The African renaissance call as a strategy for socio-cultural and economic transformation: A critical analysis of cultural and ideological issues

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Abstract

The main task of this article is to interrogate the meaning and content of the concept of culture as a phenomenological and ideological concept in human history, and to demonstrate how it is linked to the development or non-development of the marginalized communities within the African continent. Equally important, the article identifies the processes of alienation and the marginalization of African cultural heritage by the ideological designs and practices of colonialism and the apartheid ideology. It highlights the importance of the African Renaissance call as a socio-cultural, political and economic strategy for transformation in post-1994 South Africa, and a movement to motivate Africa into moving forward and realising its true potential in the context of globalization and its marginalizing tendencies.

1 Introduction

Thus in taking a look at cultural aspects of the African people, one inevitably finds himself having to compare. This is primarily because of the contempt that the 'superior' culture shows towards the indigenous culture. To justify its exploitative basis, the Anglo-Boer culture has at

all times been directed at bestowing an inferior status to all cultural aspects of the indigenous people (Biko 2004)

Generally, the concept of culture refers to any aspect of life that relates to the survival, death, progress and lack of of humankind. This comprises not only physical factors like artefacts and implements, but also psychological and sociological factors. The psychological factors comprise all non-material interests such as religious institutions, ritual observances, to mention a few, and the sociological factors are manifested in the way a certain society behaves and through various institutions such as **mahadi/lobola** (an African custom by which a bridegroom's family makes a payment in cattle or cash to the bride's family before the marriage) and **lebollo/isuthwini** (circumcision and traditional initiation school). In this article, culture is regarded as that which encompasses the sum total of African thought patterns, behaviour, ideas, and artefacts.

However, the observation by Cabral (1973: 53) that, "in some respects, culture is very much a source of obstacles and difficulties of erroneous conceptions about reality," is not totally dismissed but considered constructive criticism based on what has been experienced in some communities. In the whole, culture can be used to intensify the course of advancement of a society, while in some cases it can be a source of tension and dislocation in the life of a society.

The purpose of this article is to interrogate the meaning and content of the concept of culture and to demonstrate how it is linked to the development or non-development of most African communities within the African continent. More importantly, the paper identifies the processes of alienation and marginalization of African cultural heritage by the ideological designs and practices of colonialism and apartheid. That is, the mechanisms employed to alienate most African communities from their traditional values and culture as a frame of reference in their relationship to other communities in the world.

The cardinal objective of the article is to highlight the importance of the African renaissance call as a socio-cultural, political and economic strategy transformation in post-1994 South Africa, and a movement to motivate Africa to move forward and realise its true potential in the context of globalisation and its marginalising tendencies.

2 Ideological basis for displacement of African cultural creativity

Culture as an ideology has a significant role in the struggle for the domination of cultural thought and behaviour in the human world. In support of the notion, Ani (1994: 11) contends that:

> The ideological aspect of a culture can have two thrusts: (1) It is in every culture - giving direction to the lives of its members and to their group creations; (2) it gives the culture momentum. But in some cultures, the ideology is also outward, seeking to project culture, assuming a competitive and hostile posture towards other cultures.

Historically, this idea has been demonstrated by how European cultural thought and behaviour has maintained a negative and hostile posture towards non-European cultures in the world. The process of European imperialism's ideological displacement of African cultural activity has always been based on the strong conviction that "... whatever may be the material aspects of this domination, it can only be sustained or maintained by the permanent, organized repression of the cultural life of the people concerned" (Cabral, 1973: 39).

To demonstrate the link between culture and ideology, Ani (1995: 4) adopts Nobles definition of culture as "a process, which gives a people a general design for living and patterns for interpreting their reality, with aspects such as ideology, ethos, and world view." In a the struggle for domination of cultural thought and behaviour, between Europeanism and Africanism, the link between culture and ideology continue to play a major role in that it forms a basis upon which the idea of supremacy has been upheld and propagated. Culture is a mechanism through which people define their identity in the world; therefore, any systematic ideological displacement of the culture and life of the concerned people will *ipso facto* lead to disorientation and identity crisis. This is also based upon the fact that culture as ideology impacts on the identity of the people in that "it possesses the force and power to direct activity, to mould personalities, and to pattern behaviours" (Ani, 1994: 5).

In the South African context, it was through the ideological designs of colonialism and apartheid (Seepe 1998: 1) that African communities became alienated from their tools of self-definition; the mechanisms which maintained their "belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment ... in their capacities and ultimately in themselves" (Ngugi

wa Thiongo, 1986: 3), and the whole African cultural heritage became marginalised. Even in this era of neo-colonialism, an essential element of European colonial imperialism's assertion for domination is still the ideological weapon, which usually manifests itself in various forms such as religion, the arts, values and beliefs, and racism. The most effective component of it, especially in Africa, has always been religion, under the guise of European Christian tradition.

2.1 Imperialism's ideological uses of religion in the devaluation of African cultural heritage

As a point of departure in an exercise such as this, which is aimed at demonstrating how imperialism's ideological use of religion in the end was meant to devalue African cultural and religious heritage, it is critical that there should be a clear understanding of how in the European cultural thought religion as a phenomenological concept is interpreted and applied. According to Ani (1994: 109), religion in the European cultural thought and behaviour is regarded as "integrally related to the development of ideology ... because what is identified formally in the European experience as religion often has very little to do with what is understood generally as the "religious" in a phenomenological sense."

Furthermore, what should be noted is that religion in the European world thought, as a formalized institution, does not exist independently of other European cultural aspects. As a result, religion as a phenomenological concept is not merely regarded as that which deals with the expression of beliefs about the supernatural world, practices, values and morals, but as a concept which also has ideological implications.

The European cultural imperialism's subversion and suppression of the colonised's belief system which forms part of its culture, and the psychological warfare against those who refused to relinquish their ancestral beliefs (Achebe, 1958), were constructed and actualised through the European Christian tradition and its missionary enterprise. In this endeavour, Christianity became a battering ram and was "portrayed as a religious system based on perfection. A perfect God against pagan gods and heathen religious practices" (Ntuli, 1999: 191).

In agreement with Ntuli, Omotose (1994: 108) makes the following observation:

> Wherever he went, the missionary's aim was to destroy the basis on which the African had built his traditional existence and to replace it with a completely new set of beliefs. Conversion was done by persuading the African that his ways were inferior to those of the white man.

In this way, the European Christian missionary enterprise contributed enormously to the devaluation of African cultural and religious heritage, and as a result "African converts came to understand the Christian way of life as being identical with the norms of conduct set for them by the missionaries who introduced Christianity in each particular locality" (Mugambi, 1992: 1).

In addition, Maluleka (1996: 8) aptly states that the process of the subjugation of indigenous beliefs and practices was "based on the strong conviction that 'African heathenism', by hook and crook, was to give way to Western Christian civilization." Thus, religious terms and concepts, which were foreign and alien to the African religious system, were imposed on the mind and soul of the colonised. There was to be no way in which a link between the "European God" and the "African God" could be established. In the final analysis, as observed by Ani (1994: 165), terms such as' heathen' and 'pagan', as used by European Christianity, were not merely meant to represent religious differentiation but indicate ideological differences.

The concepts of Modimo (Supreme being) and Badimo (ancestors or saints) found in the African religious system were described as primitive and, in this way, devalued and invalidated. As a point of reference, Biko argues that in South Africa, colonialism and apartheid, "using a highly exclusive religion …[Christianity] … denounced all other Gods and demanded a strict code of behaviour with respect to clothing, education, ritual and custom" (1978: 41). This means the whole knowledge of Modimo/Nkulunkulu/Raluuhimba (God) became the monopoly of the European Christian tradition and practice. As part of the ideological strategy for domination, it was important for colonialists to supplant African spirituality and cultural values with references to their ethics, values and beliefs in Europe.

Furthermore, concepts of African design such as *badimo/amadlozi* (ancestors) were decried as superstition, paganism and heathenism. Deliberate marginalization of the organic relationship of ancestors as saints in the African belief system was launched with validation by

Biblical texts and traditional European Christian doctrines (Ani, 1994: 149-162). New European ancestors, canonised by the European litany, followed the African child into the school and into the home. Alien and foreign meaning irrelevant to the African religious experience and culture, based on the European super-structure, were coercively imposed on the rich indigenous spiritual belief systems.

There was, therefore, no meeting ground between Eurocentric and Afro-cantered religious experiences, of which if space and time for such a process was allowed, it could have given birth to a rich religious belief system which would have benefitted the whole of humanity (Achebe, 1958; Imenda, 1994). Actually, the whole knowledge of Modimo/Nkulunkulu/Raluuhimba (God) became the monopoly of the Western Christian tradition and practice. In the end, where there was a lack of resistance, the various religious facets, practices and experiences of African people capitulated to the new Judeo-Christian religious tradition.

Alluding to the European cultural imperialism's subversion and suppression of African cultural thought and behaviour, Museveni (1997: 11) points out that, "Christianisation involved an element of modernisation and thus demanded changes which penetrated to the deepest aspects of ... [African] ... traditional culture". This attitude is clearly demonstrated by the cultural intolerance that is fashionable in the suburbia of South Africa, even in the new political dispensation. Whereby there are a number of cases where Africans slaughtered a cow, or sheep, or goat as a sacrifice to ancestors and a thanksgiving ceremony those who subscribe to European cultural thought and behaviour see in it a pagan practice which is an offence to "their God" (City Press, 2 April 2000, p 9).

Contesting this kind of attitude the European Christian tradition displayed against African traditional religious system and spirituality, Setiloane (1986: 21- 28) maintains that, "whatever the missionaries can say about the pagan [and pagan] state of the ... [African]... people, they certainly had some concept (image) and certainly an experience of God."

The derogatory attitude displayed by European cultural imperialism towards African traditional religion has always been based on the former's refusal to recognise the fact that religion in the African worldview is regarded as a dynamic phenomenon, one that is "found in all aspects of African's lives, in their activities, which include occasions like the birth of a child, the giving of names, circumcision and other

initiation ceremonies, marriage, funerals, harvesting festivals, praying for rain, and many others" (Masolo, 1994: 104).

2.2 The use of the socio-linguistic displacement mechanisms

In a bid to sustain its domination of African cultural thought and behaviour, the European cultural hegemony, among other tools or mechanisms, used something as basic and yet critical as language. Language can be defined as that aspect in life that "bears the record of history, traditions, beliefs and knowledge of any people. It is in language that people learn, relate to each other as social animals in a material world of production, reproduction, distribution and exchange" (Prah, 1998: 2).

For Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986: 13), language is "both a means of communication and a carrier of culture." As a tool for communication, a particular language can be used by different cultural groups in a society, but as a carrier of culture, language can be used by a specific group or native speakers of the language and in this way it "reflects the concerns, attitudes and assumptions of its speakers" (Ngara, 1985: 42).

The function or role of language as a carrier of culture is of significance in that it controls the way a people, individually and collectively, perceive themselves in relation to other selves in the world. In this connection, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986: 15) identifies three components that constitute the function of language as a carrier of culture: (i) language in culture is a product of history, which it in turn reflects, (ii) it is an image-forming agent in the mind of a people; individually and collectively, and (iii) it operates as a transmitter of those created images of the world and reality through the spoken and written language.

The above simply implies that language plays a central role in articulating culture and the formation of an identity of a specific people within a society, mainly because it forms part of their cultural heritage. Ngara (1985: 42) endorses this when he maintains that, "there is ... a fairly number of 'loaded words' in any language, words whose pejorative and ameliorative arise from the social psychology of the native speaker, from the store of prejudices, opinions and value judgements which form an important part of ... culture."

Given this description, it is clear why it was crucial for European cultural imperialism to, in its bid to assert and sustain its total domination

of the African cultural thought and behaviour, use language as a tool. The implication in this regard is that to devalorize and disorganize the language of the colonized is equal to disorientating their worldview and definition of self in relation to other people in the world. Concurring with Ngara (1985), Pityana (1995: 85) explains that "language as discourse is a system of differential relations: it expresses power relations; it can be a sign of domination or subjectivity."

Accordingly, the African as "a perpetual student, having to learn from a perpetual teacher", is "… not only given a Western education, but also taught in Western European languages to the extent that education was equated with the acquisition of a European language" (Biko, 1978:24; Ngara, 1985: 39). As a result, literacy became only associated with mastery of English, French or Portuguese, and above all it became linked to the Western type of schooling. Through the curricula that was purposefully prepared there was "… a systematized indoctrination … [of Africans] … against their own heritage in favour of alien culture" (Mugambi, 1992: 2).

With strategies such as this, Western cultural imperialism achieved its supreme objective of invalidating African indigenous education. Mugambi (1992: 2) points out that "Africans experienced a dichotomy between what they learned at school, and the socialized life they lived at home." This means whatever was taught at school (through Western curricula) radically contrasted with what was taught at home and in the society through various indigenous practices and institutions.

Since language is not only a medium of communication, but also a carrier of culture, the implications of the psychological effect of the type of displacement described here, especially by Ngara (1985) and Biko (1978), is that the process did not only have to do with inheriting alien syntax or lexicology but also the ways in which the colonised will ultimately perceive self and the world and how to relate to others, especially Europeans in their assumed superior status.

As a further strategy to suppress and marginalise indigenous languages, colonies were made to adopt languages of the coloniser as official languages and indigenous languages were to be used only 'at home' and other informal situations which were separate from the colonialist realm. In this way "the colonial child was made to see the world and where he [or she] stands in it as seen and defined or reflected in the culture of the language of imposition" (Ngugi wa Thiongo, 1986: 17). Fanon (1967: 38) aptly points out that "a man who has a language

consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language."

Through languages foreign to Africa, concepts and thoughts, which were in direct conflict with traditional communal development values, got into the life of the colonised and ultimately disorganised the colonised psychologically and referentially. One such explicit example is given by Asante (1980: 7) when he writes that "… Islam [as, one emerging foreign cultural hegemony]… made Arabic the language of millions of non-Arabs, thus spreading culture in a most powerful manner". Actually, hearing about God in a foreign language automatically makes one experience the divinity in foreign form and content, and the process ultimately alienates the colonized from indigenous cultural heritage and identity.

On the whole, using language as a tool or mechanism to sustain cultural imperialism, the aim of European cultural imperialism was to destroy the collective memory bank of the colonised past achievements and their experience over time, all of which form the basis of their identity in relation to other people in the world in time and space.

2.3 The success of European cultural imperialism's psychological domination of the African personality

Fanon, in his work *Black Skin, White Masks*, which he described as a clinical work, summarises the problem and implications of the psychological domination of the African personality as follows:

> The black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro. That this self-division is a direct result of colonialist subjugation is beyond question (1967: 17).

This confirms the fact that in the process of asserting its domination, European cultural hegemony has been successful in disorientating and destroying the colonised psychologically in that, when closely examined, "his/*her* images, symbols, lifestyles, and manners are contradictory to himself and thereby destructive to his/*her* personal and collective growth and development" (Asante, 1980: 4).

According to Manganyi, one aspect of colonialists' efforts at asserting their domination in Africa "has been the development of the dichotomy

relating to the body, namely the 'bad' and 'good' body. The white ... [person's] ... body has been projected as the standard, the norm of beauty, of accomplishment ... On the contrary, the ... [African] ... body, projected as the 'bad' ... inferior and unwholesome" (1973: 28).

The cultural implication of this phenomenon is manifested in the European "dialectical process of definition of value of individuals" (Ani, 1994: 407-408) whereby good is ascribed to white, which in turn denotes a positive image of self accompanied by a sense of superiority. The dialectic opposite is bad which is ascribed to African/black with a negative image of self and a sense of inferiority. Ani (1994: 296) asserts that, "the functionally 'successful' self-image of the European is dependent on a negative image of others and on the hypothesis of the existence of inferior beings." Fanon (1967: 14) observes that this behavioural pattern and attitude has "created a massive psychoexistential complex." This implies that there is always a situation of social disharmony and tension, between the African/Black persona and the European/White persona, because of the superiority-inferiority complexes.

Asante (1980: 8), looking at Islam, as another form of foreign cultural hegemony, and its process of Arabization, observes that, "turning one's head to Mecca is symbolic of the same cultural insistence which keeps the convert looking in the direction of another's culture, not his own." This ritual, Asante contends, is one of the most powerful tools of mind control ever created. This makes sense in that in the African traditional religious system, God is everywhere and thus can be experienced facing any corner of the universe and worshipped at any time of the day, of the month and hour of the day (Mbiti, 1975; Setiloane, 1986).

According to Masolo (1994: 4), the process of sabotaging and derogating the African personality in the world started as early as the 18th century, which was described as "a period of cultural revitalization and power consolidation in Europe". Central to this process became the dichotomy between the European race (civilized and logical) and the African race (uncivilized and mystical).

By distorting the African personality, the colonialist cultural hegemony managed to empty the natives of all form and content, how Africans perceive themselves in time and space, and in relation to other selves in the world (Fanon, 1963: 169). Thus, the colonised African became ontologically disorientated and ceased to self-define the location and standing of the African in the world in relation to the other selves

and his/her environment. This phenomenon created the superior-inferior European-African stratification whereby the European became "a perpetual teacher and the Africa(n) a perpetual pupil" (Biko, 1978: 24).

In the whole, the main objective of the process of the psychological disorientation of the African personality was to inculcate a sense of cultural insecurity and self-doubt in the dominated. The impact of this type of subjugation and domination, on the psychological domain of the colonised personality, is what Lamb (1985: 140) regards as the "lingering inferiority complex and confused sense of identity" of the African personality.

European Christian missionaries can be said to have played a major role in this regard. It was through the Christian message, which encouraged subordination and subservience, that European ways were imposed as the right ways, "superior to anything the empty heritage of Africa had to offer" (Lamb, 1985: 140). Ngugi wa Thiong'o observes that "... by controlling the cultural and psychological domain, the oppressor nation and classes try to ensure the situation of a slave who takes it that to be a slave is the normal human condition" (1993: 51), and this is the psychological orientation which has always governed the relations between the coloniser and the colonised in the world.

Indeed, to succeed, it was important for the European colonial imperialism to unleash a programme of systematic sabotage of every tool of self-definition of the dominated, precisely because... "how people view themselves ultimately affect how they view their values, their culture, their politics, their economics and ... their relationship to nature and the entire universe" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1993: 54).

3. The African renaissance call and the complexities of decolonisation

With their fall in the 21st century, the ideological practices of colonialism and apartheid have left behind devastating social and psychological legacies, which have greatly negated, and continue to, the creativity and identity of the African personality. This malady is clearly demonstrated by Biko (1978), Cabral (1973), Chinweizu (1987), Fanon (1963), Frere (1981), Mphahlele (2004) and other Third World theorists, who in their works point out that, in the process to assert the desire for domination and subjugation, colonial cultural imperialism and the apartheid

hegemony, alienated and marginalised African cultural values and traditions.

As a matter of fact, the Africa's situation in the 21st century and the context of globalisation with its marginalising tendencies require a motive force or a politically-conscious program that has as its objective the reclaiming of the nearly lost humanity and therefore the cultural referencing of African knowledge and achievements. In this relation, the principles of the thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis, which are held to be "cardinal points around which any social revolution revolves", will be applied (Biko, 1978: 90). The thesis in this paper is the marginalization of the African cultural heritage by the European cultural imperialism and the apartheid hegemony.

Consequently, the anti-thesis is the reclamation and the revitalization of the whole of the African ontology, values and spirituality. This refers to the progressive African cultural values and practices that can inherently play a pivotal role in the socio-cultural, economic and political transformation of post-1994 South Africa. Furthermore, it is a strategy that can be used to encourage socio-economic development of Africa in the context of globalisation and its marginalizing tendencies. The synthesis is the process that has as its objective the desire to "achieve a unified personality" (Mphahlele, 2004: 284) in the African person in the 21st century. It is at this juncture that the African renaissance call comes into the picture, which can briefly be explained as the motive force that has as its task to re-center the African cultural experience(s) and creativity, for the socio-political, cultural and economic development of the majority of the marginalized African communities.

As a new pan-Africanism vision in the 21st century and a philosophical framework for (re)-construction and development, and a strategy for the reasserting of the African personality, the African renaissance call is an important counter-hegemonic vehicle in the struggle against subjugation tendencies and practices. This approach is of paramount significance precisely because no nation in the world that was uprooted from its soul can be able to recover wholly and progress, without basing its socio-economic development on its own identity and self-knowledge.

3.1 Understanding the African renaissance call in the context of post-1994 South Africa

Post-1994 South African interpretation of the African renaissance call needs to be understood from two levels. Firstly, from the position of the country's evolving socio-political, cultural, and economic factors of the post-1994 and its challenges of socio-political, cultural and economic transformation. Secondly, from the country's position as part of the continent that in the new millennium is confronted by the challenge of finding strategies for ending grinding poverty, disease and underdevelopment. This means how South Africans understand and articulate the meaning and content of the African renaissance call idea is informed by their experience(s) and their efforts to deal with the demons of colonialism and the apartheid hegemony post-1994, locally and continentally.

As a philosophical and conceptual framework for transformation in post-1994 South Africa, it embodies the determination of a people to reclaim their great past achievements, before colonialism and apartheid. It is "… the manifestation of the dialectic of what is and what can be; a manifestation of the perennial struggle of peoples everywhere to transcend the material and spiritual conditions of their existence. Today in Africa, the Renaissance call seeks to assert new value systems, to fashion new institutions, to reaffirm the positive … [the African] … knowledge system" (Ohiorhenuan, 2001: 40).

Maloka (2000: 3-4), in his paper titled *The South African "African Renaissance" Debate: A Critique*, identifies three perspectives of the African renaissance call prevalent within the South African context: globalist, pan-Africanist and culturalist. The three perspectives, as Maloka further notes, are not separate from one another, their convergence point is the desire to holistically decolonise the African personality and its environment. Maloka's interpretation is relevant in the South African discourse on the subject because each of its three perspectives is clearly intended to address a specific situation(s) or experience(s) of alienation and marginalization of the African personality by the practices of colonialism and the apartheid hegemony.

3.1.1 The globalist perspective

According to the globalist perspective, considering the new challenges of the globalisation process with its marginalizing tendencies and practices, for Africa to make progress and experience a situation of self-reliance and self-determination, the continent must re-center her development on strategies that are sensitive to indigenous cultures and realities as some of the Asian Tigers have done. More importantly, Africa's political leaders and intelligentsia (within the continent and the diaspora) must continue to challenge the tendencies and practices of neo-colonialism that encourage socio-cultural and political domination, and economic dependency in the relationship between Europe and Africa.

As Maloka (2000: 3) asserts:

> There emphasis is, on the one hand, on the need for political and economic renewal on the continent, and, on the other hand, on the need for the transformation of the world political and economic order, including its institutions.

As the latest manifestation of European imperialism globalisation is explained by Evans as a process "about a borderless world especially in terms of trade, commerce and finance; it is about internationalization, interdependence, universalization; it's about the Internet, the communications revolution, the wired world, and the collapse of the time-space distinction" (2002:2). The process has it supporters both in the global South and the North, the former are generally found amongst those who are moneyed, and the latter group consist of the poor and the marginalised, the "religious revivalists and reactionary nationalists who grieve at the damage inflicted on their traditional cultures and beliefs by the deluge of images, ideas, music and artefacts that capture their young and erode their sense of group identity" (Evans, 2002: 2).

From the preceding, it is apparent that globalization has positive and the negative effects on the socio-cultural, political and economic relationship between Africa and Europe. In this relation Mazrui (2002: 1) points out that:

> Globalization is positive when it enhances human communication, improves levels of human productivity, enhances our awareness of

being inhabitants of a fragile planet, and facilitates empathy between
societies across vast distances. [It] is negative when it allows itself to be
handmaiden to ruthless capitalism, increases the danger of warfare by
remote control, deepens the divide between the have and the have-
nots, and accelerates damages to our environment.

The negative dominates in that, as predetermined by practices of the
European capitalist economic system, "the force that drives globalisation
is the free market." As long as this economic system in its modern
version is concerned with "the world as a global village," it determines
economies in the same way that, in all the villages, the market is the
centre of most of the economic activity of the community (Evans, 2002:
1).

As it is commonly known, one thing about the market place is that in
all its core business and its activities "…there are winners, losers, buyers,
sellers, and inevitably, beggars who are the downside of all economic
systems of production and distribution" (Evans, 2002: 1). In the global
marketplace, countries of Africa, East Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean
and the Pacific constitute the beggar group. Therefore, given this
context, the African renaissance call, from the globalist perspective, can
be seen as representing "…part of a broad anti-imperialist movement"
(Maloka, 2000: 4).

3.1.2   The pan-African perspective

Pan-Africanism can be explained as an ideological force for the socio-
cultural emancipation of the African people, and the expression for the
desire for political unity and the economic advancement of the African
continent. In fact, the exponents of pan-Africanism had as their objective
the notion that the emancipation, socio-economic development and
prosperity of Africa and its people can be achieved through political
unity of the people of the African continent.

Perhaps, the most comprehensive explanation of pan-Africanism is by
Mazrui (2004: 11) who describes the idea as:

a system of values and attitudes, which favour the unity and solidarity
of Africans and of people of African ancestry. At its most developed
level, Pan-Africanism can amount to ideology in its own right – a vision
of the past, the present and the future and a guide to policy and
political action.

163

Thus, driven by a common aspiration towards decolonisation and liberation, equality and prosperity, African leaders embarked on a mission to establish an inter-African organisation of independent African states. Without a doubt, the creation of the Organisation for African Unity in 1963 is a direct result of the attempt by the then African leaders to find an institutional form for their wish for political unity of Africans within their continent (Prah, 1999: 57-58).

However, "the turn of the century and the new millennium presents a timely moment to raise issues which have implication for the longer-term economic and social prospects of Africa" (Prah, 1999: 37). This is so precisely because many challenges, including poverty, underdevelopment, disease and conflicts remain in some of the countries of the continent. This means that, for Pan-Africanism to motivate Africa to meet the evolving challenges of the 21st century with its global socio-cultural and economic paradigm, "it needs to go beyond crass reproduction of former views, some of which are today contextually and sociologically irrelevant" (Prah, 1999: 700), and the African renaissance call is meant to serve that purpose.

The situation is such that, to survive from the mesh of the global economy and global imperialism, it is imperative for Africa and its people to strategically retreat into the continent's glorious past with the aim to extricate some of the knowledge systems and practices relevant to the needs of the African people in the 21st century. Essentially, what the notion of the African renaissance call as a new Pan-African vision in the 21st century, encapsulates is the opportunity to reframe the Pan-African idea in a manner that it can be able to provide feasible alternatives that would make the idea work in the era of the global socio-economic paradigm. As noted by Muchie (2000: 298) "Africa's crises have intellectual, political and economic reasons much of which has been a relic from the incomplete decolonisation of the continent."

Intrinsic to the process proposed by the African renaissance call, as a new pan-African vision in the 21st century, is the fact that Africa's socio-economic development cannot be premised on unbridled cultural borrowings from alien and marginalizing cultural values and traditions belonging to European imperialists. Most importantly, this means that for the African renaissance movement, "development in a sustainable and meaningful way can only be achieved on the basis of Africa's own cultural usages in consonance with the history and cultures of the people of Africa" (Prah, 1999: 60).

3.1.3   The culturalist perspective

According to the culturalist perspective, the African renaissance call can be explained as an endeavour towards the reclamation and revitalization of African cultural values, belief and knowledge systems, which should be adopted as part of a conceptual framework that can be utilized to inform the sustainable development envisaged in Africa. It seeks to reclaim the progressive African past that will lead to a prosperous African future amid globalisation and its marginalizing tendencies.

As one of the prominent exponents of the culturalist perspective, Ntuli (1998), describes the African renaissance call as a process that is aimed at:

> …the rebirth of the African continent after centuries of subjugation. It is about the redress of knowledge, of correcting negative images inculcated into its people; a people made to believe by systematic Eurocentric education that they had no history (Hegel), or at best they were noble savages (Rousseau).

Ntuli (1998: Online) further holds that for the Renaissance project to succeed in this era where Africa is faced with the challenges "of post colonialism with its multiple discourses", it must introduce a three-dimensional programme of action:

   i.   To excavate Africa's past.
   ii. To examine Africa's position, and the valiant efforts made by many African and non-African people in reversing the debilitating slide into perpetual chaos.
   iii. To make plans for Africa's future.

In essence, among other things, Ntuli's three-dimensional programme of action emphasises the fact that, for the new Renaissance to have an impact on the lives of the ordinary people who belong to marginalised African communities, it must find ways and means of capacitating (from their glorious past) Africans to formulate strategies of ending chaos in their continent and eradicating poverty in the 21st century.

The African renaissance call as a new vision of Pan-Africanism and a socio-cultural tool for (re)-construction and development, include the process of "re-centring the history of the African people on themselves on the one hand, and on the other, relating the experience of Africans to

the history of humanity as a whole" (Keto, 2001: 5). This is of significance in that "when the history of Africans becomes centred, it becomes an unambiguous integral part of world history at the same time" (Keto, 2001: 5). In this way, the negative perception of Africa and African people, and the complex historical, political and economic circumstances that account for Africa's current situation of dependency and underdevelopment will be dealt with, precisely because the European ideas of superiority and acts of imperialism will be addressed.

Perhaps the best attempt at explaining the meaning and content of the concept of the African Renaissance is the one that denotes it as a process that entails "…a search for a sustainable guide to Africa's intellectual recovery from its interpellation into discourses that positioned and framed Africa as incapable of formulating its own knowledge systems" (Ntuli, 1999: 187). In this way education and training will purposefully be aligned to enable and empower most African communities to participate in decision-making processes aimed at improving their lives in general and specifically.

As has been demonstrated by the foregoing statements, the call of the African renaissance as a positive dynamic process, in a century characterised by global socio-economic paradigm, can be interpreted as African people's own reassessment of their own institutions, the revitalization of their cultural heritage with the view to establishing total African hegemony all over the Africa. As a socio-economic strategy for (re)-construction and development, the African renaissance call has as its objective to ensure "Africa's participation and competitiveness in the global arena, validating Africa's progress and development in economic, cultural, technological, spiritual, communications and socio-cultural spheres" (Dalamba, 2000: 40).

Here it should be mentioned that, whereas the exponents of the culturalist perspective of the African renaissance call regard the process as an important socio-economic tool for the total emancipation and development of Africa, they are also conscious of the fact that "…unbridled and uncritical allegiance to the African past can be an insurmountable obstacle to recognizing and acknowledging those structural and behavioural adjustments necessary for modern times" (Owomoyela, 1996: Preface). In light of all that has been raised here, the African renaissance call has as one of its objectives the reclamation and revitalization of traditional African cultural experience(s) and practices that are functional and viable in modern times.

4. Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated without doubt that, for colonialism and the apartheid hegemony to thrive, it was necessary that the superstructure that constitutes the African worldview -the forms of social relations, patterns of behaviour and systems of belief- be destroyed (Rodney, 1972: 16); as they form the foundation upon which people's identity, self-reliance and self-determination are based. To fulfil the objective of domination and control, it was of paramount significance to dispossess the colonised of all their tools of self-definition in the world, and in this way the colonized's reference and creativity ended up being invalidated and disorganised.

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