving energy that instructs our cultural and epistemological inquiry. The very nature of a seed, we have tried to demonstrate is a living-dormant container that simultaneously is fruit and promise that draws our attention towards the natural characteristics of Afrikology's collective well-being, and the qualities of cultural resilience that contribute to healthy communities not only in East Africa, but around the world.

These conversations have had a long travel down the community-lane in realising the falsity of the dichotomisation of complex human relations, by certain restraining epistemologies (this as we have attempted to demonstrate) that can only be corrected under a system of restorative justice, restorative agriculture, and restorative cultural practices that Afrikology offers aplenty. Furthermore, through practical means and community-centred interactions, we have demonstrated that communities are moving away from the perspective of African "victimhood" by adopting the epistemology of thinking from the heart' as an approach towards community-centred intellectualism and cultural activism.

Afrikology thus stands for manoeuvring space within and interaction with social, economic and political structures that are external to and at the same time part of the community. Afrikology is also about doing justice to communities' capabilities to reflect and act without losing sight of the structural circumstances that enable and at times constrain them. It is about the people's strength. It is about making a difference. It is about creating an indigenous dialectical space for communities to reflect on its social and cultural values and thereby create a connecting relationship between itself that allows room for reflexivity and reflectivity that then reveals the inner soul of the community to the world at large.

In the Upanishads of Nabudere, the epistemological grandmaster of Afrikology, we can equate the fundamental nature and universalism of Afrikology as a passage that speaks to how those who become wise lose the Great Oneness, and the Way Rivers all flow into the sea. In the transformation from the solitary to the communal, there is a mysterious physics that each generation has to relearn and advance regarding how we are more together than alone. In the hard-earned experience of Oneness, we all have the chance to discover, through love and suffering, that we are at heart the same. The task for us today is to restore connections that history has shattered. However, there are challenges; the process of making cultural education a lived experience for many cross-border learners around the Mt Elgon area is not possible in the present regime of culturally isolated knowledge production. And second, the symbolic languages used in current educational systems are not learnt at an early age by a large percentage of children in the area; and for them, education especially cultural, its language, its methods and its packaging represents an alienating experience both culturally and epistemologically.

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