

AFRIZEALOTISM AS A THEORY IN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

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1. Introduction

When the Europeans came to Africa, they had the bible and Africa had the wealth. They gave Africa the bible and took Africa's wealth to develop their home land. They scrambled for, and partitioned Africa. The end result was imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Many Africans became Europeanized or westernized. Afrizealotism addresses the issue of returning to authentic African life characterized by black dignity, black nobility, black power and black consciousness. Afrizealotism awakens the African from his slumber and makes effort to liberate Africa from the shackles of imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Hence, the Salvation of Africa must come from Africans through the Spirit of Afrizealotism.

Since Africans' contact with Europeans, there are many cultural and ideological problems arising from conflict of culture. Many Africans became Europeans in attitude as a result of the Afro-Euro contact. The outcome of this contact was a cultural ideological conflict. The efforts made by the Africans to liberate themselves from the shackles of European imperialism and colonialism gave rise to Afrizealotism. Afrizealotism is a vision and an attitude to life which originated due to the dehumanizing situation of oppression that characterized the African continent in the post contact era. Afrizealotism therefore, is a revolutionary movement that intends to project a synthesized African culture that is free

from European bondage. Afrizealotism is the philosophy of self re-discovery embarked upon by the modern Africans to ensure adequate re-integrations and a possible synthesis for a new way of living as authentic Africans. In order to realize the above objective, the following issues are considered.

- i. The dilemma of synthesis and the Aesthetics of self choosing
- ii. The structure of Afrizealotist Revolutionary movement

2. The Dilemma of Synthesis and the Aesthetics of Self Choosing

The cultural and ideological clash created by Afro-Euro contact has placed Africa in a dilemma of how to synthesis and realize cultural harmony. In describing the dilemma, “Ekwuru, observed that; the bewildering variety of cultural ideologies imported into most of the African cultures complicates the nature of the conflictual ‘battle’ between the traditional African cultures and western culture¹. The view of Ekwuru expressed above point to the fact that different cultural ideologies have mingled with the African culture and the result was clash of culture or cultural conflict which has thrown the human mind into confusion as two cultural worlds exist in the same mind, hence, the dilemma. In stressing the dilemma of synthesis, Ekwuru further echoes the views of Frantz Fanon and Ali Mazrui by saying; “The African is divided between choosing himself and losing the West and vice versa. He nurses both attitude of love and hate for both cultural representations². J. O. Chimakonam contends that the problem that results from this is far deeper than readily obvious. It concerns thought system and logic. “The reason for lack of viable development in Africa is that the tutored African who reasons within the framework of the strange Western logic radically loses touch with his environment and its realities. He therefore thinks without action, and where he acts at all, he acts without thought”³.

Colonialism, slavery, neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism which saw African native cultures replaced with the colonialist cultures has dealt a heavy blow on the status of African identity. Commenting on the writings of W. E. Du Bois, J. O. Chimakonam states:

So we understand Du Bois as affirming our concern here that Africa and the African have lost their identity. For those in America, this would be due to the geographical uprooting from Africa to America during the time of slavery and the consequent implantation into a strange culture area. While for those in Africa, it would be due to colonialism which saw the native culture and thought system replaced with the strange western versions. Thus the African of the post colonial era is neither an African nor a westerner; he feels the strange twoness none of which is now actually his true identity.⁴

The opinion stated above is the core of the African crises of identity. This is why Chimakonam again argues that "...it can be argued here, that the worst crime the west committed in the modern time was not the slave trade...it is essentially the destruction and erosion of the African cultural framework"⁵. The major difficulty of cultural synthesis is found in the dilemma of choosing between the West as the epitome of all that is good and Africa as original roots. Africans are highly receptive and have the natural tendency to behave as foreigners even in their own culture, hence, most of the postcolonial Africans enjoy being called a Westernized African or Black European. This tendency according to Chimakonam as cited above is due to logical brainwash.

Africa is in a cultural confusion created above all by social pressure. In order to get out of this confusion, the African must make a decision of choice. He must harmonize the elements of the

imposed western Culture with the existing African culture. The result of the harmonization removes the dilemma and produces authentic African identity different from the colonial identity. Ekwuru joins other African authors of the colonial and postcolonial period in emphasizing the need for authentic Africanness characterized by self realization and self-rediscovery. This rediscovery for Chimakonam must begin from the native African Cultural values⁶ and must have its base in African native logic and thought system⁷.

3. The Structure of Afrizealotist Revolutionary Movement

Afrizealotist movement is a movement that seeks to promote the great name of Africa and restore the beauty of the black race. Through the movement, the dignity and pride of every African is restored. According to Ekwuru, “Afrizealotists are not men motivated by one form of selfish ideology or the other; they are moved by a lived experience of an urgent practical need for their people’s total liberation”.⁸ The basic aim of Afrizealotism is to liberate the African from every form of slavery, poverty and backwardness. In trying to achieve the objectives outlined above, the movement shall concentrate mostly in three areas of great need. The three areas are:

- i. Conscientisation for the change of mental attitude.
- ii. Conscientisation for peace and social justice.
- iii. Conscientisation for new framework of civilization.

Conscientisation for the Change of Mental Attitude

There is the great need for a change of mental attitude by all Africans. Conscientisation and re-orientation of the African is very necessary if we must realize Afrizealotism. A return to Afrizealotists movement is essentially demanded because of the long period of colonial rule and domination which has done reasonable damage to the African mental framework. According to Asiwaju:

African States must consider themselves to have now reached the stage at which the Eurocentric and generally outmoded notion of sovereignty, which at their inception led independent states to insist dogmatically on maintaining their territorial boundaries, should be seriously questioned.⁹

The most desirable solution for the change of mental attitude is to be persuaded to view Africa like any other continent in the world. The need for this has already been recognized. Change of mental attitude is necessary as the history and activities of several multinational and bilateral organizations operating in Africa has shown. It is generally believed by most Africans that the long period of colonial domination has done a great damage to the Africans' mental framework. Many African scholars including those in diasporas such as; Blyden, Du Bois, Chimakonam, Oyebola, Senghor, Nkrumah, Mazrui and Chinweizu believe that colonialism is not just a political and economic conquest and domination of Africa. Thus they called for a change of mental attitude.

In support of the above view Ekwuru writes:

Colonialism, conquered, destroyed, and made nonsense of every bit of African cultural world of established universe of meaning. It has been discovered in retrospect that we have been colonized so much to the point of not only losing ourselves, but of losing our concrete touch with reality. We were colonized and brain washed to the extent of not only hating ourselves, but also anything that is associated with our own nature.¹⁰

Conscientisation for change of mental attitude is therefore, very necessary because African history through the centuries has

accumulated much of confused teaching and orientations from external influences. African past witnessed a conflicting and confused experience at the hands of the colonial imperialists and others who are against African traditional values and ideals. The situation was worsened by the deceptive presentation of African history as a story of European adventure and the Africans acceptance of such incoherent history. Afrizealotism uses eclectic principles to achieve the conscientisation for change of mental attitude. The basic aims of Afrizealotism were indirectly echoed in consciencism of Kwame Nkrumah. The book consciencism is a forerunner of Afrizealotism. According to Nkrumah:

Consciencism is the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African societies to digest the western and the Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality ... that philosophical stand point which taking its start from the present content of the African conscience, indicate the way in which progress is forged out of the conflict in that conscience.¹¹

Thus conscientisation for a change of mental attitude is a way of achieving Afrizealotism. This was foretold indirectly by many African scholars as well as scholars of African descent in America and the West Indies. The main theme of their activities was the encouragement of Africanness (African identity), that Africans should be proud of their heritage which should not in any way be assumed to be inferior to the European culture. Afrizealotism as a philosophical concept was articulated because consciencism and negritude as philosophical concepts have not thrived nor created the required mental disposition for an authentic Africanness.

Conscientisation for Peace and Social Justice

There is the urgent need to redirect, convince or conscientise Africans to see the importance of peace and social justice among Africans and in Africa. The arbitrary division or balkanization of various African people brought Africans of the same linguistic and cultural groupings under different European domination. The tendency is hatred of fellow Africans and the championing of European culture and civilization. The Europeans scrambled for, and partitioned Africa thereby planting the seed of disunity and hatred among Africans. The lack of peace and social justice caused by the European invasion and the subsequent occupation of Africa is expressed by Ekwuru in the following words:

Through various forms of political intrigues, Africans have been made to hate one another for the benefit of colonial nations. During the colonial invasion and conquest, Africans were used to fight and conquer their fellow Africans out of ignorance. Later on, during the full swing of colonial occupation, Africans were employed to suppress their fellow Africans. This did not end with colonialism, but continued with the various forms of neo-colonialist intrigues.¹²

Even after independence, Africans were still being used against Africans. Most civil wars in Africa were set-ups to delineate Africa. The balkanization of Africa and the colonial policy of divide and rule provided grounds for hatreds resulting in the secessionist movements that sprang up in several African States. Buttressing the above points, Asiwaju notes:

The Congo (now Zaire) saw strong secessionist sentiment among the Bakongo in the 1950s. After

coming to independence in 1960, it had to content with Katanga's attempt to secede. Ethiopia has been troubled by the secessionist stance among its Somali population in the south, and among the Eritrean population in the north-west. In Ghana, the Ewe claimed the right to secede and join their brethren in Togo. In the Ivory Coast, the Sanwis rose in 1959 and claimed the right to secede. On the eve of independence in Kenya, sentiment in the Coastal province favoured separation and union of Zanzibar, and in addition a strong secessionist movement existed among the Somali in Northern Kenya. In Mali, the Tuareg rose in revolt in 1963 and refused to recognize the government's authority. The Sudan was torn to civil war... Uganda's unity was threatened both before and after independence by separatist sentiment among the important Baganda people.... In Nigeria, the Igbo people tried to secede and establish the abortive "Republic of Biafra".¹³

This view of Asiwaju above show that crisis of civil wars and dissension have continued to trail Africa since the colonial era and the entire continent continued to disintegrate and deteriorate. Most African States are in one dispute or another. Some of them are internal while some are international. In fact, most African countries are at daggers drawn. The question then arises; can there be peace and social justice in Africa? The answer to the above question is found in Afrizealotism. The revolutionary conscientisation of Afrizealots will definitely bring peace and social justice to the entire continent of Africa. Afrizealots will act as messengers of peace and at the same time dedicate their live to ensuring peace in Africa. Afrizealots will have the basic function of redirecting, reshaping, remolding and concientizing fellow

Africans to see and appreciate peace and social justice. Ekwuru observes that “the most radical mission of Afrizealots is to see to the end of any form of oppression in the continent and to defend the cause of the downtrodden throughout the world”.¹⁴ Afrizealotism has an African origin but will carry its programme of emancipation of the down trodden beyond Africa. According Ekwuru:

Their message will not be one of hate and retaliation as would have been expected from the disfigured and downcast faces they wear, the soulless bodies they resemble, and the fettered legs of their colonial slavery. Instead their message will be one of creative love and redeeming universal brotherhood. Such great message is not going to be cast on empty words and based on false diplomatic rhetoric formulae, but on concrete facts.¹⁵

The realization of the above situation or condition by Afrizealotist movement will obviously and definitely give rise to peace and social justice in Africa and beyond.

Conscientisation for a new civilization framework

The new civilization framework for the realization and achievement of the basic objectives of Afrizealotist movement is a return to the root of our Africanness and ensure cooperation among States. Senghor outlined the framework for a new African civilization in these steps:

The first step is the bringing to light the traditional civilization as the root of African socialism: the second step should involve the study of the colonial impact of African civilization: the third step should be the synthesis resulting from the interfecundation

between African socialist roots and the values assimilated from European civilization.¹⁶

This synthesis if achieved would affect the development of African social, economic, political and cultural life and further achieve a new world civilization. Ekwuru observes authoritatively that the framework for Afrizealotist (Afrizealotism) movement is black consciousness epitomized in black nobility, Black beauty, black dignity and black power. These concepts are the things that are guaranteed by a new civilization. He pointed out that in the historical evolution of some of these concepts, black consciousness has always been linked to them. From the foregoing, one notices that the achievement of a new civilization, there is need for a strong awareness of our situation as Africans and equally accepts our Africanness (Identity) with pride. Afrizealotism becomes a tool for the creation of the awareness and the proudly re-acceptance of our condition. Afrizealotism is not violent rather it is radical in its approach to issues as they affect Africans. Its major aim is to create awareness and consciousness as road maps for achieving authentic African life (Africanness)

4. Conclusion:

Afrizealotism is a movement designed to assist the Africans to return to an authentic African life with pride. Afrizealotism is meant to awaken the Africans from their slumber and enhance unity and solidarity amongst African states. Afrizealotism shall promote more vigorously and religiously greater intra African cooperation, interaction and solidarity¹⁷. This is necessary because only in the unity of purpose created through Afrizealotism that the Africans can achieve their cherished objectives and totally eradicate colonialism and neo-colonialism, remove ethnicity and tribalism. Finally, Afrizealotism provides grounds for the

accomplishment of national integration and unity, patriotism and national greatness.

Notes

¹Ekwuru, E.G., *The Dynamics of Afriraciogenesis, the dialectics of Afrizealotism*, Owerri: Totan Publishers, 2011, P. 423

²*Dynamics of Afriraciogenesis*, P.428

³ Chimakonam, Okeke Jonathan. “Principles of Indigenous African Logic: *Toward Africa’s Development and Restoration of African Identity*”. Paper presented at the 19th Annual Conference of International Society for African Philosophy and Studies [ISAPS], ‘50 Years of OAU/AU: Revisiting the Questions of African Unity, Identity and Development’. Department of Philosophy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State. 27th – 29th May, 2013. P.1

⁴Ibid. p. 24

⁵ Chimakonam, Okeke Jonathan. “Africa’s Restoration: Rediscovering the place of African Cultural Values in an Ichabodded History”. G. O. Ozumba and Elijah O. Okon (Ed.) *African Political Philosophy*. Uyo: El-Johns, 2012. P. 107

⁶ Ibid

⁷Chimakonam, Okeke Jonathan. “Project on African logic, From Thought System to Algorithmic Model: Impact on Science, Technology and Human Development”. *Paper Presented at the Second International Conference and Home Coming*. Department of Philosophy, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Nov. 30- Dec. 3, 2011.

⁸*Dynamics of Afriraciogenesis, P.434*

⁹Asiwaju, A.I., (Ed) *Partitioned Africans, ethnic relation across Africa's International Boundaries 1884-1984*, Lagos: Lagos University Press, 1984, P.13

¹⁰The dynamics of Afriraciogenesis, P. 437

¹¹Nkrumah, K., *Consciencism*, London: Heinemann education books, 1964. P.79

¹²*The dynamics of Afriraciogenesis P. 442*

¹³*Partitioned Africans, P. 226*

¹⁴*The dynamics of Afriraciogenesis P. 445*

¹⁵*The dynamics of Afriraciogenesis P. 445*

¹⁶Senghor, L.S., *What is Negritude* in M.I. Nwoko, *basic world political theories*, Ibadan: Claverianum press, 1988, P. 212.

¹⁷Eluwa, G I C., et al, *Africa and the Wider World since 1800 A.D*, Enugu: Africana First Publishers Limited. 2005, P. 229