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Culture: The Missing Link in Development Planning in Africa

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Introduction

Over the past five hundred years, no single phenomenon has impacted as definitively on the making and shaping of current realities in Africa as the experience of the African colonial encounter with the West. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, it is often considered problematic to suggest that colonialism as a heritage has been the major impediment to Africa's attempt to move forward in social advancement and development. The argument is that it is too easy to put the blame for Africa's failure on outsiders when Africans have supposedly been in control of their own affairs since the end of the colonial era some forty years ago. Certainly, Africa should take responsibility for its own failings. Corrupt, dictatorial and undemocratic practices have been the hallmark of life in almost all of Africa's post-colonial states. But everything that is happening in Africa is not under the control of Africans. African governments do not control the prices of the commodities that are sold in global markets, nor do they have any real say in the setting of the prices at which commodities are bought from the developed world. Despite the endless propaganda trumpeted from the West about free markets, the reality for Africans is that most Western markets for the items, largely agricultural, which are produced cheaply and easily, are closed. The European Union is the supreme case in point. What we face are quotas, tariffs and cartels. For Africa, free trade remains a pie in the sky. The minerals we produce in abundance are controlled by Western capital from the source of production of the raw materials, their sale, and destination of sale, with no value added at source. Our economies are perpetually under siege through pernicious and unequal trade practices managed by the West and the related Bretton Woods institutions. These latter institutions have become *de facto* parallel governments in many African states.[1] With stagnating, shrinking economies and diminishing resources, it is not difficult to see (without condoning this) why the elites in Africa become so prone to corruption and the looting of the state. What I am saying is that a combination of internal and external forces is responsible for the current societal malaise in Africa.

But the deep structure of our malaise is largely entangled with the general impact of the colonial experience. While the West introduced modern techniques into pre-colonial and preindustrial Africa, it also distorted the autonomous nature of the processes of Africa's development.

In the fifty years or so of post-colonialism in Africa, no single obsession has been as overriding in the preoccupations of Africa's intellectuals as the question of development. It is the single, most obsessive object of all governments and ruling elites in Africa. It is hard to find a single regime in the post-independence experience of Africa which has not set its highest sights on the development objective.

What is noticeable, after half a century of post-independence, is that it continues to be an enduring feature of the rhetoric and espoused *raison d'etre* of African regimes. There are no exceptions to this, for the language of desired development is flaunted by military regimes, one-party states, so-called no-party states and multi-party states. The tragedy of the situation however is that, despite the copious verbiage and the related ceremonial fanfare which goes with high-level state events, the sanctimonious pronouncements of state authorities about development, the frequently touted imminence of expected successful outcomes of the endeavours of these regimes, little has been achieved in the 50 years of Africa's independence which can be seriously described as developmental.

The notion of development prominently implies the improvement and uplifting of the quality of life of people, that they are able, to a large measure, to attain their potential, build and acquire self-confidence and manage to live lives of reasonable accomplishment and dignity. The related idea of sustainable development which emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s can be understood as a process of social transformation in which the exploitation of resources, patterns and strategies of investments and capitalisation, the ethos and direction of technological advancement and attendant institutional adaptation are in relative harmony, and facilitate both current and strategic potentials to satisfy the needs and aspirations of members of the society concerned. This concept was more European than American. In our times, and increasingly so, environmental and 'green' concerns have assumed, quite rightfully, a central position in how development objectives are pursued and implemented. Development efforts which show environmental sensitivity have become the prized approaches in development thinking.

Too often, skyscrapers, beautiful residential areas, cinemas and hotels are seen by some to represent development. The availability of champagne and whisky, ham and sausages, BMW's and Mercedes-Benz automobiles are equated with development. Ironically, the champagne and caviar life style in Africa invariably coexists with sprawling *bidonvilles,* with their unhealthy open drains and sewers. Development as a sustained, socially engaged socio-structural transformation paradigm, which augments the productive capacity and economic returns of mass society, and provides scope for the socio-economic amelioration of the quality of life of mass society, has largely eluded Africa. The elites have been content to feast on the latest choice commodities of Western consumer culture, and for as long as

the availability of consumer-goods are assured, the fallacious arguments of the development rhetoricians will continue.

Development in Africa must make a difference, firstly, in the lives of the masses. This difference must mean that in all areas of the social life of the masses, perceptible and incremental growth of possibilities and opportunities, in both material and non-material senses, would need to be registered. Development must optimize the capacity of mass society to intervene intelligently, creatively and knowledgeably on the environment in pursuit of its mode of livelihood. An anthropology colleague, Prof. Simon Simonse, who had spent some years in Asia, more specifically in the Indonesian archipelago, once remarked to me that the striking feature about developing Asia is that the development and transformation of Asian societies are noticeable, first and foremost, at the village level. The significance of this point is that in the transformation and modernization of agrarian society in Asia, the ultimate goal has been that social change should transform the lives of the teeming rural underclasses. The leaps forward we have seen in Asia over the past three decades demonstrate the fact that development at the level of mass society for the Third World today is at heart an agrarian question.

In Africa, the often vaunted example of successful development is Botswana. As compared to the Asian experience, what we see in Botswana is a society awash with revenue from diamonds and which has provided lavishly for the elite to live and express themselves in evident materialistic terms. Botswana is one of the major beef producers in the world and has a lucrative market in the European Union. The human-livestock ratio for cattle is also one of the highest in the world. In rural Botswana, the effects of these enormous revenues have not been felt as a structural socio-economic process that is transforming the productive capacity of people and scientifically and technologically transforming the country-side. The semi-feudal *Mafisa*/cattle-loaning system is still prevalent. Botswana has a population of about 1.25 million. With its revenues from Diamonds and cattle rearing, Botswana now has reserves totalling approximately 7 billion US dollars invested in US government bonds. Such relatively large reserves could indeed transform Botswana in a more comprehensive way. Outside Africa, Saudi Arabia provides another classic point of reference, where enormous oil revenue has not meant the scientific and technological transformation of the society, but rather has created a basis for an opulent and vulgar consumerist life-style dominated by a feudalist aristocracy, backed up by one of the most sophisticated and expensive military machines of the contemporary world. This latter is purchased at a price from the West.

The Search for the Development Formula

It has been almost fifty years that Africa's post-colonial intellectuals have been searching for the cure to the malaise of the economic, scientific and technological deficits of the African society. During the early period of our quest for solutions to the issue of Africa's under-development, some intellectuals were much influenced by one of the dominant theories known in the West as 'modernization'. It was

particularly popular with American scholars, who, with considerable ingenuity, constructed a baseline model for understanding and tackling the problem of underdevelopment. The philosophical matrix on which the theoreticians of modernization grounded their formulae was 'functionalism'. For some of them, modernization was ultimately a question of attitudinal change. The global inequities of our times were identified as springing from differences in levels of technological development and industrialization. Invariably, in the thinking of the modernization theorists, tradition and cultural constraints were the prime inhibitors to modernization. This has been called *cultural blockage*.[2] They were generally, almost totally, silent on the global structure of production, distribution, exchange and the roots of the lopsidedness and unfavourable terms of trade underdeveloped nations experienced in relation to the developed ones. These theories, which had their heyday in the late 1950s and early 1960s, were championed by well-known theorists such as W.W. Rostow, David Apter, Wilbert Moore, S. N. Eisenstadt, J.Coleman, and many other largely American academics.[3] Their ideas greatly influenced a number of African and other Third World theorists of development. It was an approach which, in those years, found much favour in American government circles. Furthermore, it was a strategy which was uncritical of the role of the West in the construction of the premise of inequality in the global affairs of contemporary states. The two contrasting poles of opinion with regard to modernization theories are exemplified by the following two opinions from Mark Weigand and Manjur Karim.[4] Weigand wrote that:

> In my own experience, sociologists I have known who worked for the government usually were involved in 'social change' projects, which usually meant 'helping' Third World countries 'modernize' and become more like the US. Nothing too sinister, just ethnocentric projects.[5]

Karim's sharp and pungent rejoinder was that:

> But weren't the modernization theory related research project integrally connected with Cold War geopolitics? Third World countries were advised to modernize themselves after the Western model. A not so subliminal subtext of the modernization theory was to present a paradigm of development that is opposed to the socialist model of development that some post-colonial countries were attracted to. Whether individual researchers were aware of this political agenda or not is not the issue here. The issue is a larger one. Anyone who reads one of these works carefully, whether it is about the lack of 'achievement need' (read profit motivation), or 'modern and universalism' as opposed to 'traditional particularism', or 'formalized and impersonal rules of governance' in the 'traditional' societies, will know that the only kind of modernization these folk were talking about is capitalist modernization. Third World countries are backward because they haven't attained the illuminated path of capitalist modernization, not because they are forcefully articulated into a subordinate position into the world capitalist economy and locked into peripheral capitalist (or semi-feudal, or semi-colonial or whatever .....).[6]

Implicit in most modernization theories of the past has been a replay of the Victorian linear Eurocentric view that all societies are evolving and developing to become Western type societies; that non-Western societies were at various levels of development or rungs below the West. As a corrective, the way Kurimoto goes round this implicit weakness is to suggest 'multi-linear modernization'. [7]

What 50 years of post-independence history teaches us however is that the much vaunted modernization theories of the 50's and 60's nowhere provided successful cases which can with any seriousness be emulated. In spite of years of the much extolled virtues of 'Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP)' of the Bretton Woods institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have dismally failed to produce any unimpeachable success stories in the Third World. We still have to see the first case in Africa of a country that has achieved economic and developmental success through the IMF SAP formula. Takahashi Motoki has made the observation that by the 'mid-1990s, the failure of orthodox SAPs to save Africa from rampant poverty and stagnation became unquestionable'.[8]

Visibly, some societies, particularly in Asia, (the Asian Tigers) have succeeded in considerable measure to achieve development levels that in some instances have been quite impressive. But these achievements have been made largely through the economic creativity, judicious institutional arrangements and political astuteness of the leadership of these countries, not through the medicine of the Bretton Woods institutions.

The failure of the modernization theories to produce success, during the Cold War era, cannot be criticized on the basis of better theories or ideas emanating from the East. Indeed, the alternative paradigm offered by Soviet thinkers at the time was, what came to be known as, the 'non-capitalist road to socialism'. This idea was the officially blessed paradigm suggested by Soviet social scientists, their ideologues, and their other Third World neophytes. In brief, it suggested that Third World countries could move to scientific and technological development under a Soviet-type socialist political system which would avoid capitalism and which, as it were, would take them from where they were to socialism through Soviet tutelage. In practice, these ideas led to state capitalist approaches with nationalization under large state bureaucracies.[9] This idea like the modernization theories from the West proved, through historical experience, to be of little use to the challenges of the Third World. Indeed, the whole edifice of Soviet economy and politics has collapsed around us. In my experience, in Africa, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, modernization theory was being pilloried in lecture halls, conference rooms, symposia and workshops by African academics. Historically, almost surreptitiously, economic neo-liberalism took centre-stage position in discourses on Africa's development. But various types of Marxists, who generally had challenged modernization theories, were again back in the fray, assailing neo-liberalism and its approval and blessing of IMF-World Bank solutions. As we moved close to the end of the 1980s, in African academic circles, the assault on neo-liberalism became more philosophically generalized, at the same time, many erstwhile Marxists (particularly those who had

in the past been disposed to Soviet orthodoxy) were theoretically running for cover as the Soviet system collapsed.

Bates put the blame for Africa's incapacity to economically move forwards on the African state's 'anti-developmental policies and urban bias',[10] For Gunnarsson and Lundhal, the post-colonial state was 'predatory' and prone to a developmentally negative disposition.[11] A glaring weakness in the views of these observers is their relative silence on the role of international and globalizing interests in the creation of the African malaise.

In contrast to the concept of modernization which, for the reasons I have given above and others, is tainted by both theoretical inadequacies and practical failures, some observers favour the notion of the search for 'modernity'. When applied to the problems of the Third World, this notion generically alludes to the search for the same objectives and goals as the modernization theories of old, but is not bound to any particular school of thought, and is therefore open to diverse theoretical structuring. It is used to denote the mix of ideas, ideals and practice which has emerged out of Western progress since the European Enlightenment, although some scholars, variously, choose a different time span as its historical record. While some prefer to restrict it to the whole of the post-Enlightenment West, others relate it to the West since about the 1860's while some have narrowed it further down to the post-World War II era. Pos-tmodernism is defined in reaction and contradiction to this. What needs to be remembered is that the concept of modernity is also heavily loaded with Eurocentrism and cannot serve well our understandings of African realities unless its relevance for each scholar-user is clearly defined, with its relevance for Africa amply demonstrated.

The message which has over the past few decades of experience filtered through to us is that whatever developmental formula we may be disposed to, unless we build on what people have and know, not much headway will be made. Needless to say, what people have and know are constructed in their languages and cultures.

For one thing, it is important to make a point that people best develop from the foundations of their indigenous knowledge. African societies like all non-Western, non-industrialized societies of Asia and Latin-America are made up of populations which have ancient collective memories and funds of knowledge about their environments and which they utilize in the implementation of their modes of livelihood. Such knowledge has deep and penetrating roots embedded in the cultures of the people. Development, to be meaningful, needs to acknowledge this fund of indigenous knowledge and construct new knowledge on the foundations of what the people already know. That way, new knowledge is integrated into the indigenous cultures of the people. The new knowledge thus does not bypass, avoid or diminish the relevance of the old knowledge which the people already have but, acknowledging the old, the new is added on, respecting the cultural centrality of the indigenous for their confidence and ability to relate the new to the old.

In the past, a great deal of research attention was given to what was always described as *appropriate technology*. While the term has semantic propriety, in practice it has tended to be utilized to often describe inferior technology and unimaginative technological innovations which do not significantly increase the productive capacity of poor countries. This is not to say that the idea of appropriate technology is semantically inappropriate to describe what needs to be done. Obviously, technological innovations and scientific inputs into the development efforts of poor countries, like African countries, need to be environmentally friendly. Such should be within the economic grasp of the people who need such technology and scientific input, and should be understandable by the users. The goal here is that such should make a difference in their quality of life. But this must not mean inferior technology.

Culture is a large and encompassing concept. It implies the totality of products that have resulted from the creative ingenuity of humans. Some of these products are material and are therefore tangible; while others, in such areas of social life like religion, language, beliefs, customs and values, are intangible, but are often more instrumental in the guidance of behaviour than the more recognizable material products of culture. While culture is the result of human creativity, it is also the key factor which shapes the way people behave. Inasfar as it is a historical and social product often tied to geography and environment, it tends to have specificity with respect to the peoples who create particular cultures. Thus while cultures vary from one society to another, there are also features of different cultures which are common to humanity as a whole. In an increasingly globalizing world, where we are all becoming global villagers, living in proximity to everybody else, those cultural features that are shared collectively by humanity as a whole are increasing by the day. Coca-Cola has culturally globalized us in much the same way as Chinese cuisine has. But, in spite of the universal cultural features which we increasingly all share, the specifics of culture and the particularities of cultural traits, values, artefacts, science and technology remain. Some technologies are more prevalent and are created more easily in some societies than others. In South Africa, where swimming pools have a higher per capita ratio than anywhere else in the world, the country also creates the best swimming pool technology in the world. In Japan, bathroom technology is more sophisticated and adapted to Japanese cultural values and practice than anywhere else. The adaptation of science and technology to suit the cultural and institutional foundations of the social life of a given people affirms the sense of confidence and cultural well-being of the people concerned.

The Peculiarities of Africa

In Africa, the history of the process of the production and reproduction of knowledge since the advent of colonialism is, for our purposes here, instructive. The object of education under colonialism was not as altruistic is it is often made out to be. The idea of a civilizing mission, through which Africans were Christianized and taught to read and write, was first and foremost an attempt to produce Africans who would be serviceable for the project of colonialism; Africans who will acquiesce to the strategy and tactics of the colonial project.

The language of altruism and Christian morality were one part of the mind of the colonizer. There was another area of this mind which accommodated institutionalized racism, military patrols, punitive expeditions, genocide, looting and land-grabbing. Development under colonialism was geared towards developing the sort of infrastructure which enabled the exploitative extraction of minerals and the production of colonial agricultural produce, the disengagement of the colonized from their traditional modes of livelihood through the imposition of taxes, requiring wages and the engagement of the labour of colonial subjects, their submission to the colonial consumer market, and their compliance with the laws and by-laws promulgated under colonial sponsorship and sanctioned by police and military force. Colonial railways and roads ran from mining and agricultural cash-crop production areas to the harbours.

The educational systems established under colonial tutelage in practice produced social types who were intellectually distanced from the cultures from which they sprung. The first and most important vehicle for the removal and alienation of the educated African from his or her original cultural moorings was the use of colonial languages such as English, French or Portuguese. Africans were taught to be ashamed of their own languages, and in some areas, particularly in the French and Portuguese colonial areas, the use of indigenous languages at school was punishable, sometimes by flogging. The acquisition of knowledge was therefore, right from the start, linked to the use of the colonial languages, and this lent further spurious status of truth to the idea that knowledge is available and accessible only in the colonial languages. The other side of the logic of this argument was that it was not possible to learn science and technology or acquire knowledge of any superior kind in the languages of the people. Those who worked in colonial languages and who had acquired skills in the use of these languages were the socially elevated; they represented the basis of elite formation in the colonial order.

Western languages (like all languages) were not merely vehicles of communication. They were, and continue to be, cultural packages. These are programmes through which, in addition to the acquisition of the skills of language use, one learnt to accept the values of the language bearers. The English or French languages are also registers of the histories and cultures of the people. Immersion in these languages from the position of a colonial subject was therefore, to use a Malinowskian term, an 'acculturating' process.

This pattern of education and knowledge production was inherited with only minor revisions by the post-colonial state. Indeed, in post-colonial Africa, apart from weak attempts in Tanzania and Madagascar to use African languages as languages of education at the post-primary levels, no country has made any serious attempt at developing African languages as the basis for the production and reproduction of knowledge. In the case of both Tanzania and Madagascar, after some years of half-hearted trial and error, the policy of using indigenous languages consistently in the educational system has been, in both cases, abandoned.

Language is the main pillar in any cultural system, and literacy in a given cultural system represents the most important feature in the development of a capacity for a language to work either as a repository of past knowledge or as a basis for the development and integration of new knowledge into the society or cultural system. In all societies which are able to move forward scientifically and technologically, primacy is vested in the development and use of languages indigenous to the people. This is true not only for non-Western societies like China, Japan, Thailand, Cambodia or Indonesia, but is equally true for countries in the West like Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, France and Germany. Each case that can be referred to as an example of an advancing and developing society would be a society which works with its own language and develops its culture and knowledge on the basis of the language or languages of the masses. It needs also to be said that the transfer of knowledge from outside a given cultural system into an indigenous cultural system, to be efficacious, needs to adapt the imported knowledge into the cultural system of the people in such a way that the imports and adaptations blend into the existing culture of the people. Development cannot be achieved in circumstances where the cultures of the masses are steadily abandoned in favour of cultures which are totally foreign to the masses and which are familiar terrain for only small sections of the elite. This point needs to be emphasized because it is the absence of cultural relevance and the need for cultural adaptation of external inputs into African development planning which, in our minds, constitutes the major obstacle to success in development planning and implementation in Africa.

Globalization, Culture and Development Planning

It is currently frequently argued that never in the history of humanity has the lot of the human community been as intertwined as is presently the case, with globalization and the forms of international integration. These days, the term 'globalization' is easily bandied around by all and sundry. It means different things to different people. Some perceive it as a process that is desirable; the inevitable and unalterable future of the world. Others regard it with various degrees of scepticism, aversion and apprehension. Such minds argue that it is, in fact, increasing global economic, political and social inequities between countries; that it undermines employment and living standards and frustrates social progress.

Globalization could, in the best of all worlds, offer capacious promises for genuine development on a world scale, but as it is currently unfolding, its progress is developmentally uneven. Some grow fat on its spoils while others maintain stunted growth patterns and face economic ruin and damnation. Some countries are becoming integrated into the global economy more quickly than others. Countries that have been able to integrate are experiencing faster growth and reduced poverty. Export-driven policies, matched with economic innovativeness, have brought remarkable prosperity to much of East Asia, transforming it from one of the poorest areas of the world into dynamic economic powers. And as living standards improve, so has

the ability to embrace, more enthusiastically, democracy and pressing issues such as the environment and the conditions of labour.

In considerable contrast, since the 1970s, many countries in Latin America and Africa in particular have been pitched into the exigencies of stagnating economies, increasing poverty levels, and runaway inflation in societies increasingly overwhelmed by an enduring kleptocratic ethos. In many cases, especially in Africa, adverse external developments have made the problems worse. The crises in the emerging markets in the 1990s have made it quite evident that volatile capital movements and the risks of social, economic and environmental degradation, created by poverty, are not being helpful. In spite of the economic growth of the West in the past decade, we still live with the threat of crashes and meltdowns in the principal stock and money markets of the world.

Of all the issues attendant on globalization, the one outcome which has not received the requisite degree of attention and scrutiny is the effect of globalization on cultures of societies on the periphery of the West. Some of the developed countries of Europe, particularly France, Denmark and Italy are sensitive to the dwarfing effect of American and Anglo-Saxon culture in general on their own. France is especially concerned about this. In Africa, the steadily overwhelming and brooding presence of Western culture is singularly blighting and is fossilizing indigenous cultures. In this respect, the structural difference between France or Denmark and African countries is that in these European countries, the linguistic and cultural basis of social life of the elite and mass society are not only coterminous but also largely shared, on an everyday basis, as a common patrimony. In the African case, the elite is culturally narrowing its base and steadily alienating itself from the cultures and languages of mass society. For African elites, the extent to which European cultural features are imitated and reproduced is representative of status and social influence. They live and exist in Africa, assuming and exercising leadership, but culturally they integrate into Western culture as marginal consumers. The centre of gravity for the creation of Western culture remains in the West. In a sense, it is therefore possible to describe African elites as surrogates for Western culture in Africa. The question that follows from this reasoning is this: can an elite which is beholden to Western culture in a more or less unquestioning fashion become the architect for a culturally indigenously oriented transformation process? This curiously is a question which only the African elite can raise and answer.

In spite of the fairly homogenous and guarded interests of the African elite, they cannot be construed to be uniform in ideas, ideals and strategy. There are positions of the philosophical right and left amongst them, reformers and conservatives, 'Africanists (cultural nationalists) and non-Africanists (cultural Westerners)'. In short, what I call elites and counter-elites. The way and the pace with which Africa accepts its historical and cultural belongings in the development process will depend considerably on the contestation between the elites and counter-elites. Ultimately, it is how these contesting social elements engage the minds and

actions of the grassroots that will determine the trajectory of developmental change in Africa.

Planners and African Developmental Options

It would appear to me, clear from the above argumentation, that Africa's development, to be successful, would need to be premised on the cultural fund embedded in the social life of Africans. The key to the door of the cultural world of Africans is African languages. In the first instance, they provide the basis of social identification and, secondly, access the knowledge of the people. It is in these languages that the creative aptitude and inventive instinct of the people are articulated. It is also in these languages that any attempt to introduce ideas on a mass scale can be achieved. It is almost farcical to assume that by working in the socially very narrowly based languages of colonialism, it will be possible to effectively achieve transformation of African societies. If we want to be able to place African languages and cultures centrally in our developmental endeavours, we need to clear up the myth of their necessity to implement modern ideas. A good example of the confusion we find in thinking about African languages is provided by Dominic Milazi's observations on South Africa. He writes that:

> Language is, of course, the very medium and heart of communication, the mainstay of cultural heritage.... We can to some extent identify language as the salient feature which demonstrates the presence of ethnicity. The challenge, of course, is to find a strategic role for indigenous languages – a role in the national scheme of things. At the same time, this vexed question of the place of African languages in national development must be broached in any future move designed to deal with language policy in a comprehensive manner.... Given the fact that national languages in many African states had very little impact as far as paving the way for nation-building – decolonization, promoting self-esteem and cultural integrity – was concerned, the choice of eleven languages in South Africa as national languages was the correct one. For one thing, it gave expression to the principle of democracy and pluralism. For another, it provides for the meaningful promotion of the policy of national languages based on language rights, particularly their recognition and application. This, in itself, should foster the principle of intercultural tolerance.[12]

Milazi fails to register the fact that in almost all African states, after independence, lip-service is being paid to elevating the status of African languages. Sometimes, this is written into constitutions and at other times not. Even when this is written into the constitution, in practice, little has been done to achieve this elevation, so that in effect the pre-eminence of the colonial languages persist long after the colonialists have left. It is also important to draw attention to the fact that the so-called eleven languages of South Africa are effectively four. The two clusters, i.e. Nguni and Sotho/Tswana consist of languages which are mutually intelligible in both instances. Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele and Swati are the same language. Indeed, there are other dialectal variants of this cluster as far north as Tanzania and includes speakers in Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia. The same can be said for the Sotho/

Tswana cluster which has speakers in South Africa, Namibia, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia and Angola. I have elsewhere drawn attention to these issues.[13] Why the role of African languages in development must be a 'vexed question' is unfortunate because by his account 'Language is, of course, the very medium and heart of communication, the mainstay of cultural heritage'. Fortunately, there is increasingly a realization amongst some African academics and experts that the notion of a profusion of African languages is false. The argument has been very well made by Hounkpati B. Capo in his inaugural lecture at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria – 'Let us Joke Over it: Nigeria as a Tower of Babel'.[14]

Concluding Remarks

It needs to be emphasized that all development planning and practical efforts in Africa should be undertaken with an eye on cultural relevancies in general and the language question in particular. The people who need development, such as the peoples of Africa, speak their own indigenous languages. If we need to reach them, and need them to be able to understand and create with the innovative ideas that are offered, then the language of communication and transfer would need to be their own. In those cases where a multiplicity of languages all at work at the same time could be rather impractical, perhaps Africa's linguists could create new collective languages with inputs from multiple linguistic sources. These would serve as practical *lingua francas* for Africa's populations.

Westernization as a process of adaptation of Western thought and techniques, the establishment of bureaucratic organizational principles as ordering systems for production, distribution and exchange, the institution and consolidation of democratic principles of government, the sale of law and respect for human rights, in our times, constitute basic and fundamental requirements for the march towards modernity. But such ideas in the abstract remain empty and vacuous platitudes unless they are translated into the cultural and linguistic belongings of social majorities.

No ideas however lofty, well-meaning and humanitarian can resonate with the broader classes unless these ideas find interpretable entry points into the cultural familiarities of the people. In other words, Western ideas must melt into African culture and become African cultural adaptations of Western or universal modes of thought and social practice. This requires a discriminatory and selective approach which, while eschewing the backward conventions, values and attitudes of archaic traditionalism, is unhesitant in absorbing practices and innovations which strengthen the cultural basis of what African societies already have.

Institutions that have taken thousands of years to evolve should be cast aside with great caution. It is possible and often more useful to reform such institutions than to relegate them to the dustbin of history when, in fact, their significance in the individual and collective life of societies is often much greater than meets the eye.

Notes

1. See, Guy Arnold, 2000, 'Monitoring – The New Colonialism', in *West Africa*, November (20-26), p.2. A good example of this is provided by Abel Mwanyungwe in the *Business Day* (South Africa) of Wednesday, 23rd May 2001, p.7. 'The World Bank has asked government not to increase funding to the Foreign Affairs Ministry in the 2001-02 fiscal budget as an expenditure saving measure. In a document, titled *Malawi Budget 2001-02: Suggestions from a World Bank Study*, the bank said the squeeze on foreign affairs would necessitate adopting measures to scale back foreign representation. Malawi has 19 embassies worldwide, with an average of five Malawian employees at each station'. See also, Joe Khamisi, 'IMF Ultimatum Shock for Kenyan Officials', *Business Day/Business Report*, Johannesburg, September 12th, 1995:15.

2. I have looked at this issue in an earlier paper titled*: '*The Notion of Cultural Blockage and Some Issues of Technology Adoption Concerning the African Peasantry', 1991, in Prah, K.K. (ed.), *Culture, Gender, Science and Technology in Africa,* Schriftenreihe der Deutschen Stiftung für Internationale Entwicklung (DSE), Windhoek, Harp Publications, pp. 48 - 65.

3. A good sample of such approaches is provided by the following; Marion, J., Levy, Jr., 1952, *The Structure of Society,* Princeton, Princeton University Press. Karl W., Deutsch, 1953, *Nationalism and Social Communication,* New York, M.I.T. Press. S. N. Eisenstadt, 1961, *Essays in Sociological Aspects of Political and Economic Development,* The Hague, Mouton; S. N. Eisenstadt. 'Social Changes and Modernization in African Societies South of the Sahara', *Cahier d'Etudes Africaines* ,Vol.5. No.19, 1965. Appears also in John Middleton (ed),1970, *Black Africa*, New York, Macmillan; Wilbert Moore, *Social Change*, 1963, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice Hall; Gabriel, Almond and James, S. Coleman,1960, *The Politics of Developing Areas,* J. S., Coleman, 'The Emergence of African Political Parties', in C. Grove Haines, 1955(ed.), *Africa Today,* Baltimore, Greenwood Press; David. E., Apter, 1969, *The Politics of Modernization*, pp.18-19; Edward Shils, 1962, *Political Developments in the New States,* The Hague, Mouton.

4. Http://csf.colorado.edu/mail/psn/2000/msg01185.html

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. See Kurimoto, E., 2001,'Introduction', in Kurimoto, E. (ed.), *Rewriting Africa: Towards Renaissance or Collapse,* Japan Centre for Area Studies Symposium Series, No. 14, Osaka. p.3.

8. Motoki,T., 2001, 'The Creation of Developmental States', in Kurimoto, p.60.

9. A Good Illustrative Study of the Theory of Non-capitalist Development (NCD) is provided by Esmail Hosseinzadeh, *Soviet Non-Capitalist Development: The Case of Nasser's Egypt,* Praeger Publishers, New York, 1989. Recently, Burbach and Nunez have advanced an argument which harps on the notion of non-capitalist development while meaning something different from the original Soviet usage. Burbach and Nunez argue that, in the making, within the global context is a new non-capitalist mode of production which, all things being equal, will overwhelm capitalism from below. For these authors this new mode of production, consisting of workers, peasants, petty traders, small businesses, street vendors, casual labourers who work in the twilight areas of the periphery of the globalizing economy. For them, this growing informal economy will ultimately dethrone capitalist hegemony. There is some perceptive analysis of globalization and neo-liberalism, but the way forward as viewed by the authors is marred by much wishful thinking. See, Roger Burbach, Orlando Nunez and Boris Kagarlitsky, 1997, *Globalization and its Discontents: The Rise of Postmodern Socialism,* Pluto Press. London.

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11. Gunnarsson, C. and Lundhal, M., 'The Good, the Bad and the Wobbly: State Forms and Third World Economic Performance', in M. Lundhal, M. and Ndulu, B.J.(eds), 1996, *New Directions in Development Economics: Growth, Environmental Concerns and Government in the 1990s*, London, Routledge, pp. 251-281.

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