

# Global African Indigenous Knowledge Systems

## The Challenges of Epistemicide and Ontological Suicide

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### Abstract

Africa is blessed with an abundance of resources – human, natural and spiritual. The resources abound under the earth, above the earth and in the human population. The variegated geography and climate ensure there is in abundance floral and fauna variety, which constitute a template on which humanity and those subsequently described as Africans have traditionally survived and thrived to create the first human civilizations and cultures. However, with the multi-century visitation of barbarians from the North (Europe) and East (Middle), who returned to their ancestral homeland of Africa to pillage their ancestors, bearing naked colonialism and (Atlantic and Arabian) slavery respectively, cemented through concerted epistemicide, the resources of Africa – human and natural – were expropriated, appropriated, plundered, pillaged, and African humanity – spirituality, intellectual capacity, moral agency, political and governance traditions became almost irreparably or irretrievably vandalized. Various forms of vandalism, wanton destruction, denialism and capturing of all epistemic and ontological spaces of being and existence of Africa and global Africa took place over hundreds of years. It was this which denuded global Africa of material and intellectual spaces of intrinsic validity. The effect has been the loss of the munificent indigenous knowledge systems to Africa and Africans who were the original creators and users of these. Worse has been the role of miseducated, historically ignorant, and intellectually deficient Africans in the contemporary destruction of African traditional knowledge production and application capacities. Hence, as we enter a new phase of wealth creation and management, it is significant that knowledge, as knowledge for knowing sake and for doing and controlling reality, now looms large in ensuring the prosperity of nations and societies. Countries and societies with no natural resources have grown into international dominance and prosperity through the development of knowledge societies. It is argued in this paper that Africa and the African Diaspora have a duty to posterity to reverse epistemicide and end ontological suicide by researching, documenting, and developing global Africa's indigenous knowledge and thought systems.

### Keywords

Civilization, Indigenous, Knowledge, Epistemicide, Suicide

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## Introduction

The frontiers of global control of power have shifted considerably in the last hundred years. The advent of computer information technology, the expansion of knowledge in the areas of biotechnological engineering, artificial intelligence, machine learning and the advances in space research have transformed the modes of being and existence of humanity forever. What the industrial revolution began, with the creation of wealth, through automation of the processes of the mass production of goods and services, breeding apparently self-sustaining (even self-destructing) capitalistic mechanisms, has now been perfected into virtual re/production and real/virtual wealth development and destruction. Bloggers now command resources which even the soft-ware developers can only ogle at a distance.

More significantly, we now find that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will reward not so much the owners of natural resources but those communities which can best transform knowledge into products and services which are in demand. Those societies which remain at the level of primary or raw materials producers are eternally condemned to the bottom of the income pile and will continue to be indebted to those who manipulate data, resources, and ideas to generate further ideas and wealth. This is a trend that has been unleashed by the advances in the sciences, technology, and communications systems which we have seen develop over a period of a century. Africa has not fared too well in this arena, and much of the resources of Africa are under-utilized by Africans, deliberately under-valued by those who conspire to take without compensation these resources and Africa contributions to knowledge production and application are also under-appreciated as the engine house of global prosperity. This has made global Africa to be dependent, to remain the poorest continent in the world, despite the vast human, intellectual, demographic, and natural resources that abound in the continent and that are dispersed generously throughout the world. The way and manner in which many African countries are now directly or otherwise controlled by external agencies in the determination of the use of their own resources, thereby ensuring that only little added value is generated locally and, in the process, ensuring that the bigger part of the benefit that should have accrued to the local populations are actually repatriated or expatriated by the external agencies and their partners in the criminal enterprise of holding global Africa to ransom is worrisome.

Africa and African descended intellectuals and academics now have an obligation to save humanity from imminent omnicide. There are no two ways about it. Continuing as the West has been naturally and intuitively predetermined on the trajectory of violence as industry, as entertainment, as end in itself, as self-replicating reflexive engagement with reality and humanity writ large, will lead to the ultimate destruction of the human race, the planet earth, and the ecological environment it claims as home. Too much of what is regarded as Western knowledge has no basis in reality or fact; they are merely inherited myths with no provenance for validity, or at best superficial understanding of nature, and at worst are partially true ideas, but which ideas are counterfactual intuitively and open to self-evidently defeasible alternatives should peoples of other climes wake up to demonstrate the bogusness of Western traditional intellectual foundations. The current practice of gratuitous accession of respect and deference to Western traditional thoughts as universals of epistemes by Africans needs to be deconstructed, unmasked and dethroned from the fraudulent high pedestal it has occupied for so long; it is only by so doing that humanity will begin the process of emancipatory knowledge development and application to solve global challenges that face humanity – problems not beyond human capacity to solve, but which have proven intractable because of the bogus privilege accorded to the pernicious Western traditional thought systems built on false binaries and mutually annihilating opposites – disingenuously called dialectics.

Are there correlations between the control of knowledge, resource, identity, and destiny control across the spectrum of global power relations, whereby societies that take seriously these aspects of existence dominate others who fail to attend to these, especially relative to Global Africa? I have long been persuaded that many factors are responsible for the contemporary parlous existence of

humanity in global Africa, but the most critical is the failure of historical and contemporary Africana leadership to take knowledge seriously. In this regard, I suggest that societies which fail to take deliberate control over the soft side of resource development in the various forms of knowledge generation and their utilization, narratives of meaning making, determination of what constitute reality as manifested in accidental and deliberate abandonment of indigenous knowledge systems development, upscaling and application, that is, knowledge ownership, always tend to bear the brunt of whatever variations and negative irruptions are occurring in global economic and development arenas. Such societies are at the risk of not just domination but total annihilation if they refuse enslavement.

## Understanding Epistemicide

Both “genocide” and “infanticide” have been recognized by all civilizations as acts of cruelty, gross inhumanity, and reprehensible oppression against occupied territories or targeted local populations, as in the case of the people of the biblical stories in Old Testament against Jewish firstborns in Egypt, the total destruction of the Amalekites and at the advent of the birth of Jesus the Christ, as happened in Congo under Leopold and also to Jews under Hitler in Germany. Genocide has received the most condemnation, by comparison to infanticide, because of the experience of the Jews; but the other peoples who have been the targets of Jewish genocide in contemporary Palestine, or those who have suffered worse experiences in Africa as in the Congo under Leopold, Kenya’s Mau Mau under colonial sledge hammer of the United Kingdom and South Africa under Boer Apartheid, the Americas as in the indigenous populations met by Europeans and blacks in contemporary Argentina, or Asia in the case of the Maoris and other indigenous peoples of the far-flung lands of the Pacific, have not been equally condemned or recompensed by a global order skewered through and through with pernicious racism and multiple standards. This is probably a result of the limited capacity of the victims of these assaults on their humanity (unlike the well-oiled Jewish narrative creating machineries) to advocate, demand, compel, blackmail (or whitemail) the criminal oppressors and to obtain redress. But no effort has been made, either to understand, document, and annotate the worst form of human cruelty and destruction, with the most effective debilitating harmful longer lasting consequences and stigma on peoples and cultures that has ever been devised by human beings and visited on other human beings – “epistemicide” (Bewaji, 2009).

What is epistemicide? How does it work? How is it used? What are the motives of its purveyors? What effects or consequences does it have on societies and peoples and on their development? Why is it so dangerous? Who benefits from it? How is it to be redressed or defeated, in order that Africa’s proper development may begin in earnest? These are only some of the pressing critical questions that must be asked and answered. It is clear to me that raising these issues may not be popular, just as mentioning the question of reparations Europe, America and the Arab World owe to black people for the sordid slaveries in the Atlantic and the Arabian worlds are unpopular, and efforts to bring them to light usually disregarded or grounded under the jackboots of capitalism or religious ideologies.

Let me itemize some of the various manifestations, stages, structuring, and advancement of “epistemicide” as it was perpetrated by the Europeans and Arabs on Africa and global Africans to completely emasculate, denude Africans of agency and to orchestrate a complete disempowerment of global Africa before undertaking a precise definition of the evil phenomenon which I have annotated under the concept. This inventorization, I believe, will place in proper relief, and beyond doubt, the situation which Africana peoples globally have to contend with, in order to ever begin to undertake the project of proper continental independence and there-after intellectual and cultural reclamation for the overall project of identity and existential redemption for global African peoples:

- a. The Hamitic hypothesis.
- b. The deliberate stealing of the intellectual heritage, arts, civilizations, artifacts, religions, and metaphysics of Africa – how does a civilized person steal from a primitive?

- c. The consistent, persistent, meticulous, concerted, and systematic assault on and destruction of African indigenous knowledge systems, languages, the historical evidence of African civilizations.
- d. The denial of the existence of African civilizations and historical African intellectual contributions to human heritage.
- e. The deliberate replacement of African indigenous knowledge systems with European and Arabic ones.
- f. The total negation of the humanity and intellectual capacity of Africans.

What, then, is epistemicide? Epistemicide is,

... the act, behaviour, exercise or crime, violent or non-violent, overt, covert or benign, of omission or commission, directed against a group's intellectual heritage, ontological constructs, metaphysical presuppositions of existence, governance institutions and traditions, social and ethical values and ultimately their indigenous knowledge systems, with the sole or ultimate intent of destroying the existence of the group or groups' knowledge of themselves and their true identity; it is a coordinated plan of different actions and inactions aiming at the destruction of essential cultural and intellectual foundations of the lives of national or racial groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves or making a nullity the identity, self-esteem, self-awareness or corporate existence, as autonomous or separate being, of a group or groups. It is the deliberate, calculated, concerted and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group's identity or belief in such separate identity and existence, through the negations of their knowledge systems, the denial or expropriation of their intellectual property and foisting on the intellect of the target society a mendicant and supplicant, genuflecting approach to existence.

It is by far more pernicious than both genocide and infanticide combined, but it often manifests in the most sophisticated and benign manner than either of these latter two, subtly appearing to create in the victim a Stockholm Syndrome reaction and attitude. This is because, epistemicide, when visited on the intellectual heritage of any group, society, or people, has the lasting effects which transmutes into internalized, replicable self-destruction of the intellectual heritage of the society, thereby becoming self-sponsoring, self-propelling, self-promoting and almost irreversible in consequences. The transmutation of the vestiges of epistemicide in the forms of cultural trauma which becomes normalized is most affective of the most sophisticated among the victims; such victims no longer regard themselves as afflicted and they even accuse members of their dehumanized community who continue to complain about the conditions which hold them in subjection as whiners. When you dare to remind these megaphones of colonial success that global Africa still have the knees of the white "civilized" primitives on the neck and jugular of the black community, the George Floyd is the real life metaphor for global Africa, and thereby asphyxiating black humanity with the most destructive policies, sanctions and economic policies, you are accused of lacking agency.

Epistemicide has been institutionalized in the curriculum which demands that copy-right acknowledgement be paid to geo-intellectual centers which just emerged from primitivity in the last 5000 years, as in the narratives of Arab family found in the Torah or the Jewish scripture (Genesis) or in the Greek philosophical ideas of 2600 years ago. This is deliberate erasure of the intellectual heritage of African humanity before that, and the supplanting of same with a narrative that constitutes itself into the sole universal of understanding the nature of reality, the source of being, and the multiverse. All the ancient texts of the precursors of these destructive relatively young human intellectual traditions are conscripted into the dungeon of nothingness and in its place is constructed a structure which holds humanity hostage to a destructive binary which glorifies violence, destruction, and extreme depravity. And old habits die hard; every local white "researcher" who has access to some funding and some half-baked ideas is an expert on Africa and its Diaspora, claiming to know where Africans came from and how they have lived their lives in the "jungles" and in the crevices of the deserts. Even as late as 1999, Croegaert would write the following imponderable nonsense:

At a later date an important cultural landmark appears whose origins seem to be round about 900 BC: the Nok culture. This culture will develop in a surprising and original way between 500 BC and 200 AD on the Bauchi plateau north of the Benue-Niger confluent (sic) in what is now Nigeria. It is one of those privileged places where the classical elements propitious to the birth and propagation of all cultures are present: streams and rivers, the “roads-that-walk”. Here then appears the first evidence of a typically negro artistic creation: terracotta figurines with thick prominent lips, stylized coiffures, enlarged eyes with slightly divergent pupils producing already the artist’s personal vision which goes beyond descriptive naturalism (Croegaert, 1999, p. 19).

How does it – epistemicide – work? How is/was it used? What are the motives of its purveyors? What effects or consequences does it have on societies and peoples and their development? Why is it so dangerous? Who benefits from it? How is it to be redressed or defeated, in order that Africa’s proper development may begin in earnest? To answer these questions there is need for us to annotate what is described as epistemic deficit here, especially on the part of Africana social, scientific, technological, political, economic, religious, intellectual, ethical, aesthetic, academic, educational, cultural and psychological leadership.

Olufemi Taiwo (2010) has described *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa*, strangely with an intellectual sleight of genius, separated Christianity from colonialism and thereby lamenting the fact that the colonial masters did not allow Christian modernity to take root, so that the Europeanization of Africa would be complete, and the cloning of the African humanity after the Western European ego-individualist destructive paradigm would have been total. He thinks that the various problems afflicting Africa, such as those of poor governance, economic disempowerment, technological weakness, absence of social cohesion, educational deprivation, cultural and religious limbo, intellectual and scientific backwardness which leads to the acceptance of mediocrity, and numerous other ills in the Africana socio-political terrain, are consequences of Africa failing to be properly and totally colonized with wholesome ideas of modernity. He assumes that the colonizers were altruistic and benevolent human beings, who were set on the agenda of true “civilization” of the heathen primitive peoples of Africa, such that it was because some miscreants in the colonial process misappropriated and mismanaged, for personal and group narrow selfish interests, that Africa’s developmental process were scuttled, stunted and derailed. For Taiwo, it is,

Needless to say, the program of economic transformation that a true transition to modernity would have necessitated never took off: from the standpoint of the dominant administrator class, the colonies were useful only for the natural resources that could be extracted from them. This is why we must develop a different attitude in our assessment of the missionary role in the transition to modernity in Africa (Taiwo, 2010, p. 51).

This trope resurfaced again in his *Africa must be modern* (2014) and *Against Decolonization* (2022). In the last one, it became even more virulent. A proper discussion of his work is something that can be properly addressed under different circumstances. The corpus of work which Olufemi Taiwo has accumulated over the decades, spanning the fields of philosophy of law, methodology of research in African sociology, critical reviews of historical traditions and interrogation of modernity require more attention than the cursory one that is possible here. What is surprising is the turn toward adulation of Christianity, a religion steeped in the parochial Jewish ethnological ideologies of dispossession of family members of their common patrimony through divine larceny of land, graduating into the individualistic hedonism of a hereafter in which their tribal deity rewards his servants and punishes offenders eternally. Suffice to say here that mentioning his work is to demonstrate the near complete success of epistemicide in Africana societies, especially among even the coterie of African intelligentsia one would have expected to be more circumspect of the “civilizing” mission of the West and the demeaning profligacy of Abrahamic religious traditions of warmongering in Africa.

## Ontological Suicide

The near complete effectiveness of epistemicide has apparently been the final nail in the coffins of African humanity. No external agents or forces are required now to maintain the prostrate state of Africa. Africans are the ones ensuring that Africa cannot develop, nor utilize any of the inheritances bequeathed by their ancestors in the forms of indigenous knowledges in diverse intellectual areas to solve any problems. They are the ones who now continue to talk about “Africa South of the Sahara”, because of their own laziness to investigate the history, archeology and cultural materials left behind by their ancestors, instead of relying on the perfidious lies of their slave masters and colonizers. Even when others reveal to them the intricacies of the sciences, mathematics, engineering, religions and governance institutions of their ancestors, the “educated” Africans continue to insist that African cultures were oral, pre-literate, illiterate, illogical, irrational, purely superstitious, primitive, barbaric, purely emotional, absolutely uneducated and totally without ideas of civilization.

Ontological suicide is committed when an individual or community or people or ethnic group accepts that they are worth nothing, they are inheritors of nothing, they are capable of nothing without being guided by others or that their oppressors will share with them the knowledge they need to overthrow their oppression. It is worse than the social death lamented by Orlando Patterson (1985). Social death occurs as a product of slavery, and existential Africana results when conditions of angst emanate from the dehumanization of the post-colonial racist derogation of the humanity of Diaspora black (Gordon, 2000). Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) results in the loss of agency on the part of the products of plantation slavery and post-colony. But the complete abrogation of the Africana agency and capacity to be centers of knowledge production, self-definition transcends Du Boisian (1903) “double consciousness” into the domain of individual and collective ontological suicide when it becomes an individual and collective attitude of tokenistic success, individual and group mendicancy, dependency and embrace of rank versions of Stockholm Syndrome.

These are manifested in diverse ways. To sum up what this is about, I simply put it in the category of individual and/or ethnic capitulation, in the form of ontological suicide. When this happens in the life of a person or people, they do not believe that there is anything worthy of investigation or preservation in their ancestral memory, nor do they make any efforts to preserve the memorials of their ancestors, because they have been miseducated into accepting the primitivity of their ancestors and traditions. They talk glibly about the embrace of modernity as the tearing down of anything that will remind them of their ancestral lineage, either in the form of landmarks, places of origin, traditions of existence, ontologies, cosmologies, knowledge systems, notions of filial organization, etc. They forget that no individual or group can succeed on the basis of alien cultural traditions, metaphysics, spiritualities and cultures.

In religion, for example, Africans now pray to the gods of other peoples for salvation and success and for protection against the original owners and fabricators of these gods and their local enemies. This is bizarre. Even sexuality does not escape the mimicry of deviance; aberrations are now normalized and normal relationships are now demonized. They were sold the idea that homosexuality is normal, natural, and legal, while polygamy is abnormal, unnatural, and illegal. Black physiological appearances witnesses the Michael-Jacksonization of their physiological modification to look white “beautiful”, through multiple bodily panel beating and assaults with bleaching chemicals or pilling on one’s head the hairs of goats, dogs and foreigners in the forms of extensions and weave-ons. These are challenges which collective African humanity needs to frontally address if the future is ever going to be improved, so that African descended peoples can live in dignity.

## Agriculture

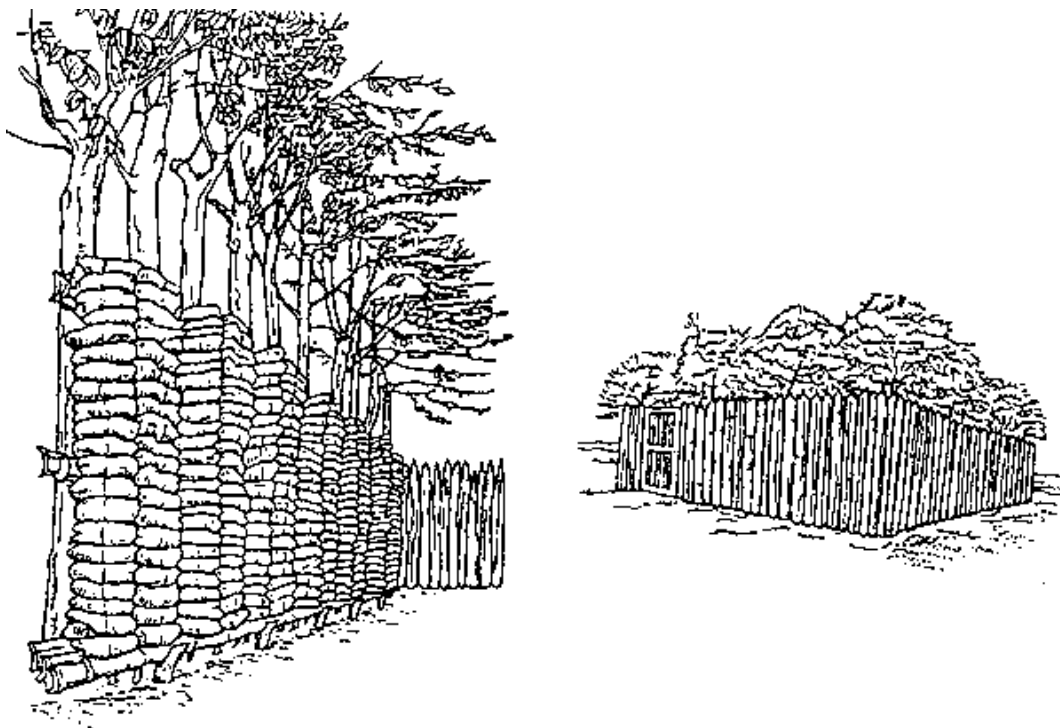
Indigenous peoples of the world have developed, adapted and perfected the means of utilizing the indigenous knowledges about themselves and their environments, accumulated, adapted, transmitted and improved over millennia to provide for themselves in the immediate present and to secure for themselves and their progenies in the near and distant futures, to ensure that the

universe of their abode is safe, respected, nurtured and facilitated in its task of also taking care of all living beings. To this end, each human community adopted mechanisms most suited to the production of their needs and adapted the most ecologically friendly and sustainable crops, animal husbandry, floral development and fauna management that allowed them to survive and flourish to the best extent they could. This ecophilism (which I describe as eco-friendliness, eco-loving, eco-respecting and eco-respectfulness) was the mode of use of the resources in nature, which was well adapted to sustain all lives. It would have continued to be well with humanity and nature had Nordic destructive individualism parlayed in libertarian capitalism wedded to Arabian desert hateful belligerence not led to the destruction of indigenous knowledges of ancestral Europeans in the double disaster of Agrarian and Industrial Revolutions.

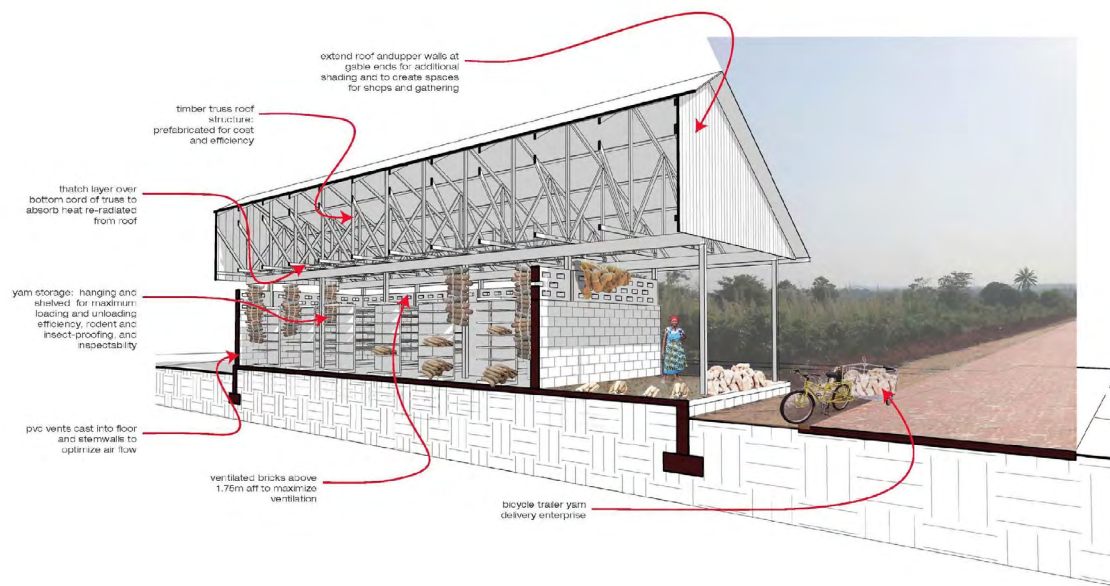
The worst hit was Africa where the indigenous knowledges were so badly affected, terribly vandalized, destroyed, and cremated. Had it not been the capacity for enduring survival ability of the evidence of such knowledges which allowed us to see the remains of Mummies, artworks and other artefacts thousands of years after the preservation of the dead, everything about African intellectual history would have been erased. If there was anything to the story about Josephson and the ability of Egyptians to preserve food for 14 years – seven years of plenty and seven years of poor harvests – it is the unparalleled technological sophistication of the societies of yesteryears, relative to what we celebrate today where the shelf life of food is a few months or maximum a couple of years.

In agricultural developments in various parts of the world, the types of crops that were developed, which then determined the dietary products and habits, were based on climate, capacity for reproduction and preservation. Genetic engineering, biodiversity, crossbreeding, hybridization and cross-fertilization of plants and animals was not new to indigenous peoples of Africa: it was a necessary part of the knowledges which made Africa to survive the various challenges thrown at it by both nature and her hostile descendants who came back to rape their motherland and destroy the evidence of the humanity of their ancestry. In the tropics, as the case of Nigeria will show, tubers and legumes, fruits and vegetables were developed. Diets were balanced with the use of animal protein and fish resources. We could look at traditional examples given as provided below:

#### Traditional Example:



### Contemporary example:



What seems quite clear in the above is that indigenous societies have not been unmindful of the need to store and preserve excess food for times when these are not freshly available. What has to be done is to ensure that various approaches were undertaken to assure that there is no scarcity during periods when fresh yams were not available. Some of the practices are now combined with the barn storage, shed, table and ground storage and dousing in chemicals to prevent infestation by pests.

Clearly, it would seem that what needs to be done is to harness the indigenous knowledge and practices, while researching and developing further on these to preserve products. Even more important are efforts to process, market and distribute products beyond the immediate production regions, to ensure global African culinary availability, sustainability, and food security.

What has been done with *Iyan Ado* and other Pouno Yam products is important to ensure that the farmers get good prices for their effort, because yam can now be used throughout the year and not just in the months of harvesting. Further, irrigation has shown that crops can be produced throughout the year. The recent social media blitz of yam growing in bags, shows that creative ways can be devised to ensure that tubers and other crops can be grown even in non-traditional environments. It is not insignificant that in many communities in Yoruba society, different methods are also devised to grow yam, including planting a type of yam in Cocoa and Kola Nut plantations, for harvesting years later.

## Alternative Medicine

There is no doubt that modern medicine has been able to assist humanity in the battle against disease and premature death. For this we must thank the advances in medical and technological developments over the last 100 years. But what is important is that we do not forget that modern medicine evolved from traditional medical practices that are found in various parts of the world. These practices are the foundations upon which contemporary advances were built, even if these are not recognized or acknowledged. This is not a strange thing, because in virtually all aspects of human existence, whatever the West derives from other places it appropriates without acknowledgement, or even denies the humanity of the societies from which these knowledges are derived. However,



the privileging of one tradition over all the others has constituted a setback for humanity, because it deliberately skews research and development of the knowledges about human well-being along the lines which benefit only one human ethnicity – Western European humanity.

We must also remark that the difference between indigenous traditional medical practices of various societies and the contemporary Western privileged medical practice is that traditional medical practices are more ecologically based and utilize the innate self-corrective mechanisms of the human anatomy to ward off disease and to repair damage.

To this extent, it is suggested that the indigenous medical knowledge found in various parts of Africa, which being non-intrusive or non-invasive and depending largely on total or holistic approach should become the foundation on which health care deliveries of Africa should be based. Significantly, it is to be understood that there are various treatment procedures which modern medicine can learn from indigenous practitioners. Further research would then need to be conducted by African intellectuals, academics and professionals to take the indigenous health care practices and delivery mechanism and systems to loftier heights which can be integrated into contemporary medical practices globally. For example, in Oru-Ijebu, in Ogun State, there is an indigenous orthopedic practice that is famous in Nigeria, where people whose cases may have been rejected as beyond repair at Igbobi Orthopedic Hospital (the leading Orthopedic Hospital in Nigeria if not in West Africa) are treated. It is our obligation as academics and policy makers to ensure that these indigenous medical and healthcare knowledges are preserved and does not die, and that it is incorporated especially into the training curricular of our contemporary medical education that is practiced in the Universities, Colleges of Medicine, Nursing Schools, Physiotherapy Institutes, etc. The advantages of doing this cannot be totally enumerated, but the most obvious is that we would be able to see how better to improve on these practices where we think there is not to so do.

## Individual and Public Health

In the past decades many viruses, germs and diseases have been named and identified because of advances in technology. The recent Ebola outbreak in three countries in West Africa clearly show the vulnerability of African communities to health threats.

It is significant that the migration of one man from the affected region nearly wrecked unimaginable havoc on the most populous mega city in West Africa, Lagos, but it is to the credit of alert doctors that the threat was curtailed. One would suggest that an institute in epidemiology should be set up in memory of the consultant doctor and the nurse who were the heroines of the salvation of Lagos and Nigeria from the infestation of Ebola. This is not too much to ask, and the fact that African Union has been setting up centres of excellence shows an appreciation of the need for research and development at the continental level. National authorities must spring to action.

There are a number of things that can be done where public and individual healthcare are concerned. But these must be coordinated to have the result that would allow Africa to have sustainable development. In the area of health, the architecture of the built environment must be sensitive to the ecologies of the regions. A situation whereby buildings are seen in Europe and Asia and are copied haphazardly and mindlessly transplanted without domestication to various African communities is neither energy-efficient nor conducive to individual and community health advancement. To this end it is the responsibility of indigenous knowledge centres to facilitate the research into various practices in various indigenous African communities, whereby the lived environment are constructed reflective of the best practices in the various communities, in alignment with the dictates of nature. Having buildings in tropical environment without proper cross ventilation for airflow and heat reduction is an affront to native intelligence of indigenous communities. It is not without reason that houses were constructed the way they were in traditional communities; and if these were to be “modernized”, the concepts behind these must be properly understood to promote collective and individual health and wellness.

There is no doubt that the cities which sprang up over various African communities before European civilization emerged and started “discovery” journeys around the world had knowledge of how best to deal with individual and community health issues. The hygiene and education coordination was responsible for the flourish of these cities even at those ages in African civilization. While today those committed to the destruction of African intellectual heritage are busy singing about the pre-literate and pre-scientific societies around the world, classifying Africa within that category, it must be remembered that the Nile was dammed by African civilizations, that cesarean section was performed, neurological surgeries were not alien to African communities, and mummification of the dead was practiced. That the wheel was a popular tool for agriculture was not in dispute; even more critical are the various mathematical and scientific advancements which led to the construction of the Pyramids.

## Indigenous African Pharmacology

Broadly speaking, pharmacology is the field of herbal and medicinal knowledge that has to do with the understanding of the composition of drugs and the active properties of the various ingredients in the drugs, how they function in the interactive process with parts of the human or animal body, what are their occurring sources in nature or how they can be made from natural materials. The last aspect deals with synthesis and drug design, using the various components of the materials or extracting those active ingredients to the desired quantity and quality, understanding the molecular and cellular mechanisms of interaction of the active ingredients. These ideas and knowledges were not alien to indigenous African intellectual traditions. It is the fact that such traditions had existed that Africans have been able to survive some of the most dangerous of diseases: Ebola, COVID, Malaria, Tuberculosis, etc.

When COVID-19 hit the world (regardless of the origin of the virus, whether it was naturally occurring or fabricated in the American biowarfare labs is not the issue that concerns us now), the expectation was that Africa would have been decimated. What was not factored into that expectation was the fact that Africa was not ignorant of the art of immunization, inoculation, and vaccination for thousands of years before it became an engineering fad in the West. Apart from that, Africa had in abundance nature's resources for regeneration, rejuvenation, repair and healing of life: not just human life, but life generally. The knowledge of this came handy for Africans in ensuring that the disaster that was anticipated was minimized and mitigated using indigenous knowledge of disease, prevention and treatment.

## Environmental Science and Technology

Continental Africa has been very fortunate not to have recurrent and destructive natural disasters as earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, tsunamis, etc. Africa has had her fair share of climatic variations which have brought about the desertification of the surrounding territories to the Sahara Desert, and in many instances, these have led to displacement of populations from their homesteads and communities. But the effects of global warming has been the increase in the droughts plaguing many parts of Africa and the possibility of acute water shortage in the future.

To this end, Africa must begin again to utilize the age-old conservation and preservation knowledge of the ancestors in agricultural practices and water management efforts. Mathai received the Nobel Prize in 2004 for her efforts in reforestation; this effort must be redoubled against the scourge of deforestation and the creeping spread southward of the Sahara. The diversity of types of trees would indicate that these could be used to reclaim lands from the desert spreading downward and displacing human populations and as well as to fortify the continent from ecological degradation.

## Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in Indigenous African Societies

One would think that artificial intelligence, machine learning, programming and software engineering are recent developments brought about by Western technological developments. Such ideas may not be totally accurate, because in many indigenous communities in Africa, especially among the Yoruba people of South West Nigeria, machine learning, artificial intelligence, and other computer and information detailing systems have been known. In an essay for *The Guardian*, Kole Omotosho (2015) wrote about *Sigidi*,

The Yoruba word for 'robot' is 'sigidi'. As Yoruba words go for foreign ideas, it is an inspired word swop... *Sigidi* is a clay image of the human torso with eyes and mouth and nose marked. It serves the maker without any question, without any hesitation... It is part of the forgetfulness of the past the Nollywood has not gotten on to *sigidi*. Because, if robots can now make robots, what prevents *sigidi* from moulding other *sigidi* to serve its own purpose against other *sigidi* and against even humans?

Omotosho seems only to be interested in the linguistic framing of how Yoruba people got about *Sigidi* without considering the ontological and epistemological foundations of artificial intelligence, computer programming (which has been traced to Ifa Corpus) or machine learning to which he has alluded. In recent times, pictures surfaced of the President of Bahrain attending an international event with robotic security on tow. This harks to the fact that unmanned arial machines are being deployed by various international agencies for various functions. These were not different from the various errands which *Sigidi* performed in Yoruba society.



*Sigidi* or Yoruba Robot

Taking a cue from Yoruba society and the varieties of factional ideas which the literatures and cultures are replete with, D. O. Fagunwa (1938), in *Ogboju Ode* weaved tales of various types of beings in various parts of the multiverse engaging in interactions which defy even present day explanations. These tales bode various ideas and knowledges which are interesting, but which epistemicide has deprived our scholars and researchers the interest to interrogate. Beyond merely saying that global Africa had science, there are significant ideas which need careful examination.

## Education beyond Certification

The development of humanities education, based on foreign conceptions of humanity, society, culture, economics, security, conflict management and resolution, religion and family orientation, among others, in global Africa is very misguided. When UNESCO identified the near century failure of the faculties of education in Africa to produce teachers who would lead the challenge of national and continental development, it was signal annotation of the mindless following of foreign ideology that must be blamed on the weakness of our intellectual preparation for addressing national and continental challenges. All societies of the world keen on social, economic, political, cultural and other forms of transformation begin the process through a sense of nationalism, patriotism and identity development which create the trust capital between the leadership and followership.

The analysis we have engaged calls for serious scholars to come together, first and foremost, to have a retreat or workshop, one dedicated to pondering how the parlous situation of the humanities in Nigeria and indeed the whole of the African world can be redressed. There is no time to waste as, regardless of how much resources a society has, if there is no enlightened and committed leadership strata to drive the process of development, such development will simply not happen.

Nigeria, for example, has been in the season of anomie for a long time, as Soyinka would aver. In recent times, Nigeria was subjected to an eight-month long closure of universities because the Federal Government did not see the reason why there should be tertiary education and the University teachers felt that this was not in the best interest of Nigeria or global Africa at large. When I first developed the material for this essay, I was thinking that the elections would have started in Nigeria in February, 2015 and the liberation of the masses would have begun in earnest, but the old saying that corruption will fight back seem to be immutable. Not only was the election not held, it was shifted back by about three months, during which the government tried everything to ensure self-perpetuation. Nigeria is in the cycle of another election in 2023 as I revise this essay. What has changed? Absolutely nothing: the products of the highest Western and Arabic educational traditions are busy trying to outdo themselves about which one can create the most havoc for the entire society. This is a disgrace that our African ancestors would have found intolerable. Yet the products of both traditions shamelessly troop to the Mosques on Fridays and Churches on Saturdays and Sundays to celebrate their perfidious destruction of their societies through various grandiose offerings and contributions to the ecclesiastical till. Africans now have the distinctions of being more Catholic than the Pope and being more Muslim than the King of Saudi Arabia.

## Conclusion

As we engage humanity and globalization, global Africa has a duty to its posterity; but this responsibility devolves on leadership in all strata of society, beginning with those ensconced in the academy as intellectuals, researchers, scientists, and thinkers. Securing the indigenous knowledge systems, patents, copyrights and proprietary controls over global African indigenous knowledges and the intellectual traditions is critical to ownership and benefits deriving and accruing therefrom. Currently this is not the case for the reasons enunciated in this discussion, but the overall objective should be moving toward adaptation of such traditions to guide in the proper determination of the paths to African development. Our scholars must invest in research, while our business communities and governments must support the research into challenges facing society and encourage the

commercialization of these ideas which must benefit global Africa. There are no alternatives or shortcuts to development, and no society develops based on the gratuitous generosity of other societies, especially those which had colonized or enslaved them in the past.

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