

PRE-COLONIAL AFRICAN PARADIGMS AND  
APPLICATIONS TO BLACK NATIONALISM

---

A Thesis  
Submitted to  
the Temple University Graduate Board

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
MASTER OF ARTS

---

by  
Trey L. Lipscomb  
Diploma Date (May 2017)

Thesis Approvals:

Thesis Advisor, Molefi K. Asante, Chair, Department of  
Africology and African American Studies

## ABSTRACT

From all cultures of people arises a worldview that is utilized in preserving societal order and cultural cohesiveness. When such worldview is distorted by a calamity such as enslavement, the victims of that calamity are left marginal within the worldview of the oppressive power. From the European Enslavement of Africans, or to use Marimba Ani's term, the *Maafa*, arose the notion of European or White Supremacy. Such a notion, though emphatically false, has left many Africans in the Americas in a psychological state colloquially termed as "mental slavery".

The culprit that produced this oppressive condition is Eurocentricity and its utilization of the social theory white supremacy, which has matured from theory into a paradigm for systemic racism. Often among African Americans there exists a profound sense of dislocation with fragmentary ideas of the correct path towards liberation and relocation. This has engendered the need for a paradigm to be utilized in relocating Africans back to their cultural center. To be sure, many Africans on the continent have not themselves sought value in returning to African ways of knowing. This is however also a product of white supremacy as European colonialism established such atmosphere on the African continent.

Colonization and enslavement have impacted major aspects of African cultural and social relations. Much of the motif and ethos of Africa remained within the landscape and language. However, the fact that the challenge of decolonization even

for the continental African is still quite daunting only further highlights the struggles of the descendants of the enslaved living in the Americas.

The removal from geographic location and the near-destruction of indigenous language levied a heavy breach in defense against total acculturation. Despite this, among the African Americans, African culture exists though languishes under the pressures of white supremacy. A primary reason for such deterioration is the fact that, because of the effects of self-knowledge distortion brought on by the era of enslavement, many African Americans do not realize the African paradigms from which phenomena in African American cultures derive. Furthermore, the lack of a nationalistic culture impedes the collective ability to hold such phenomena sacred and preserve it for the sake of posterity. Today, despite the extant African culture, African Americans largely operate from European paradigms, as America itself is a European or “Western” project.

The need for a paradigm shift in African-American cultural dynamics has been the call of many, however is perhaps best illuminated by Dr. Maulana Karenga when he states that we have a “popular culture” and not a nationalistic one. Black nationalism has been presented to Black People for over a century however it has varied greatly between different ideological camps. The variation and many confusions of these different ideologies perhaps helped the stagnation of the Black Nationalist movement itself. An Afrocentric investigation into African paradigms and the Black Nationalist movements should yield results beneficial to African people living in the Americas.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to Cleveland A. Flott  
in honor of the continuation of my promise,  
and the entire Flott clan for their continued  
love, sacrifice, and encouragement.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. HELD AT GUNPOINT.....	16
3. CULTURAL RETENTION VS. CRISIS OF IDENTITY.....	32
4. AFRICAN PARADIGMS: THE GIKUYU MODEL & DISCOURSE ON AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY.....	51
5. ON THE PATH TO BLACK NATIONALISM.....	75
6. CONCLUSION: NATIONALIZING ON A CULTURAL BASIS.....	117
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	127

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

This study will trace from the period of enslavement until the present day the cultural retentions extant within African Americans and then present theory as to why the use of such retentions is a strong basis for nationalization. Pre-colonial African paradigms will also be introduced throughout the text in order to provide parallel examples of cultural paradigmatic origins and retentions. A robust examination and critique of previous nationalizing efforts is included in order to grasp the spiritual, economic, social and political orientations of these movements and how they either benefit or hinder further efforts at nationalization. Ultimately, what is submitted here is a contention that unity on the basis of legitimate shared cultural commonalities among people of the African world is the soundest foundation for nationalism.

From all cultures of people arises a worldview that is utilized in preserving societal order and cultural cohesiveness. When such worldview is distorted by a calamity such as enslavement, the victims of that calamity are left marginal within the worldview of the oppressive power. From the European enslavement of Africans, or to use Marimba Ani's term, the *Maafa* (holocaust or great calamity), arose the notion of European or White Supremacy. Such a notion, though emphatically false, has left many Africans in the Americas in a psychological state colloquially termed as "mental slavery".

From the earliest days of enslavement Europeans have utilized the social theory of white supremacy for such ends as to create the conditions of mental slavery. White supremacy has matured from theory into a paradigm for systemic racism. Often among African Americans there exists a profound sense of dislocation with fragmentary ideas of

the correct path towards liberation and relocation. This has engendered the need for a paradigm to be utilized in relocating Africans back to their cultural center. To be sure, many Africans on the continent have not themselves sought value in returning to African ways of knowing. This is however also a product of white supremacy as European colonialism established such atmosphere on the African continent.

The removal from geographic location and the near-destruction of indigenous language levied a heavy breach in defense against total acculturation. Despite this, among the African Americans, African culture exists though languishes under the pressures of white supremacy. A primary reason for such deterioration is the fact that many African Americans do not realize the African paradigms from which phenomena in African American cultures derive. Furthermore, the lack of a nationalistic culture impedes the collective ability to hold such phenomena sacred and preserve it for the sake of posterity. Today, despite the extant African culture, African Americans largely operate from European paradigms, as America itself is a European or “Western” project.

The need for a paradigm shift in African-American cultural dynamics has been the call of many, however is perhaps best illuminated by Dr. Maulana Karenga when he states that we have a “popular culture” and not a nationalistic one.<sup>1</sup> Black nationalism has been presented to Black People for over a century however it has varied greatly between different ideological camps. The variation and many confictions of these different ideologies perhaps helped the stagnation of the Black Nationalist movement itself. Further investigation into these movements and the paradigms in which they operated from should yield results beneficial to African people living in the Americas.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mazama, Ama. *The Afrocentric Paradigm*. (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003), 19

## Methodology

The African world has long needed, and long desired, manumission from the theories, philosophies, ideologies, and cultural hegemony of Europe. The application of Sankofa implies an imperative to revisit past cultural paradigms of Africa in order to apply their successes to the future national successes of African people. Sankofa is used in this essay within the context of Kawaidan theory, thus being, “*an ongoing synthesis of the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange with the world.*”<sup>2</sup> Kawaida finds itself responsive to culture and its seven core elements, which are, “history; spirituality and ethics; social organization; political organization; economic organization; creative production (art, music, literature, dance, etc.) and ethos.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus, this text purposes itself in extracting the best of the African models and presenting them as solutions to current conditions in the African community. In synthesizing the Kemetic paradigm, it is important to note that, without it, there would be left a void in the foundation of African thought and practice. Unequivocally, Kemet and the Nile Valley region is the national spiritual birthplace –the heart of Africa, and as such, the heart of the diasporic African community.

---

<sup>2</sup> Maulana Karenga, *The Language and Logic of Kawaida: African Ways of Engaging the World*, <http://ibw21.org/commentary/the-language-and-logic-of-kawaida-african-ways-of-engaging-the-world/> Accessed: October 22, 2016

<sup>3</sup> Maulana Karenga, *The Language and Logic of Kawaida: African Ways of Engaging the World*, <http://ibw21.org/commentary/the-language-and-logic-of-kawaida-african-ways-of-engaging-the-world/> Accessed: October 22, 2016

Molefi Asante's works surrounding Afrocentricity are important and otherwise poignant mediums for liberation and the rediscovery of self-agency. *The Afrocentric Idea*, being the first of Asante's quartet on Afrocentric theory, is a foundational medium under the then-coined term Afrocentricity that has stood its ground under heated criticism. Afrocentricity means, literally, placing African ideals at the center of any analysis.<sup>4</sup> Thusly, the binding paradigm of this essay is that of Afrocentricity. Afrocentricity also argues that the West's hegemonic cosmology stifles and oppresses the culture and has done so covertly by, as Asante has asserted, "masquerade[ing] as a universal view".<sup>5</sup> As such, one must observe African phenomenon in such manner as to place Africans as subjects rather than object, and Afrocentricity serves such purpose as the theoretical framework of the thesis' arguments.

For an Afrocentric perspective of the ancient African past we turn to the work of Cheikh Anta Diop. Diop was not himself an Afrocentric but paradigmatic to the paradigm. Likewise, his *The African Origin of Civilization*, serves as paradigmatic to the theoretic application in this essay. Cheikh Anta Diop's importance in near single-handily dismissing the "Dynastic Race Theory" of Flinders' Petrie and others, essentially relocating the people of Kemet back to their African place, was essential in establishing cultural connections back to the ancient Nile Valley. Diop's development of melanin dosage testing allowed him to unequivocally confirm the race of the people of Kemet, now known as Ancient Egyptians.

---

<sup>4</sup> Asante, Molefi Kete. *The Afrocentric Idea*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 2

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 1

In proposing unification through Nationalism a germane definition for nation must be applied. In *Blueprint for Black Power*, Amos Wilson conceptualizes a nation as, “an analytical instrument used to arrive at a practical understanding of problems faced by the [Afrikan] community”.<sup>6</sup> Wilson later gives the term functionality by submitting nationhood as, “a centralized government; a sense of cultural-linguistic commonality [and] a unified economic/marketing system.”<sup>7</sup> Notice that neither definition qualifies geography as an indicator of nationality. Thus, as an analytical instrument, we purpose “nationhood” as a means of focusing on the common needs of African people, both on the African continent and throughout Diaspora. As a functional institution, it is able to provide organized politics, cooperative economics, welfare and other basic needs. However, as a nation is not efficiently functional without land that it holds sole autonomy over, Africa, as geography, must be properly applied in terms of cultural and historical ownership, bridging the possible realities of complete autonomy for African people.<sup>8</sup>

### Diop’s Charge

As Afrocentricity provides the foundational paradigm for this analysis, there are two major Afrocentric tenets that must be acknowledged. The first of which is recognized as “Diopian thought”. The forbearer of which, Dr. Cheikh Anta Diop, an apparent polymath who may very well be regarded as the Imhotep of our time, emphasized often and effectively the cultural unity of all African people. In his many works, Diop, using the myriad skills acquired during his years of study at the Sorbonne in France, would

---

<sup>6</sup> Amos Wilson. *Blueprint for Black Power: A Moral, Political and Economic Imperative for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Afrikan World InfoSystems, 2011), 507

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 517-518

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 467

meticulously lay out the evidence for such a claim. During his years at the Sorbonne, Diop would become proficient in the sciences of History, Egyptology, Physics, Linguistics, Anthropology, Economics and Sociology.<sup>9</sup>

This would of course aid him in his pursuit to recapture the truth of the African past and assist those who look to his work in re-invoking African agency. Diop would begin his analysis of African culture with Kemet. He theorized and later set out to prove that all African cultural expressions derived from the cultures in the Nile Valley region, ultimately synthesizing in Kemet. Diop charges, “The history of Black Africa will remain suspended in air and cannot be written correctly until African historians dare to connect it with the history of Egypt.”<sup>10</sup> He would further suggest, “The African historian who evades the problem of Egypt is neither modest nor objective... he is ignorant, cowardly, and neurotic.”<sup>11</sup> In *The African Origin of Civilization* (a synthesis of several theses), Diop asserts that all Africans have inherent commonalities and should unify on the bases of a linguistic, cultural, genetic, economic and social scope.

### Why the Importance of Kemet

It is of no doubt that humanity began in Africa before spreading out to form the various expressions of the human family. We should not be surprised to discover that Africa also gave the world the first of its “civilized” peoples and, subsequently, civilized nations. Although it is asserted by many African-centered historians that civilization, as

---

<sup>9</sup> John G. Jackson and Runoko Rashidi, *Introduction To African Civilizations* (New York: Citadel Press, 2001), 13

<sup>10</sup> Cheikh Anta Diop. *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*. (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1974), xiv

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, xiv

we know it in the form of the nation of Kemet, began some time before in Ta-Seti (“Land of those Who Carry the Seti-Bow<sup>12</sup>”), it is the Kemetic society that we have the most information to work with. It is in Kemet that we witness the first forms of writing, architecture, applied mathematics, military science, and a host of other contributions to civilizations in African and also the world. Most of which can be deduced simply by investigating the reliefs extant in the remains of superstructures like the Mir of Sunruset III.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, the Western academy and Western media have ferociously dislocated Kemet and its people. Thusly, African people have tried at all cost to relocate this African civilization in order to centralize the classical African world.

Consequently, Kemet can be accurately described as the zenith of classical African agency. Each expression of the human family took from Africa and developed their own cultural foundation. However, the African continued to develop the African project and progressed it into its own unique culture. During the classical era of Africa, Kemet became its soul –the spiritual birthplace of African culture.

The idea of a spiritual birthplace has been examined in the Eurocentric context, and done so vibrantly by European philosopher Edmund Husserl, developer of phenomenology, who, in the deliverance of his “Vienna Lecture” in the spring of 1935, expressed his view on the state of Europe as a nation, his view on Europe’s spiritual and ideological birthplace and the preservation of Europe and Eurocentric culture. Husserl posits, “Spiritually Europe has a birthplace. By this I do not mean a geographical place, in some one land, though this too is true. I refer, rather, to a spiritual birthplace in a

---

<sup>12</sup> *Seti* was the ancient term for Bow

<sup>13</sup> Toby Wilkinson. *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt*. (New York: Random House, 2010), 125

nation or in certain men or groups of men belonging to this nation.” He further contends that “It is the ancient Greek nation” that is the spiritual birthplace of Europe. According to Husserl, it is the ancient Greek’s who formed philosophy, thus being “the original phenomenon of spiritual Europe.”<sup>14</sup>

So Husserl identifies ancient Greece as the spiritual home of Europe and expounds on the need for Europe to remain true to its project. Speaking in regards to Europe’s colonization in India he contends, “Therein lies something unique, which all other human groups, too, feel with regard to us, something that apart from all considerations of expediency, becomes a motivation for them - despite their determination to retain their spiritual autonomy - constantly to Europeanize themselves, whereas we, if we understand ourselves properly, will never, for example, Indianize ourselves.”<sup>15</sup> For Africans, to “understand ourselves properly” means taking the same position.

That is, asserting self-agency and not looking towards other nations for examples of what that is. In the example of Europe, colonization, exploitation and the oppression of culture and livelihood would become the primary means for national development. Africans has no such equitable history and yet their historical greatness is inferior to no people. As we have identified Kemet and the ancient Nilotic region as our own spiritual birthplace, we must reclaim the best of this era for the sake of liberation and harmony. The colonization and subsequent Europeanization of Africa was done by violent

---

<sup>14</sup> Husserl, Edmund. Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man or “The Vienna lecture”, May 10, 1935 lecture presented at the Vienna Cultural Society. [www.ischool.berkeley.edu.http://people.ischool.berkeley.edu/~ryanshaw/nmwg/edmund.husserl-philosophy.and.the.crisis.of.european.man.pdf](http://people.ischool.berkeley.edu/~ryanshaw/nmwg/edmund.husserl-philosophy.and.the.crisis.of.european.man.pdf). Retrieved October 23, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

suppression of culture, spirituality and commonality. Africans themselves must seek to repair this damage. As aforementioned, due to the effects of this damage, Kemet has been dislocated from its historic people and have been placed under the ideas of a “Dynastic Race” and other such erroneous notions that seek to deprive the Africans of that great civilization their historical ownership. It is within the heart and mind of the African that Africa and the African project must peak in priority and relevance. It is only then that Africans may strongly advance in reclaiming their history and culture and begin reversing the effects of centuries of oppression.

### A Review of Disciplinary Axis and Africological Terms

The field of Africology is disciplinary because Western disciplines do not provide an African perspective but instead are intellectual enterprises with Western paradigms as foundation. Thusly, the synthesis of such disciplines with one of African perspective is not possible without endangering the paradigm of Africology itself. The two paradigmatic schools of analysis may engage with one another and even gain for each other but a synthesis will no longer make the field Afrocentric in an European dominant society nor Eurocentric in an African-centered society. For an interdisciplinary shift, what would essentially have to happen is not the development of “Black Psychology” or “Black History” or “Black Archaeology” as those are no different in the suggestion of a “Black Marxist”. To simply place a “Black perspective” on European-paradigmatic disciplines still bounds individuals to that paradigm. In order for the field of Africology to become “interdisciplinary” it would require a complimentary discipline in which to do so. Therefore, for example, there may be no African equivalents to the European fields of

“Theology”, “Astronomy” and “Medical Science” for from the African perspective there is no separation of science and spirituality, for everything Africans engaged in had a spiritual foundation. An entirely new type of discipline with an African-paradigmatic foundation would have to emerge to be complimentary with Africology. It is perhaps only through the field of Africology can such a reality emerge.

Additionally, there is much importance in the use of terms central to African cosmology, especially when referring to African phenomena. For example, the name Egypt does not appear until the use of the term by the Greeks and applied over the region during and now centuries after Greek occupation. Consequently, the use of the term Ancient Egypt lends no centrality to the ancient people of that land. This is why the term Kmt or Kemet is preferred in referencing that land and culture, as this is a term, and closest approximant pronunciation, used by the ancient people of Kemet themselves. Not only such such relocates them back to a place of historical centrality it also honors and shows respect to ancestors of African people. Likewise terms such as Pyramid and Obelisk are of Greek origin and as such represents the Greek’s interpretation of these structures. Thusly, the application of Mir and Teken (or Tekenu) are used respectively in recognition of these structures. This text will make note of other such terms throughout.

The term “slave” as applied to the ancestors of African Americans and other enslaved Africans in other areas of the diaspora is a dislocating term. Africans taken from African shores were *enslaved* in the course of the European project that is the Slave Trade. Prior to such condition they were mothers, sons, daughters, husbands, fathers and wives. They were people with an origin not in slavery but as Africans who, like the colonized Africans on the continent, were unfortunately taken exploited. This

exploitation came also with the processes of identity erasure as European powers attempted to strip them of their humanity and make them no more than simple chattel. Therefore, referring to the enslaved as “slaves” further perpetuates the injustices of the period of enslavement as the person or people being referred to as such are still stripped of their humanity. To be sure, slavery did exist in the African continent prior to European encroachment, however, as will be examined, the type of slavery introduced by the Europeans is different in ways worth distinguishing African systems of servitude and chattel slavery. In fact, as the term slave, is of European conception (adopted from the Slavs’ history of enslavement) and thusly couldn’t even be applied in like manner to African systems of servitude. Nevertheless, this text often references books and articles that use the term “slave”, however it instead endeavors to center those historical figures with terms such as “the enslaved”.

Lastly, many in academia utilize the terms “African Slave Trade”, “Atlantic Slave Trade” or “Triangular Trade” when referring to the period of enslavement. Each of these terms should be considered illegitimate, as it is important to place the responsibility of the trade itself on those who financed and had the most to gain from that enterprise. This was an undertaken taken upon by European powers for their own benefit, and as such it should be considered the European Slave Trade or rather European Trade of Enslaved Africans (European Trade for short). The terminology thus described will be utilized throughout the course of this text.

## Review of Literature

Cheikh Anta Diop's seminal work, *The African Origin of Civilization*, relates to the subject from the standpoint that all Africans have inherent commonalities and should unify on the bases of a linguistic, cultural, genetic, economic and social imperative, making his work indispensable in this study. As an examination of the people of the African continent, this book provided a foundational basis for the perspective of cultural unity among Africans. The examination of the works of other African sociologists such as Jomo Kenyatta collaborates with the theories and revelations set forth by Diop. Kenyatta, in his monograph, *Facing Mount Kenya*, elaborates on the significance of names and terms specific to the Gikuyu ethnicity of Kenya. Kenyatta's insight into the cultural aspects of the Gikuyu, their ceremonies involving naming, and the epistemologies which inform such activities, provides a wonderful analysis of a variant of African ethos and presents a paradigm for the practice of Sankofa.

Both Diop and Kenyatta's works can be found to have parallel examples of ritual and meaning within African societies as also true within that of the works of Ifi Amadiume, writer of the influential text *Male daughters, female Husbands*. Amadiume's anthropological study of gender in Africa was useful primarily for cultural context however is indispensable and foundational on gender discourses in Africa.

Maulana Karenga's *Kawaida Theory: An Introductory Outline* is not only useful as a guiding theoretical perspective but provides numerous references to African paradigms. As Kawaida is among the heaviest influences of Afrocentricity, this text helps

to grasp a better understanding of the Afrocentric method of analysis. Molefi Asante's text, *The Afrocentric Idea*, was, of course, more than useful as a theoretical framework for Afrocentric analysis, however, it also provided context for which to relocate African Americans within the discourse of naming. Asante relates to the reader the shared cultural heritage of nicknaming among the Akan, Yoruba, Ewe, and African Americans:

While the African American does not retain the formalized Akan or Yoruba response to naming, one does find the prevalence of nicknames, which serves as markers of the African presence in the 'sound sense' of black America. Almost all young men and women receive nicknames at an early age, and these names are designatory, referring to one's physical appearance (e.g., Red, Gooseneck, Peanut Head), character (e.g., Bull, Slick, Rap), or relation (e.g., Buddy, Bro' Boy, Big Sister, Cool Baby).<sup>16</sup>

The text offers various such examples of African cultural continuity among African Americans, despite the disruption and damage caused by the era of enslavement. Asante's anthropological surveys on African American social thought concerning agency are of unique importance. His own testimony of acquiring an African name could be used as a guide for those seeking answers in their own journey towards such personal, and, consequently, collective cultural reparation.

There is perhaps no better-researched literature on the period of enslavement that offers the perspective of Africans themselves than of Michael Gomez's *Exchanging Our Country Marks*. In the comparison of African cosmologies among the Caribbean and the continental U.S., Gomez's work has been quite indispensable. In Gomez's analysis of the synthesizing of African ethnic groups from ethnicity to race, he posits:

Africans and their descendants did not simply forget (or elect not to remember) the African background. Rather, that background played a crucial role in determining the African American identity. Put another way, given the

---

<sup>16</sup> Asante, Molefi Kete. *The Afrocentric Idea*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 85

importance of African ethnicity, it is inescapable that ethnicity had a direct impact on African Americans' self-perception. The African American represents an amalgam of the ethnic matrix; that is, the African American identity is in fact a composite of identities. In certain areas and periods of time, the composite approached a uniform whole, as the transition from ethnicity to race was more thoroughgoing.<sup>17</sup>

Gomez has thus presented the basis that while many ethnic groups existed among the enslaved, they were able to come together under not only the commonality of bondage but that of similar cultural backgrounds. He cites historian Sterling Stuckey in his analysis of the similarities of the spiritual customs of certain west-African groups: “Stuckey, building upon Herskovits's earlier work concerning Yoruba, Fon, and Akan affinities for rivers, makes the point that the aforementioned Bakongo belief concerning their ancestors' habitation of a world below water ‘casts additional light on why water immersion has had such a hold on blacks in America and why counter-clockwise dance is often associated with such water rites.’”<sup>18</sup> Such cultural similarities are not to be considered coincidental, and should further illustrate the practicality of African Americans repairing themselves from African paradigms.

Aside from the WPA narratives of enslaved Africans, there is perhaps no better-researched literature on the period of enslavement that offers the perspective of Africans themselves than of Gomez's *Exchanging Our Country Marks*. His theory on the conversion process of African Americans to Christianity, though rich in detail, is quite interesting and backed by both the record of W.E.B. Du Bois and John Blassingame. Gomez is correct to hold the position that most Africans did not convert until after reconstruction. Blassingame, in his groundbreaking text, *The Slave Community*, makes

---

<sup>17</sup> Michael Angelo Gomez. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 13

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 273

this same argument, stating that roughly 1 million<sup>19</sup> slaves were Christian by this time. Du Bois, in *The Negro Church*, would contrast this by stating there were only roughly 468, 000.<sup>20</sup>

While Rosalie David's *Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt* was useful, her style is trite and she provides no clear thesis. Religion and Magic isn't the clear subject of her work. However, Wilkinson's *Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt* on the other hand is a great historical hand guide yet not indispensable. It is written well yet he often makes the mistake (or possibly no mistake at all, given his target audience) of weaving in too much personal interpretation instead of an objective presentation of the evidence.

---

<sup>19</sup> John Blassingame. *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South Revised, Enlarged Edition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 97 - 98

<sup>20</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Negro Church*, (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903), 29

## CHAPTER 2 HELD AT GUNPOINT

### The Nature of the Maafa

Among the most endearing narratives from the era of enslavement is that of Olaudah Equiano's personal account, which begins as a juxtaposition of African and European slave systems. The setting of Equiano's homeland is approximated as deep southeastern Nigeria, bountiful with lush greenery, and an abundance of various vegetables and fruits. Equiano, the youngest son of an Igbo chief, was kidnapped from his village and passed between the hands of several African masters before being eventually sold to Europeans. He spoke of slavery in Africa, prior to European influence, as primarily a punitive system for those convicted of kidnapping, adultery, or other crimes.<sup>21</sup> He gives careful detail in explaining his relationship to his African masters. He describes that many "slaves" worked alongside those who were free and all were treated with dignity and humanity as an extended member of the family. One could even be fully adopted into the family and relinquish being a slave. In one incident he recalls:

I could scarce help expressing my surprise that the young gentleman should suffer me, who was bound, to eat with him who was free; and not only so, but that he would not at any time either eat or drink till I had taken first, because I was the eldest, which was agreeable to our custom. Indeed every thing here, and all their treatment of me, made me forget that I was a slave. The language of these people resembled ours so nearly, that we understood each other perfectly. They had also the very same customs as we.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African*. (Gloucester: Dodo Press, 2009), 6

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 22

However, a few months after being enslaved he was whisked away once again to the shores of West Africa where he encountered “uncircumcised” Africans who “cooked in iron pots, and had European cutlasses and cross bows, which were unknown to us.”<sup>23</sup> Equiano reasoned that these Africans near the shore were quite affected by European encroachment. The fact was that the effects of the European Trade had reached inland as far as his homeland, and his kidnapping was a result. Before being kidnapped, Equiano spoke of people from the southwest hinterlands who brought goods to barter with his people for slaves and other wares in exchange for firearms, gunpowder, hats and beads.<sup>24</sup> Both firearm and gunpowder being not native to the African interior, one can reason that European influence had permeated the region for some time by the time of Equiano’s kidnapping. Nevertheless, as exemplified in Equiano’s account, Africa’s punitive systems of slavery, serving as societal correctives, were stark in contrast to the cruelty of European slavery.

Equiano’s narrative reveals, naturally, only his empirical perspective of the circumstances provoked by his kidnapping. We know of his pain once he was separated from his sister, the joy and then anguish of finding her once more before being permanently ripped apart, and the hopelessness he felt being shipped off to an unknown land in order to endure forced labor. However, not only in this case, but in that of countless others, what is often not discussed is the plight and anguish of African families when they discover their loved ones had been stolen away from them and sold off to distant, often inaccessible lands. We know nothing of the situation involving Equiano’s parents once they returned to a home destitute of the children they had left behind.

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 23

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 6

Furthermore, as difficult it would be for someone today to attempt to trace the actual parents of Equiano, it was perhaps even more difficult for Equiano's parents to discover what became of their children, despite it being mere hours since they last saw them. They may have eventually understood that they were kidnapped for the purposes of slavery, but to which area of the western coast, or even to what region of Africa had they been carried? Moreover, even if the children's location had been miraculously discovered, although the father was a chief, would they have had the resources to reclaim both children? These were the realities laid before Africans whose kin were kidnapped.

Discussions of the European Trade often neglect the equally important narratives of Africans attempting to reclaim their loved ones by either ransom or by force, and that of the enslaved attempting freedom before leaving African shores by way of rebellion and insurrection. Heavily in the writings of early twentieth century western scholars was the notion that Africans immediately accepted their subservient position and were, essentially, a race bred for slavery. Indeed, westerners seemed to believe that either a secret trove of willing vassals lay in wait on the African west coast ripe for choosing, or that Africans sold "their own" without any heartfelt consciousness of their deeds. However, slavers themselves understood clearly the humanity of the enslaved and their families, and exploited such with impunity. Slavers often kept individuals in the hopes that the families of the enslaved would soon show to claim them for ransom.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Diouf, Sylviane A. *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 83

Ransoming profited slavers for often times they would request more than what the enslaved would have been worth, or for the exchange of two or more enslaved Africans for the one being ransomed. In one such case in 1793 Sierra Leone, a father was told that in order to save his daughter that he must bring the slaver two Africans to be enslaved in exchange. The father soon petitioned the governor who intervened and convinced the slaver instead to exchange for “one prime slave.” Unfortunately, by the time the father had secured her replacement, the slaver had already shipped the daughter off.<sup>26</sup> The tragedy of such circumstances however is that the emotional duress experienced would turn some families into participants in the slave trade. Nevertheless, many still remained on the lookout for kidnappings and would inform neighboring families of what they saw in attempt to save others from being enslaved as well.

If by chance a neighbor witnessed the kidnapping, or relatives were aware of the nearest port, they would show themselves and request the family they sought. However, those chances were also limited in the case of a raid that claimed their loved ones. In such cases, many could have been killed during the raid, especially elders. The survivors of which were left to tend to the wounded and help restore their destroyed markets and fields.<sup>27</sup> The chaos would often allow kidnapers to get away without being pursued. Even more terrifying is that on other occasions when families were able to find their kidnapped loved ones, if the families only had very modest resources they would have to decide how many of their loved ones they could afford to redeem. The psychological ramifications of such a decision was perhaps the most damning of all, for the enslaved, the redeemed, and the families involved.

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 86

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 85

In 1788, Abdul-Rahman ibn Ibrahim Sori, a young Amir (governor) of the Fouta Djallon region of Guinea, West Africa was captured and sold into slavery in the United States. After 40 years in bondage he was released after the Sultan of Morocco heard wind of his circumstances and petitioned the United States government. He arrived in Monrovia, Liberia in 1829 and a caravan carrying \$6,000 to \$7,000 in gold to be remitted to him made its way from Fouta Djallon in order to meet and assist Sori in freeing his still enslaved children left behind in the United States.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, Sori died before the caravan would ever reach him. He never saw his children or his beloved homeland Fouta Djallon again. His story, however, is a testament to the longing of not only Africans to reclaim loved ones but that of those who wished nothing more than to return to their homes and their African way of life. Many similar narratives arise from this era. Those who could afford and or will their power into procuring their loved ones did so whenever fate afforded them. King Naimbanna of Sierra Leone discovered three distant relatives in the West Indies and made attempts to bring them home.<sup>29</sup> Another Sierra Leone King, King Tom, in 1731 beseeched one Sir George Young to have an African woman returned to him.<sup>30</sup>

In an extravagant case, King Ghezo in 1818 sent two delegations to the Americas to search for his mother, Agontime. By the early 1820s a woman by the name of Agontime who was said to have returned from the West was bestowed the title *kpojito* by

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 81

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 92

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 92

Ghezo, the highest female position in the kingdom.<sup>31</sup> One quite extraordinary case comes from an obscure plantation in Pike County, Georgia. In 1936 a man named Shade Richards, a formally enslaved African interviewed by a reporter from the Federal Writers' Project gave tale of his great-grandfather, an African possibly of modest means, who came from the continent to redeem Shade's grandfather. Not much is known about the social status of Shade's grandfather however, both he and his son died before they could leave. Arguably, a notable would have not made the journey themselves and certainly not without company. If we are to assume the man to be of modest means that suggests that possibly several others of the same status had made similar journeys and succeeded.<sup>32</sup> To be sure, that is not to say a notable would not have made such a journey. It is perplexing how someone from Africa not having a more privileged social background, and thus not likely having a relationship with traders who could grant him access to trade routes, could pinpoint a family member in some obscure region of western Georgia. He could have indeed also been a relative or friend to a notable and made privy to such information thusly.

Nevertheless, the evidence is clear that African people did not simply throw away their families. Those who were more easily traded without means of kidnapping were those who were already likely enslaved under African punitive systems that had not yet become accepted as family, and many still were traded as a means to redeem from European slavers family members who had been kidnapped. Several rebellions and shipboard revolts occurred along the west-African coast as well as the interior.

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 93

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 93

Perhaps the most prominent west-African rebellion was the Mandingo Rebellion (1785-96), which affected the entire Upper Guinea coast for over a decade.<sup>33</sup> The Bilali Rebellion (1838-72) in Sierra Leone is ripe with the history of the evolution of interior African slavery as influenced by the customs of European slavery. Bilali was the son of the Soso King of Kukuna and one of his enslaved women. Though he himself was considered one of the enslaved, his father made sure he received extensive Qur'anic and military training. Thus, he was well educated and possessed all of the mental acumen and physical prowess of a Soso warrior. By custom and by his father's wishes he was to be essentially "freed" once the King himself died.

However, following the King's death, the family did not respect his wishes and went completely against the cultural customs in order to keep Bilali enslaved. Bilali soon escaped with his family and was given refuge by the neighboring Limba, who respected him so much as to give him land in which he used as refuge for other runaways. Soon after he began to stage revolt against his former family and the British slave establishment.

Though this was still a pale comparison of the type of chattel enslavement that had developed in the Americas, the revolt proved to be among the most violent and prolonged in the history of the region.<sup>34</sup> It disrupted the trade to such a degree that the British colonial government in Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown, stepped in and sought diplomacy with Bilali, after, of course, first unsuccessfully attempting to suppress his

---

<sup>33</sup> Rashid, Ismail. "A Devotion to the Idea of Liberty at Any Price: Rebellion and Antislavery in the Upper Guinea Coast in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" In *Fighting the Slave Trade*, edited by Sylviane A. Diouf, 139. City: (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006)

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 144

undertakings with force.<sup>35</sup> The circumstances surrounding Bililali's Rebellion offers prime example of the nature of European and African relations during this era.

Take for example the Kingdom of Dahomey, which saw considerable expansion of its empire under the direction of King Agaja (1708 -1740) and by the reign of King Ghezo (1818-1858), had even regained lands that had fallen under Oyo control.<sup>36</sup> Like many other African kingdoms Dahomey, by having some control in trade, was trying to maintain ultimate control of its own territories. What makes Dahomey somewhat exceptional is the background of a Portuguese trader by the name of Francisco Félix de Souza. De Souza assisted Ghezo in the overthrow of his brother Adandozan, the former King of Dahomey. The year of Ghezo installation as King, De Souza was made *yovogan*, a personal representative to King Ghezo himself and given administrative power over trade activities in the Dahomean 'port' of Ouidah. Ghezo even assisted de Souza in organizing Dahomean army in being more effective in capturing and supplying de Souza with enslaved Africans.<sup>37</sup> However still, Ghezo, like many other African Kings at the time was trying to maintain relations with European powers, particularly in this case the Portuguese who had sent de Souza in the first place.

To be sure, this was not always the sentiment of Dahomey rulers. After conquering the port of Ouidah in 1727 the Dahomean army, in 1743 destroyed the Portuguese fort established there in 1721.<sup>38</sup> It wasn't until 1750 that King Tegbesu (1740

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 146

<sup>36</sup> Ana Lucia Araujo. Dahomey, Portugal and Bahia: King Adandozan and the Atlantic Slave Trade, *Slavery & Abolition*, 33:1, (2012), 1-19,

<sup>37</sup> Ronen, Dov. "On the African Role in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Dahomey." *Cahiers d'études africaines* 11, no. 41 (1971): 5-13.

<sup>38</sup> Araujo, Ana Lucia. Dahomey, Portugal and Bahia: King Adandozan and

– 1774), in what is considered the first Dahomean and possibly first African diplomatic outreach, sent emissaries to Brazil in order to renew relations, as European artillery became increasingly necessary for the security of Dahomean borders and the further expansion of the kingdom.<sup>39</sup> De Souza's role as chief and administrator over the trading port saw the slave trade rise higher in numbers than under the reign of the previous king, Adandozan.<sup>40</sup> Like many other African societies, the main trading port, Ouidah remained a site of European hegemony and de Souza saw himself in the unique position to exploit for the sake of himself and the advancement of Portugal.

Contemporarily, discussions surrounding who is most at blame for the enslavement of African people have become hot topics amongst both the American academy and armchair historians alike. Spurred by the renewed debate surrounding reparations, many influential scholars such as Henry Louis Gates have entered the fray, arguing that Africans are just as much to blame for the European Trade as Europeans are themselves. In a New York Times article he stated, erroneously, that the role in which African kingdoms played was "considerable" without providing any proper context in which his narrative could be told with integrity.<sup>41</sup> There are questions to be asked that he simply refused to acknowledge. Who initiated the trade relations between Africa and Europe? Who established ports on African shores often times by force of lethal weapons that African had not? Europeans financed shipbuilding industries, slave trading enterprises such as The French West India Company, The Swedish West India Company,

---

the Atlantic Slave Trade, Slavery & Abolition, 33:1, (2012), 1-19

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

<sup>41</sup> Gates, Henry Louis. "Ending the Slavery Blame-Game." The New York Times. April 22, 2010. Accessed February 22, 2017.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/23/opinion/23gates.html>.

The Dutch West India Company, The Royal African Company and its predecessor, The African Company of Merchants, as well as establishing banking industries based on the slave trade itself. European nations jumpstarted the Industrial Revolution based off of human and natural resources taken from African shores while by the end of the European Trade African nations were left both vulnerable and suffering heavy economic woes. Africans were not looking for mass slave labor. They did not ask for equal trade, an African for a European, in order to jumpstart their own “industrial revolution” in-turn. These ideas were far from the zeitgeist of African consciousness. Instead, and as aforementioned, these Kingdoms wanted nothing more than to maintain their security and also their cosmologies. The submission to European customs, religion, language and aesthetics have been evidenced by historical record to have been political ploys to appease these foreigners who they understood had somehow over the centuries gained some upper-hand in military prowess. Arguably, they were at the time foreseen as a small price to pay in order to maintain the stability of their kingdoms. Naturally, they were looking to gain inasmuch as that they felt they needed the principal wares of this prowess in order to continue their own kingdom-building projects and for the sake of security, however this is a far cry from being indicative of equal culpability with the Europeans themselves.

Gates points out Angola under the reign of Queen Nzinga as a point of interest for his op-ed. “When Njinga converted to Christianity, she sold African traditional religious leaders into slavery, claiming they had violated her new Christian precepts,” Gates illustrates.<sup>42</sup> Again, Professor Gates has advanced disingenuous, un-contextual

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

scholarship on this matter. Firstly, Gates mentions how Nzinga initially went to war with the Portuguese before allying with them and assisting with the slave trade. However, one would only have to question precisely what happened that caused her to become a participant in the first place to discover the vital intricacies of the matter and thusly, be provided with a contextual understanding of the Angolan predicament. Portuguese trade with the Kongo Kingdom saw to the kidnapping and raiding of the Mbundu Kingdom of Ndongo. Therefore, the Portuguese from the very beginning were seen as enemies of the Mbundu Kingdom.<sup>43</sup> Ndongo soon saw itself severely devastated with depopulation.<sup>44</sup> Nzinga's rise to power came after the previous ruler, her brother Mbandi, fled to a island in the Kwanza river after the Portuguese became too much for him to handle and risk of his capture became imminent. Previously, Mbandi and Nzinga fought together for many years against the Portuguese and the implementation of the slave trade on their shores.

However, sources state that Mbandi became cruel and had his younger brother and Nzinga's only child murdered in order to eliminate any perceivable threat to the throne. Nzinga had eventually fled the capital and was located in neighboring Matamba when she received word of her brother beseeching her to represent him in peace talks with the Portuguese. Despite his earlier viciousness towards her and their family, Nzinga agreed to represent him and appeared before the Portuguese governor.<sup>45</sup> Before she arrived she had already realized that she had no substantial bargaining power as her brother had already surrendered everything, so she devised an elaborate display of

---

<sup>43</sup> Davidson, Basil. *Africa in History*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005.), 158

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> "Anna Nzinga, Queen." *African Biography*, Gale, 1999. *Biography in Context*, [link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/K2421000058/BIC1?u=temple\\_main&xid=813e2dba](http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/K2421000058/BIC1?u=temple_main&xid=813e2dba). Accessed 2 Feb. 2017.

symbolic power, having her entourage parade into the mansion with as much pomp and circumstance as they could muster. Upon arrival, she noticed that there was only one chair for which the governor himself to sit, an obvious attempt by the Portuguese to belittle her status, making her stand as a subject of Portugal would. However, she made one of her female attendants to position herself on the floor, kneeling on all fours, and then seated herself on her back. The Governor, certainly to his chagrin, found her already seated and had to negotiate with Nzinga as an equal. The negotiations concluded with Portugal agreeing to pull out of Mbundu territory however Nzinga, upon her own nominal conversion to Christianity, agreed to allow in missionaries as well as allow and assist the Portuguese continue with the slave trade as long as it didn't affect the Kingdom.<sup>46</sup> Thus, years after becoming sole ruler, as Gates points out, she “conquered polities as far as 500 miles inland and sold her captives to the Portuguese.”<sup>47</sup>

However, the Portuguese naturally did not uphold their treaty. It is rumored that after seeing the weakness and failure of her brother to retaliate, she had him murdered and became Queen in 1623. Her immediate action afterwards was to once again wage war with the Portuguese. Roughly sixteen years later in 1639 the Portuguese once again sought a treaty and this time followed through with a new treaty reinstating the terms of that in 1623.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Gates, Henry Louis. "Ending the Slavery Blame-Game." *The New York Times*. April 22, 2010. Accessed February 22, 2017.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/23/opinion/23gates.html>.

<sup>48</sup> "Anna Nzinga, Queen." *African Biography*, Gale, 1999. *Biography in Context*, link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/K2421000058/BIC1?u=temple\_main&xid=813e2dba. Accessed 2 Feb. 2017.

Many describe Queen Nzinga as rather eccentric but that's often because of their lack of understanding of African cultural dynamics. Nzinga married several minor kings and later made them her concubines, requiring of them to dress as women and sleep among her maids in waiting. The penalty of death followed any of the Kings bold enough to touch any of the maids sexually.<sup>49</sup> Nzinga essentially changed her gender and represented herself as a male to further legitimize her claim as the sole, superior ruler of Ndongo and Matamba Kingdoms of the Mbundu people.<sup>50</sup> For Nzinga, this had to be done in order to combat the cries of illegitimacy of other African male rulers around attempting to usurp her. This is known as in African culture as gender fluidity and shall be further elaborated in subsequent chapters.

Nevertheless, this context sets the stage for the Nzinga's decisions in allying with the Portuguese in order to keep her reign secure and protect her country as she saw herself as the only legitimate person capable of doing so. However, her alliance with the Portuguese was originally meant to remain temporary until she could think of the best way of betraying them and rid them from her country once and for all. Her relationship with the Portuguese remained overwrought with mistrust and they eventually warred again in 1630 with Nzinga as the aggressor after having gained assistance from the neighboring Imbangala of Kasanje and allying, albeit reluctantly with the Dutch. However, by 1648 the Portuguese gained more reinforcements, driving the Dutch away and with the Imbangala having abandoned her, Nzinga was forced again to make a treaty

---

<sup>49</sup> Thornton, John K. "Legitimacy and Political Power: Queen Njinga, 1624–1663." *The Journal of African History* 32, no. 01 (1991): 25.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

with the Portuguese, one in which that lasted until her death in 1663.<sup>51</sup> This narrative of the facts contrasts heavily with the position Gates took on the matter as a means to point blame at Nzinga as equally culpable in the involvement in the trade of enslaved Africans. Today still in Angola, Nzinga stands as a national symbol of resistance to European domination and colonization. Furthermore, it is not incredulous to argue, given how Nzinga rallied the ethnicities of her hinterlands, that she inadvertently created the first sense of contemporary African nationalism amongst these groups in their struggle against European domination.

As exemplified, the history of the European Trade is fraught with the ills of human depravity from all sides. We know from the annals of history that there has been no account of a perfect, utopian society. However, what should be absolutely stressed is that European influence on these African societies affected them in such a way that many of the ruling class, for a variety of reasons, made decisions contrary to their cultural cosmologies. Furthermore, Europeans inserted themselves and disturbed millennia of cultural relations between African people. Furthermore, no African societies developed an economic foundation based solely on the trade of humans. For many of these societies trade was primarily a means to keep good relations with Europeans for the purposes of receiving artillery and for the sake of security. Many times the Europeans, with their weapons, provided protection from other African nations who may also have come in contact with other European traders (many times the very same Europeans nationalities) offering them a deal in the same enterprise. Often as well Kingdoms such as the Asante were attempting to control slave routes in order to prevent their own kingdoms from

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

possible siege. It should be pointed out that a pattern of the Europeans, and as exemplified by the Portuguese in Angola, was to pit one African Kingdom, or several African ethnic groups against the other while attempting to project itself as allies towards all of whom they traded with. Despite any cultural similarities, at the time there was no sense of African nationalism so therefore these various peoples did not see themselves as selling off their own kinsmen but rather that of another nation in order to protect and preserve their own.

Establishing that Africans were not simply thrown away by their “savage” kinsmen and that the Slave Trade itself was primarily an endeavor of European advancement, focus is now to be given on the Africans who were brought to the Americas and their descendant’s yet to have ended journey of rediscovery. As alluded to in the previous section, possibly the most revealing behaviors from the period of African enslavement in America was the burning desire of Africans to return home, often related in the form of folktales. The telling of folklore of people flying home to their ancestral land –to Africa- permeated throughout the south. The dilemma that began to unfold however was that of those born in Africa trying to relate the significance of Africa to the American-born. For the African born, he in death had a home to fly back to. This was not perceivably true for the American-born as he “was born and would die without a home.”<sup>52</sup> To be clear, this does not mean that the African born in America was not related the knowledge of and given the sense of ownership to their ancestral home by the African-born. However, as generations of American-born Africans progressed, this vision was sure to diminish in attainability.

---

<sup>52</sup> Michael Gomez. *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 277

Today still many African people in America relate to Africa as their home in various ways. However, quite a number of Africans living in the Americas today have not and possibly will never visit Africa. Many still do not care for Africa in association. With major Black directors creating shows such as Kenya Barris'<sup>53</sup> *Black-ish*, which has expressed in the mouth of its characters existing, yet damaging and untrue, opinions such as “We Black, Not African... Africans don’t even like us”,<sup>54</sup> it is clear that some manner of nostophobia<sup>55</sup> exists among a great deal of Black people. We now come full circle in relating the sentiments of the growing number of American-born, particularly those aforementioned to the “We Black, not African” sentiments among us today.

---

<sup>53</sup> Co-creator of *America’s Next Top Model* and principle writer on *Are We There Yet?* Both are highly watched shows among the African American community due to the shows’ stars Tyra Banks and Ice Cube respectively.

<sup>54</sup> Kweli I. Wright, So Just How Cosby-ish Is ‘Black-ish’?. [www.ebony.com http://www.ebony.com/entertainment-culture/so-just-how-cosby-ish-is-Black-ish-343#axzz3uvKhZLXL](http://www.ebony.com/entertainment-culture/so-just-how-cosby-ish-is-Black-ish-343#axzz3uvKhZLXL) . Accessed: Dec. 20, 2016.

<sup>55</sup> Nostophobia – the fear of returning home, rather metaphorically or literally.

## CHAPTER 3

### CULTURAL RETENTION VS. CRISIS OF IDENTITY

The newly formed United States would continue the use of enslaved Africans and evolved their form of slavery into the most brutal treatment ever perpetrated on any group of people in human history. The result of which left the enslaved Africans and their descendants with new names, a new language, and an ongoing crisis of identity. Formerly enslaved Africans emancipated after the American Civil War would adopt the surnames of their former owners, and in many cases of presidents such as Washington and Jefferson (both of which also owned enslaved Africans). Booker T. Washington would refer to this phenomenon as “one of the first signs of freedom”, suggesting it denotes a sense of autonomy on the part of the newly freed Africans.<sup>56</sup> However, while this may be true in a limited sense, being approximately the third generation since enslaved Africans were barred importation by law taken effect in 1808, these Africans were largely without their original languages (though remnants remained).<sup>57</sup>

“The successful maintenance of a particular worldview can only be enhanced by the preservation of the language in which such a perspective was originally conceived,” argues historian Michael Gomez in his seminal work, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*.<sup>58</sup> Gomez affirms that wherever Africans held on to their language, particularly in the case of the

---

<sup>56</sup> Booker T. Washington. *Up from Slavery*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1995.), 11

<sup>57</sup> John W. Blassingame. *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.), 30

<sup>58</sup> Michael Angelo Gomez. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 51

Bambara in Louisiana, they hold on to more of their culture despite miscegenation. While the vocabulary of the Bambara became largely French, they would retain their African syntax and specific parts of their original vocabulary that would allow retention of the Bambara world-view.<sup>59</sup> This retention of African cosmology is however also exemplified visually such as in the elaborate “jazz funerals” held in New Orleans and the practice throughout the south of adorning gravesites with many artifacts, particularly personal effects last held by the deceased, such as cups, plates, and broken glassware.<sup>60</sup>

However, as the country progresses and the margins between race and national identity continue to converge, and as academics by way of racist logic continue to actively address the unattractiveness they foresee with Ebonics (which exhibits an African syntax), the extant African language and syntax in America, known collectively as Ebonics in the continental US, Patois in the Caribbean and even Creole in parts of Louisiana, continues to erode.<sup>61</sup> This eroding in language has a detrimental effect on the cultural unity of African Americans inasmuch as that the identification with Africa languishes. To be sure, the eroding of language does not necessarily mean the death of the culture itself. As aforementioned, certain cultural retentions do still remain, and many of them are of the most important value to the preservation of African cosmology. Ultimately the result is an African culture that has been bastardized by Eurocentric cosmology to the degree that the people of the culture no longer recognizes themselves or

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 51

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 275

<sup>61</sup> Asante, Molefi Kete. *The Afrocentric Idea*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 68

their innate Africanity.<sup>62</sup> The culture is, in effect, still hidden in plain sight. In fact, a dichotomy of emotions amongst African Americans towards African culture, and the unwitting preservation of the vestiges thereof, is quite evident when examining the blossoming of the.

### The Black Church and Cultural Retention

Gomez astutely submits, “Most who converted [to Christianity] did so voluntarily after a process in which the religion was first converted to the specifications of the African-based community.”<sup>63</sup> Subsequently, African people originally accepted the Christian faith as nominal participants. In the Caribbean, in countries such as Haiti, Orishas, which are Yoruba deities, were masked by the name of Catholic saints. In colonial America the same ideology applied. Africans would use the Christian faith in order to continue to practice their own spiritual systems. Nearly a generation after the 1809 abolishment of the slave trade, many northern Blacks had seen the ease of slavery’s clutches on their livelihood and by 1830 slavery in the north had been virtually abolished. It would be free Blacks, reserving for themselves positions of authority, which saw to the growth of what is to be termed the Urban Black Church.<sup>64</sup> As these early Black-church fathers and freemen were mostly born and raised in the American north, we can assume that African culture and custom was antithetical to their assumed epistemology –though they themselves unwittingly held on to African cultural aspects. In fact, as the only

---

<sup>62</sup> Africanity is to be loosely described as African-ess, or the state of being an African, endowed with African cultural backgrounds, and functioning within those paradigms.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Angelo Gomez. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 258

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 256

image of unequivocal freedom they knew came in the form of white men, their apprenticeship to freedom would have afforded them only a western lens on their African heritage.

However, it was at odds with another, older institution, termed, for the purposes of this exposé, The Rural Church. In 1878, the African Methodist minister and president of Wilberforce College, Reverend Daniel Alexander Payne, was invited to attend a church service and decided instead what he had encountered was “a bush meeting”.<sup>65</sup> This was Payne’s first encounter with a “ring shout”, a ritual shared among many ethnicities of enslaved Africans as their own unique cosmologies included versions of this sacred, spiritual tradition. What Payne was witnessing was vestiges of continuous African high-culture. What he interpreted, however, was African primitivism that he felt needed to be stopped at all cost. Payne was ashamed and charged those who had invited him to be equally ashamed. He soon discovered just how wide-spread this “heathenism” was. Surely, he had to protect not only the Christian faith but the race of men for whom he belonged from the “dark continent’s” heathen religion.<sup>66</sup>

Far from Payne’s knowledge, it was these very heathenistic practices that brought about that supercharged the Christian movement known as the Great Awakening. Enslaved Africans had adopted Christianity nominally, attempting at best to hold on to their African spirituality. During many church services, while whites were worshiping and believing in one theistic notion, Africans were maintaining their own cosmologies under the guise of the Christ. Africans converted Christianity itself to suit their own needs just as much as Christianity was in the process of converting them. Their spiritual

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 269 -270

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 270

fervor would give-way sometimes during church revivals and whites (typically poor, but also wealthy) got a glance spiritually motivated Africanity in action. Africans would dance, sing, sway back and forth, go into trance in front of this white congregation.

Whites had not seen before this type of worship and they themselves began to jerk and shout in an attempt to mimic the enslaved Africans who were, in their perspective, clearly touched by the holy ghost. Gomez opines "... Europeans may have provided the skeletal framework of Christianity, but it was the African who introduced the ways of the Holy Ghost." The ability for the African to be himself, and the budding respect and allowance into leadership roles by whites, no doubt convinced some to look at the new religion in an entirely different perspective.

Urban areas in the north would become sanctuary for runaways who assuredly sought asylum in the church. The Black church would emerge as the central institution to the development of urban Black culture. Richard Allen and Absalom Jones's 1787 mutual-aid organization, the Free African Society, would later birth -based Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Philadelphia in 1794. The urban church was proving autonomous. In his great history, *The Black Church* in the African American Experience, the late historian C. Eric Lincoln relates:

The Black Church has no challenger as the cultural womb of the Black community. Not only did it give birth to new institutions such as schools, banks, insurance companies, and low income housing, it also provided an academy and an arena for political activities, and it nurtured young talent for musical, dramatic, and artistic development. E. Franklin Frazier's apt descriptive phrase, "nation within a nation," pointed to these multifarious levels of community involvement found in the Black Church, in addition to the traditional concerns of worship, moral nurture, education, and social control. Much of Black culture is heavily indebted to the Black religious tradition, including most forms of Black music, drama, literature, storytelling, and even humor. The first Black publisher was the

A.M.E. Church which, with the A.M.E. Zion Church, pushed the Black experience into its first national organizations.<sup>67</sup>

This is quite telling. One could argue that the Black community would have much to lose by giving up the institution that is the Black Church as it is among the only autonomous institutions that remain and the community has benefited greatly from its presence. However, by empirical evidence alone, we can deduce that the Black Church is today but a shell of its former self as the work in the community has greatly languished. It is still however serving the purpose of sanctuary for those Blacks seeking to escape not just the physical plantation but also the ideological one. For the most part, all modes of code-switching, fitting-in, racial-profiling and other racist ailments are nullified once within the doors of the Church. In the Black Church, even amongst drama and ignorance, Black people are afforded autonomy in a place where they share cultural solidarity. With their faith in a messianic God intact, even in the immediate aftermath of racist church slaughtering, Black people today seek refuge from the world around them in the protection of the church family. In a way, it their inherent Africanity, coupled with blind zealousness, which has ensnared them within an oppressive religious circumstance. This belief in messianism “has no tradition in Africa”.<sup>68</sup>

In the domains of the Rural Church, just as with the Yoruba, Fon, and Akan of the plantation era, Christianity was widening the pool of acceptance for African cosmology. However, little did the African know of the dangers this would mean for their future generations. As subsequent generations would become more Christianized, their

---

<sup>67</sup> Lincoln, Charles Eric., and Lawrence H. Mamiya. *The Black church in the African American experience*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.), 8

<sup>68</sup> Asante, Molefi Kete. *The Afrocentric idea*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.), 139

Africanity –albeit still extant – would become an increasing non-concern and, even worse, unrecognizable to them. For the few ethnicities just mentioned, their affinity for rivers opened them up further to the acceptance of the Christian faith. The presence of rivers and the spiritual significance of water immersion resonates with Africans continent-wide and certainly with those in the Americas. For groups such as the Bakongo, ritualistic dance usually complemented water rites and within their cosmology surrounding the mpemba, or underworld, conceptualizes a “land of all things white”, meaning that baptismal robes meant a great deal to them. Burials were also big amongst the converging African ethnicities during the plantation era as “it was important that the person be remembered by the community, because ‘the world’ would not remember... for in honoring the deceased, they validated their own worth.”

Africans found even more space in their cosmology for Christianity, as the notion of a supreme deity was quite universal. “That this high god would have a son was also consistent with beliefs regarding a multiplicity of divine beings (although the absence of a divine mother was a source of perplexity),” Gomez asserts. The reincarnation of Jesus would not have surprised the Igbo, the Akan, the Bambara or other ethnicities, as they all were also quite familiar with that concept. Africans begin to see great interest in the concept of the Holy Ghost, as it differed not from the intervening spirits of their homeland. It is common conjecture that many Africans flooded the Baptist church because of the Baptist’s dogma of baptism aligning with African river rites cosmology. The Baptist church would have also been attractive to the Igbo as the preeminence of the council of Deacons was inline with their Council of Elders. In like manner, the role of the

Baptist pastor might have resonated with West African griot. To this day the traditional Black Baptist preacher follows the rather “sing-song” sermon-delivery tradition.

It is peculiar that while many of these early religious institutions, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, were not beyond identifying themselves as African, their perception of Africa tended to be one that perceived African culture shamefully. Booker T. Washington would refer to Africa as the “dark continent” and W.E.B. Du Bois would suggest that African Americans were to save Africa from its apparent backwardness.<sup>6970</sup> Washington would also contract himself with German-occupied Togo in order to send an expedition of men from Tuskegee to educate the Africans on cotton cultivation and to further his pedagogy of abiding the white supremacist system while at the same time becoming an industrious community.<sup>71</sup> Du Bois, however, in his later years would begin to develop a more Pan-African approach as he encourages Africans in 1958:

Awake, Awake, put on thy strength, O Zion! Reject the weakness of missionaries who teach neither love nor brotherhood, but chiefly the virtues of private profit from capital, stolen from your land and labor. Africa, awake! Put on the beautiful robes of Pan-African socialism.<sup>72</sup>

Evident within the Black Church, and certainly permeating throughout Black communities, was the notion that American Africans were devoid of Africanity and were no longer African but instead simply “American”. However, as previously illustrated,

---

<sup>69</sup> Booker T. Washington. *Up from Slavery*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1995.)

<sup>70</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois. *The World and Africa; an Inquiry into the Part Which Africa Has Played in World History*. (New York: International Publishers, 1965.)

<sup>71</sup> Andrew Zimmerman. *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.), 52-53

<sup>72</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois. *The World and Africa; an Inquiry into the Part Which Africa Has Played in World History*. (New York: International Publishers, 1965.), 310

African culture never left African people in the Americas. The language of the culture, the ability to properly project African cosmology has greatly suffered and it is because of this that many African Americans identify themselves as solely “American” or “Black” – albeit nominally.<sup>73</sup> Their reality is muddled between their African culture (which is inescapable) and the excessive need to be identified as “American”, meaning “closer to whiteness”, as the ideals and rhetoric of what it is to be an American is largely shaped by European cosmology. The dominant pedagogy surrounding what it is to be “American” is rooted in ideals that were originally meant to only serve white men.

### Attempted Erasure of African Culture

Therefore, when the American dream became a supposed reality for Africans in Americans, this meant that the metric for what it means to be “American” is to be as close to whiteness as possible.. This phenomenon is also epitomized by the fact that many after enslavement would choose names of figures such as Washington and Jefferson, despite the fact that these figures owned enslaved Africans. But because naming themselves after them would bring the formerly enslaved African who did so psychologically closer to “whiteness” and acceptance by the dominant society, such names were embraced. Nonetheless, this phenomenon can be accurately described as psychological slavery, self-hatred, and a propagation of white supremacy. Subsequently, the naming of all Africans in the Americas with European names has left African people as object and marginal in the course of the European project. To be sure, enslaved Africans did not immediately accept these realities. In fact, scholar John Blassingame

---

<sup>73</sup> Usually with no political or cultural agenda in mind.

provides for us context within his magnum opus, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* that the enslaved tried at best to hold on to their naming traditions before plantation owners intentionally disrupted such practices. Blassingame posits:

Memories of Africa were important in the development of self-awareness in slave children. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the slaves drew on these memories for their naming practices. Consequently, until the nineteenth century, African cognomens were prominent in any list of slaves. From around 1750 to the 1830s masters steadily encroached on slave naming practices, and by the latter date the bondsmen's cognomens had been Anglicized and they exercised less autonomy in this area.<sup>74</sup>

Due to the advent of colonialism and slavery, there has been a disruption of the cosmology of African people both on the continent and among the descendants of those kidnapped and brought to the Americas –“Black people” as they are referred to today. When this cosmology was disrupted it was not wholly abolished but instead increasingly became a well-guarded secret of the enslaved and guarded so well in fact that many of their descendants have no idea of the origin of their many traditions. As Blassingame points out, traditions such as naming were pivotal in child development as they made the child self-aware and located the individual within their cultural space. Once the period of enslavement ended, the failure to reconstruct African cosmology and revive such traditions has held African Americans captive in a culturally repressed state. Molefi Asante in his quite dutiful text *An Afrocentric Manifesto* illuminates by way of the analysis of the great intellectual Harold Cruz that “Africans had denied, lost, or given

---

<sup>74</sup> Blassingame, John W. *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*. (New York: Oxford, 1981.), 182

away agency in order to become different from our historical selves.”<sup>75</sup> The disruption of such traditions, transplanting it with that of another cultural paradigm has severely affected the agency of African people, as agency requires self-consciousness, which is a centered position.<sup>7677</sup> Consequently, a group of people ridden of their agency is doomed to perpetual bondage.

### Cultural Retentions and Effects of Aesthetic Exploitation

Despite the damage done during the era of enslavement, various cultural traditions prevailed. Music, such as jazz, blues and funk for example, cannot be divorced from its African tonality despite the fact that it is codified by the use of European notation. As aforementioned, “ring shouts” were a constant presence during plantation-era religious or spiritual events and indeed a “shout” or shouting had more application than its titular function. Often, and especially in the rural churches of the south, you will find today during a sermon or praise dance and song the application of a bellowing, “Sing Choir”, “Amen Reverend” or “Alright Nah’ Pastah”.<sup>78</sup> One could also argue that the use of “speaking in tongue” in many instances is often a form of shout. Not only has shouting survived as part of Black Christian worship, but as this music later gave birth to jazz and blues shouts also manifested as “scats” and other style derivatives.<sup>79</sup> Other derivatives such as “stomping” (seen implemented more today among Black Greek Letter

---

<sup>75</sup> Asante, Molefi Kete. *An Afrocentric Manifesto: Toward an African Renaissance*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2008.), 35

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 25

<sup>77</sup> Mazama, Ama. *The Afrocentric Paradigm*. (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003.), 25

<sup>78</sup> Floyd, Samuel A. *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United States*. (Oxford University Press, 1997.), 45

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 22, 45

Organizations), “call-and-response”, and “smiting of breasts” to imitate drums, stem likewise from this African origin known as the ring shout.<sup>80</sup> Thusly, Church calls such as “Can I get an Amen” and the response “Amen Reverend” is synonymous with the likes of “Say it Loud” and the response “I’m Black and I’m Proud” or even the use of call-and-response employed in the song “Oh Happy Day”.

It has today largely been the dominant societies’ acceptance and use of this music that has garnered the mass pride and appreciation among the descendants of the Africans who brought their music to the Americas. But it is fear, self-oppression and self hatred brought on by the system of white supremacy that ultimately leaves many African people living in the Americas unwilling to bring their African –pre-enslavement era –culture to the forefront of their consciousness and ultimately repair their world-view. To be sure, this is not to say that Africans in the Americans developed their music for the sake of garnering white appreciation. On the contrary, the development of spirituals, blues, jazz, funk, and hip-hop was a response to the condition in which they saw themselves. However, they have suffered further exploitation by the dominant, white society, as their music became the foundation of early record labels, often stolen and reformed for use by white artists.<sup>81</sup> The early Jim Crow era saw “Black face” minstrel characters performing African American spirituals and used native African instruments such as banjos.<sup>82</sup> Thusly, African American music and culture was distorted, used and consumed by racist white society to shame and exploit their aesthetics.

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 37

<sup>81</sup> "FADE TO WHITE: Black Music, White Artists=Big Money." EBONY. August 26, 2015. Accessed March 26, 2017. <http://www.ebony.com/entertainment-culture/fade-to-white-black-music-white-artistsbig-money-504>.

<sup>82</sup> Floyd, Samuel A. *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United States*. (Oxford University Press, 1997.), 55

Such shaming and deaminizing of their culture left African Americans with self-images that were psychologically destructive. They warred with themselves to escape certain aspects of their culture that the dominant society had deemed negative and African Americans, either by not being aware of or not being aware of how to interpret their past, had no conscious basis to defend against such demoralization. Dark Skin, “kinky” hair, broad noses, and “ebonic” speech patterns became badges of shame rather than being rightful recognitions of cultural and national commonality. However, with the advent of Jim Crow Laws and the continued degradation of the Black experience a small but growing sector of Black American society used grassroots efforts to blossom what is perhaps the most famous civil movement in American history –the Civil Rights Movement. This movement, unfortunately, did not necessarily seek to correct the injustice done to the Black psyche by the misappropriation of their aesthetic and history. Neither was it a movement rooted in investigating the depths of their heritage in order to rediscover just who they were culturally. This is not to say that there were not participants in the movement who acted on just that. Africans such as Zora Neale Hurston, John Henrik Clarke, Malcolm X, Arthur Schomburg, Carter G. Woodson, W.E.B. Du Bois and a host of others embarked on just such journeys of rediscovery and attempted to add what they had discovered to the spirit of the movement itself. Their contributions assuredly gave rise to the attitudes of “Black is Beautiful” exemplified during the subsequent Black Power Movement.

## African Agency in the Age of Freedom

None can argue that the events of the Civil Rights Movement are a mixture of several expressions of agency on the part of African people; however, the movement itself was still largely without a sense of self-reliance and the application of autonomy. Despite the efforts of Martin Luther King and others, African people involved in this struggle (and many on the sideline) were still in constant response to a system that informs how to feel, what to say, and what to think. These notions were challenged, but they were challenged in a way that ultimately left the decisions of the fate of African people living in the Americas in the very hands of those who oppressed them. The same can be said of the current Black Lives Matter movement. There is no doubt that these young and elderly Africans are quite courageous and their actions and sacrifices admirable, but they are operating out of the same false paradigm of the Civil Rights Era. As in the case of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that was rendered ultimately useless by a recent Supreme Court decision, effective June 23, 2013, laws left in the hands of the oppressor or oppressive systems can be overturned –and apparently easier than they were to ratify. The irony that one sole African American on the Supreme Court could have made the difference in preserving it is beyond reckoning.

To be sure, the litigators in Shelby County Alabama could have had a point. Section 4, the heart of the law that was struck down, was indeed based on data that was over four decades old. However, negating the fact that it is better to solve an issue instead of leaving a gaping hole in a law intended to protect the rights of all people, the question that remains is just how invalid is this data today? We know that it is ultimately the actions of people that create data that is to be extracted. Perhaps the demographics of

Shelby county is no longer that in which practices discrimination. However, what about its neighboring Talladega County or St. Clair County to its north? Hypothetically, could not the racist families that lived in Shelby County have moved further away, distancing themselves from the growing African American population, and the rise of several African politicians in neighboring Jefferson County? Americans have just had the first presidential election in half a century that was devoid of robust federal protections against discrimination. The current United States President has proven himself to be just as tyrannical, racist and sexist as those of years past. The only difference now is that his narcissistic nature doesn't grant him much willpower in stifling himself from vomiting his thoughts in public forums. Rumors of possible election obstruction by Russians aside, could we have now possibly seen the result of an election being hijacked by the sons and daughters of Jim Crow? Contrast, did the hijacking ever really end because of the Voting Rights Bill to begin with? Could it have simply manifested differently to produce similar results? Naturally, these are questions that can only be answered by way of covert intelligence gathering but are worthwhile asking all the same.

Moreover, are the liberals that African Americans side with in the majority of votes truly the friends they claim to be? Have Black people in America really made much progressed as a group of people in this country based on their loyalties every election season? During the Obama Administration the racial wealth gap actually widened, "poverty crimes" sent Black men to prison in record high rates, and loans for home ownership were lower than they were in over fifteen years.<sup>83</sup> This is not to say that

---

<sup>83</sup> Moore, Antonio. "The State of our Imperfect Union: President Barack Obama's Racial Legacy." The Huffington Post. July 09, 2015. Accessed April 2, 2017.

President Obama himself nor his administration didn't receive major setbacks at seemingly every turn by conservatives. However, can we honestly say the liberals did enough to advance Black issues with resolutions? Author Ta-Nehisi Coates in a June 2014 article for *The Atlantic* entitled *The Case for Reparations* presented a stirring, if not controversial, case for reparations stemming not from the area of enslavement but from relatively contemporary discriminatory acts of the U.S. Government and Government sanctioned institutions towards African Americans –namely, housing discrimination. The debate sent the media into a whirlwind and when asked of his opinion on reparations by Coates himself President Obama's posited:

Theoretically, you can make, obviously, a powerful argument that centuries of slavery, Jim Crow, discrimination are the primary cause for all those gaps [between white and Black people]... That those were wrongs done to the Black community as a whole, and Black families specifically, and that in order to close that gap, a society has a moral obligation to make a large, aggressive investment, even if it's not in the form of individual reparations checks, but in the form of a Marshall Plan, in order to close those gaps.<sup>84</sup>

The President offered a poignant and discerning perspective as always however if this is were the case, and it certainly is, then why were no efforts made at all by his administration to advance this perspective from theoretical to tangible politics? Possibly because in the very same article he suggested that other minorities would feel it to be unfair to them. Yet, though the political implications and complications of such a matter is understandable, righting a horrendous wrong done to a group of people should not be

---

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/antonio-moore/the-state-of-our-imperfec\\_1\\_b\\_7540060.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/antonio-moore/the-state-of-our-imperfec_1_b_7540060.html).

<sup>84</sup> Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "'Better Is Good': Obama on Reparations, Civil Rights, and the Art of the Possible." *The Atlantic*. December 21, 2016. Accessed April 2, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/12/ta-nehisi-coates-obama-transcript-ii/511133/>.

stalled by the opinions of others. African Americans might have felt that the 1887 Dawes Act, which utilized their tax dollars to right the wrongs done to Native Americans, providing certain ethnicities with ownership of their ancestral lands and other resources was unfair but none can argue today that it was not the right thing to do. When former presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, arguably the most radical, far-right liberal in congress, was asked the very same question on reparations he called it “divisive”.<sup>85</sup> This begs the question, are the liberals really allies of Black people or are they here-today-gone-tomorrow political exploiters? Nevertheless, what is increasingly clear is that what Africans in America must now seek with all due expediency is autonomy.

As will be explored in subsequent chapters, the idea of autonomy is not new to the thinking of Black intelligentsia. Neither is it news to the ears of the lumping Black masses throughout each generation of Black experience in America. The notion of Black Nationalism has permeated the African American community since its inception however its several manifestations has yet to take serious grounding. Perhaps it is because of the difficulty of projecting its scope and functionality coupled with an unease of sentiments from African Americans, the middle especially, in upsetting the dominant society. Also, despite the creation of such on small scales throughout its history, African Americans have not seen the Black Nationalism as an alternative protectorate providing jobs, shelter, and other resources the likes of which the U.S. Government can provide. Nevertheless, it is those very small-scale models that should be examined and the best of each synthesized into a functional, sustainable and beneficial system.

---

<sup>85</sup> Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "Bernie Sanders and the Liberal Imagination." *The Atlantic*. January 24, 2016. Accessed April 2, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/01/bernie-sanders-liberal-imagination/425022/>.

Furthermore, in bringing the range of this entire text full-circle, the plight of the descendants of enslaved Africans is the quest for re-discovery, self-actualization and autonomy. The nationalist manifestations of which have been dubbed Cultural Black Nationalism however what is being implied here is an evolution of even that initiative. Many have turned to the American Jews as prime example of Cultural Nationalism and its relatively harmonious functioning within the American system. According to Steve Silbiger, author of the seminal text *The Jewish Phenomenon*, "...it is critical to build the community's financial, educational and spiritual capital base. This builds self-esteem in its children and creates the means for them to succeed."<sup>86</sup>

While the character of the two cultural paradigms differ this fundamental law is relevant to both the Jew and the African. Being financially, educationally and spiritually sound are not mutually exclusive when it comes to building a national culture. Silbiger points out that the American political system works out for Jews most of the time because they do not simply vote but they vote with a background of political and financial power. They also place Jewish people in strategic positions of power in order to broker arrangements that best suit Jewish interests. In effect, they simply do not rely on the American system to work for them but instead they work the system. Also according to Silbiger, Jews too are largely involved in liberal interests and vote up to 60 percent democratic. However, there is much doubt that Bernie Sanders, a Jew, would publicly state that the more than \$2.2 billion in annual funds Jewish diaspora people receive from the U.S. Government "divisive".<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, the underlining significance is that they

---

<sup>86</sup> Silbiger, Steven. *The Jewish phenomenon: seven keys to the enduring wealth of a people*. (Lanham, MD: M. Evans, 2009.), 50

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 46-50

exhibit a national culture that is foundationalized by their own diasporic cultural paradigm. This cultural paradigm informs their financial, educational and spiritual decisions. More importantly, the children are raised with a singular view of the importance of cultural autonomy and advancement.

## CHAPTER 4

### AFRICAN PARADIGMS: THE GIKUYU MODEL AND DISCOURSE ON AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY

For Africans in the diaspora, and especially African Americans, it is essential that they refer to their own cultural paradigms for corrective behaviors and practices. As Na'im Akbar concluded in *Akbar's Papers in African Psychology*, "One of the ways that human beings are able to maintain a conception of themselves and maintain their mental life is through the maintenance of certain self-affirming institutions."<sup>88</sup> So in the application of Sankofa, of looking to the past to recapture what is lost, African people must reinstitute their past traditions. An institution, as Akbar alludes to, organizes these traditions and ensures each generation understands their role in society. The courageous work of Cheikh Anta Diop introduced renewed insight for African people on lost or rather hidden paradigms of social interactions.

#### Matriarchy Lost

Diop's *The Cultural Unity of Black Africa: The Domains of Matriarchy & of Patriarchy in Classical Antiquity* reveals that the family structure of the meridional cradle, the African continent in particular, was matriarchal in nature. Contrary to European societies where a dowry is often paid to the groom's family, in Africa a "bride price" was paid from the family of the groom to the parents of the bride. In contemporary America we see the Eurocentric manifestation of their customs in regards to wedding traditions. Often it is expected that the bride's family pay for a couple's wedding.

---

<sup>88</sup> Akbar, Na'im. *Akbar Papers in African Psychology*. (Tallahassee, FL: Mind Productions & Associates, 2003.), 100

However, this is antithetical to African thought as African people have a different value system in regards to women. Instead, a bride price is paid to the parents of the bride as women are considered invaluable members of the family unit. Thus, males would be considered the less economically favored sex and what is paid is in compensation for the ultimate loss of resource to the bride's family unit. Furthermore, while in European societies descent is patrilineal, descent in African culture is matrilineal.<sup>89</sup> For example, in Kemet (Ancient Egypt), when a sister and brother who were princess and prince of the reigning royal couple marry off, in matrilineal law only the child of the princess could become pharaoh once his turn came. The child of the prince would be in line of succession to reign in his mother's country.<sup>90</sup> So much respect was afforded to the woman that, according to Diop, "the African woman, even after marriage, retains all her individuality and her legal rights; she continues to bear the name of her family, in contrast to the Indo-European woman who loses hers to take on that of her husband."<sup>91</sup>

Notice that despite colonialism's Eurocentric influence these are cultural practices still in occurrence contemporarily. While some Africans have unfortunately taken on the practices of their oppressors, especially those living in America, but many on the continent as well, colonialism and the era of enslavement has not defeated African cultural continuity. In fact, such arguments of so-called pre-colonial and post-colonial African cultures should be reevaluated for gross inaccuracies in interpretation.

---

<sup>89</sup> Diop, Cheikh Anta. *The cultural unity of Black Africa: the domains of matriarchy & of patriarchy in classical antiquity*. (London: Karnak House, 1997.), 27-34

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 53

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 40

## A Cultural Paradigm Near the Headwaters of the Nile

Revolutionary John Peter, later Johnstone Kamau, who would change his name a final time to Jomo Kenyatta in solidarity with the struggle in what is now known as the country of Kenya introduces his readers to the cultural dynamics of his native Kikuyu ethnic group. In Kenyatta's first published monograph, *Facing Mount Kenya*, he implies throughout the text the importance of naming from the world-view of Kenyans (specifically the Gikuyu) and the significance of such in retaining power and autonomy. However, Kenyatta's narrative also exposes the matriarchal aspects of Kikuyu society.

To be sure, many African nations today suffer greatly despite the reestablishment of naming and, subsequently, the reparation of African cosmology. However, this cultural reparation is far from complete, and, of course, what impedes repair and continues the suffering is by and large the cause of ongoing neocolonialism and the utilization of such systems as the giving of funds or "aid", the provision of supposed "charity", and the pretense of "mission work" by the West. This is coupled with corrupt governments employing Eurocentric modes of government on their constituents. Nevertheless, cultural repair, though incremental, persists.

Kenyatta's narrative begins with the legendary history of his great people who live east of Lake Victoria, the largest headwater of the Nile River. Kenyatta states that the legend is from the "beginning of things, when man kind started to populate the earth."<sup>92</sup> Within the legend of Kenyatta's native Gikuyu we find that their original family group was named Mbari ya Moobi out of respect of the founding matriarch of the clan

---

<sup>92</sup> Jomo Kenyatta. Bronislaw Malinowski. (*Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu*. New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 3

who was named Moobi. The founding patriarch, Gikuyu, and the Moobi had nine daughters of which they found nine young men to marry them off. The condition of marriage was that the nine young men had to agree to live in his homestead under a matriarchal system. The young man agreed as they reveled in the beauty of the daughters and the kindness Gikuyu and Moobi had shown them since coming to live with them. When the heads of the Mbari ya Moobi (Moobi and Gikuyu) died the nine daughters decided to form nine clans under their own names and formed once more an ancestral collective name of “Rorere rwa Mbari ya Moombi, namely, children or people of Moombi or Moombi's tribe.”<sup>93</sup> As Kenyatta pointed out this system as since changed as generations later the men grew jealous of the women who could marry multiple men, who were stronger and fiercer warriors, and who ran their nation under with absolute authority.

However, as the men of the society were actually inferior warriors they had to come up with a devious plan. As the narrative goes, they seduced the women and impregnated them all at once and waited for the women to be in a state incapable of physical retaliation. The men then went about changing the system of the society and in doing so changed the name of the nation from Rorere rwa Mbari ya Moombi to Rorere rwa Gikuyu (i.e. Gikuyu nation). As this is legend, it is possible that this explains the system as it became under agreeable terms for the men and women. For as Kenyatta concludes of the legend:

But when it came to the changing of the clan names, the women were very infuriated and strongly decided against the change which they looked upon as a sign of ingratitude on the part of the men. The women frankly told the men that if they dared to eliminate the names which stood as a recognition that women were

---

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 5-6

the original founders of the clan system, the women would refuse to bear any more children. And to start with, they would kill all the male children who were born as a result of the treacherous plan of the revolt. The men were very much afraid of the women's strong decision, and in order to avoid the conflict, they allowed the original names of the clans to remain unchanged. And the nine main clans in the Gikuyu tribe are still known under the names of the nine Gikuyu daughters who were the founders of the Gikuyu clan system.<sup>94</sup>

The legend itself is perhaps a way of explaining the matriarchal aspects of their cosmology despite contemporary male rulership. As aforementioned, women in African societies saw respect largely unheard of in European society. However, the Gikuyu also present another aspect of African cosmology that should be well noted. Kenyatta in illustrating the cosmology surrounding the Gikuyu name *irua*, i.e. circumcision, asserts:

The Gikuyu name for this custom of *rite de passage* from childhood to adulthood is *irua*, i.e. circumcision, or trimming the genital organs of both sexes. The dances and songs connected with the initiation ceremony are called *mambura*, i.e. rituals or divine services. It is important to note that the moral code of the tribe is bound up with this custom and that it symbolises the unification of the whole tribal organisation. This is the principal reason why *irua* plays such an important part in the life of the Gikuyu people. The *irua* marks the commencement of participation in various governing groups in the tribal administration, because the real age-groups begin from the day of the physical operation. The history and legends of the people are explained and remembered according to the names given to various age-groups at the time of the initiation ceremony. For example, if a devastating famine occurred at the time of the initiation, that particular *irua* group would be known as "famine" (*ng' aragu*).<sup>95</sup>

What Kenyatta is describing here epitomizes the cultural rites of many groups throughout Africa. The origin of circumcision can be traced back to the ancient kingdoms of Kemet and Nubia, particularly Meroë.<sup>96</sup> Perhaps no one better than the African polymath Cheikh Anta Diop has codified and couched into text the shared cultural practices, and thus cultural unity, of all Africans; ultimately tracing such from the cultural

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 7-8

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 134

<sup>96</sup> Cheikh Anta Diop. Mercer Cook. *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*. (Chicago: L. Hill, 1974), 135

genius of Kemet to the modern renditions among his native Wolof in Senegal. The ritualistic and spiritual mechanism of circumcision is but one of those cultural aspects identified.<sup>97</sup> Indeed other scholars since his time have written of such clearly parallel traditions found among the Igbo of Nigeria<sup>98</sup>, the Suku in the Congo<sup>99</sup>, and the Mande of west Africa<sup>100</sup>, and among myriad other African societies.

The identification of this unity in practice of circumcision is a necessary vehicle for illustrating the importance of world-view in terms of reparation and unity. Each of these societies exhibited similar purposes for the act of circumcision, usually employed in rituals known as *rites of passage* that could result in the naming of a child and, most commonly, the inauguration into adulthood and, thus, the completion of the child's indoctrination into the world-view of the culture. Such establishment of cosmology is accompanied by cultural epistemology -the teaching of such world-view by way of using the children as center and subject within their own cultural history. To be sure, the western world has now indeed embraced circumcision, however not as a cultural rite but originating as suggestions of routine measure among 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglophone doctors for quite erroneous and eccentric reasoning such as a preventive for masturbation.<sup>101</sup>

Nevertheless, Kenyatta continues:

---

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 135- 138

<sup>98</sup>Ifi Amadiume. *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*. London: Zed Books, 1987.) 77

<sup>99</sup> Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí. *African Gender Studies: Theoretical Questions and Conceptual Issues*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, (England: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 130

<sup>100</sup> Patrick R. McNaughton. *The Mande Blacksmiths: Knowledge, Power, and Art in West Africa*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.), 113-114

<sup>101</sup> Darby, R. "The Masturbation Taboo and the Rise of Routine Male Circumcision: A Review of the Historiography." *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 3 (2003): 737-57. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3790737> Accessed: April 4, 2017

Without this custom a tribe which had no written records would not have been able to keep a record of important events and happenings in the life of the Gikuyu nation. Any Gikuyu child who is not corrupted by detribalisation is able to record in his mind the whole history and origin of the Gikuyu people through the medium of such names as Agu, Nдеми and Mathathi, etc., who were initiated hundreds of years ago... The spirit of collectivism was so much ingrained in the mind of the people that even eating, drinking, working and sleeping were done collectively. This may sound like Utopia to those who are not acquainted with the Gikuyu tribal organisation, but the fact remains that the system is still functioning in those parts of the country where the people have not yet been saturated with the Western individualistic ways of life.<sup>102</sup>

The Gikuyu are organized and think of themselves and their society no differently than one would consider a nation. There has existed governing bodies, laws, customs and every essential, and perhaps many inessential, indicators of a national culture. The key problem for African Americans, as Maulana Karenga suggests, is that they have a popular culture oppose to a national culture. In *Kawaida Theory: An Introductory Outline*, Karenga advances, “Popular culture, Kawaida posits, is the unconscious, fluid reaction to everyday life and environment.

In other words, it is social thought and practice defined and limited by its unconsciousness, fluidity and reactivity. By contrast, national culture is the self-conscious, collective thought and practice thru which a people creates itself and introduces itself to history and humanity.”<sup>103</sup> In rectifying the issue of developing national culture, it is incumbent upon African Americans to draw the lines of distinction for such ethnic nationalism. This can only be done by utilizing Sankofa, drawing from the

---

<sup>102</sup> Jomo Kenyatta. Bronislaw Malinowski. *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 135, 195

<sup>103</sup> Maulana Karenga, *Kawaida Theory: An Introductory Outline*. (Inglewood, Calif.: Kawaida Publications, 1980), 18

myriad African paradigms extant within African American culture and that which has to be recovered from African history.<sup>104</sup>

### Cultural Continuity from Ancient Times to Contemporary

Therefore, in examining the African paradigms, and particularly the Gikuyu model, for contemporary application perhaps both platonic and romantic relationships between Black men and women in America can be better understood. John Blassingame notes that during the era of enslavement, “Africans recognized woman’s independence”, quoting a Tonga declaration, “Woman has no chief”.<sup>105</sup> Blassingame further reveals that while in certain ethnic groups such as the Igbo and Fan men were the representative head, the Fan would also advise “If you want peace, give ear to your wives’ proposals.”<sup>106</sup> Blassingame suggests that because of the condition of the plantation this saw to men struggling to regain status, “transforming African familial roles to the creation of America’s first democratic family in the quarters, where men and women shared authority and responsibility.”<sup>107</sup> However, Blassingame in all his wisdom is wrong on this measure. It may have been America’s first example of a family structure that saw to equal power and status attributed to women, but it wasn’t the first known in Africa.

Concerning the Igbo, Ifi Amadiume, in her beautifully crafted text *Male daughters, female Husbands* illustrates that indigenous Igbo society had a flexible gender

---

<sup>104</sup> This should exhibit a stream of African history stemming from the Ancient African past to present day African Americans though being only one of the many channels of African history deriving from the same origin (ie, history of Africans in the Caribbean, Europe, Asia, etc.)

<sup>105</sup> Blassingame, John W. *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*. (New York: Oxford, 1981.), 177

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 177

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, 178

system in which roles generally thought to be exclusive for males, could be left for females to inherit or capitalize.<sup>108</sup> This, of course, was not limited to Igbo society however saw continuity generationally, continent-wide. In the sphere of rulership, in ancient Kemet we know of such figures as Hatshepsut who ruled for some time as consort in place of her nephew Thutmose III before electing to inherit the male gender specific role of Pharaoh (occupied previously by her father and husband) and became one of the greatest female rulers and perhaps the greatest female military tactician of all history, if not one of the greatest of all time, independent of sex. Hatshepsut even went so far as to wear a false beard to further symbolize her position.<sup>109</sup>

The Kandake (Candace) system of governance in Kush and Meroë saw to roughly 500 years of female rulership. Starting with Queen Shanadakete, who ruled not as simply a Queen regent but as wholly autonomous heir to the throne. This was not exactly a case of gender reversal however as Molefi Asante notes in his text *The History of Africa: The Quest for Eternal Harmony*, “In the wall painting her husband is shown seated behind her, indicating that she is indeed the ruler and not the man.”<sup>110</sup> In the preceding chapter Angola’s Queen Nzinga was given much attention as a ruler and tactician who replaced her brother as the head of the Ndongo and Matamba. Just as Hatshepsut had done in the Kemetite paradigm, Nzinga likewise exercised African cultural gender fluidity in fashioning herself in a male role as the ruler of her kingdom. Discussed in this chapter was the legend of the Gikuyu and their matriarchal clans

---

<sup>108</sup> Ifi Amadiume. *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*. London: Zed Books, 1987.), 185

<sup>109</sup> Asante, Molefi K. *The History of Africa: the Quest for Eternal Harmony*. (New York: Routledge, 2015.), 43-48

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, 89

beginning with the first matriarch, Moombi. In the following chapter attention will be drawn to the theoretical possibilities of the future of Black culturist and Black nationalist movements if such aforementioned African paradigms had been applied during their time.

### Discourse on African Spirituality: From Ancient Times to Present

No discussion about African people and culture can be had without addressing African spirituality. As Ama Mazama postulates in her crucial text *The Afrocentric Paradigm*, in the African paradigmatic context, “the essence of life, therefore of human beings, is spiritual.”<sup>111</sup> Afrocentric knowledge is corroborated by the synthesis of historical acumen and intuition.<sup>112</sup> Intuition in the African paradigmatic conceptualization can be understood as ancestral guidance –for we have because those before us gave, and moreover, continue to guide from the spiritual realm. Thusly, intuitive factors are spiritual in nature and the preeminence of spirituality in African consciousness promotes a oneness with nature. With this understanding African cosmology recognizes the “fundamental interconnectedness of all things.”<sup>113</sup> An exemplar of such thought comes from the passages of *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United States*, written by the esteemed music scholar and educator Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. Throughout the text he highlights African people’s insistence on the spiritual primacy of not only music but all human activity. Floyd, in utilizing the scholarship of John S. Mbiti, advances:

---

<sup>111</sup> Mazama, Ama. *The Afrocentric Paradigm*. (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003.), 26

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 26

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 26

In traditional African culture, there was no formal distinction between the sacred and the profane realms of life, or between the material and the spiritual; thus there was in traditional Africa no word for "religion" because the Africans' religion permeated and was the basis for all aspects of life, including education, politics, harvesting, hunting, homemaking, and community welfare. Since religion permeated the everyday life of African peoples, the great number of religious beliefs that existed were not systematized into dogmas, but appeared as ideas and practices that governed everyday life in the various communities. All African peoples recognized God as the One, although in a majority of cosmologies other divinities also existed, some of whom were closely allied with him. In a few cases, dual and trinitarian concepts prevailed (Mbiti [1969] 1990, 35-36). But whatever the case may have been, Africans, on the whole, worshipped God, the One.<sup>114</sup>

The western world has long from their perspective interpreted and then propagandized their misconceptions of the spiritual practices of African people. The use of the term "pagan" has long shackled the complex spiritual models of African culture, deaminizing said culture as inferior and quite often as malevolent and immoral. Much of the misconceptions presented about African spiritual systems stems also from European projection of their own cultural occultism such as witchcraft and devil worship onto the African models. What you will find is that African people, particularly in the Americas began to believe much of these misconceptions and many even, for various reasons began to practice the clandestine amalgam of African aesthetic and European occultism.

Europeans have inserted their world-view on even the most ancient of African spiritual traditions. Though in some cases, while the interpretations may be illegitimate and often damaging to the reconstruction of African cosmology, the discoveries made prove useful. Especially when those discoveries involve sacred relics of ancient and modern Africa. Fetishes (sometimes appearing as fetishism when ideologicalized) is a

---

<sup>114</sup> Floyd, Samuel A. *The Power of black music: interpreting its history from Africa to the United States*. (Oxford University Press, 1997.), 15

European terminology used to describe are a range of items that the ancient ancestors of the Nile Valley cherished and usually served some manner of sentimental and mystical application.<sup>115</sup> They are also used in the description of various other similar African objects of spiritual application. These came in the form of wrapped staffs, amulets bearing ankhs and beetles or possibly even shabtis<sup>116</sup>. The term fetish was coined by a Frenchman named Charles de Brosses who in his text, *Du culte des dieux fétiches ou Parallèle de l'ancienne religion de l'Égypte avec la religion actuelle de Nigritie*, elaborates on his theories linking Kemetic spirituality to west African spiritual systems.<sup>117</sup> Historians such as William Pietz offer ideas on the definition of fetishes. Piez suggests that fetishes are much different from idols, which are representations of an ethereal presence located elsewhere, insomuch as that Fetishes are more like amulets embodying beliefs, narrative structures, and desires.<sup>118</sup> This would be almost acceptable however Pietz, being a Eurocentrist, fails naturally to grasp the very nature of the objects in question. To further elucidate, Pietz offers in his article “The problem of the fetish II” what he calls a “first encounter theory”, an encounter between a Dutch merchant Willem Bosman and an African man:

He [Bosnian's principal African informant] obliged me with the following Answer, that the Number of their Gods was endless and innumerable: For (said he) any of us being resolved to undertake any thing of Importance, we first of all search out a God to prosper our designed Undertaking; and going out of Doors

---

<sup>115</sup> Rosalie David. *Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt*. (London: England. Penguin Books 2002), 51.

<sup>116</sup> Shabtis are ethereal servants in the form of wooden or stone dolls that are given specific tasks.

<sup>117</sup> Charles de Brosses. *Du culte des dieux fétiches ou Parallèle de l'ancienne religion de l'Égypte avec la religion actuelle de Nigritie* (1760)

<sup>118</sup> Macgaffey, Wyatt. "African Objects and the Idea of Fetish." *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 25 (1994): 123-31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20166895> Accessed: April 6, 2017. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20166895> Accessed: April 6, 2017

with this design, take the first creature that presents itself to our Eyes, whether Dog, Cat, or the most contemptible Animal in the World, for our God; or perhaps instead of that any Inanimate that falls in our way, whether a Stone, a piece of Wood, or any Thing else of the same nature.<sup>119</sup>

We see now that the encounters on the western coast between Europeans and Africans were far from those of which cultural ideas exchanged evenly. Europeans had certain suppositions of the nature of African culture and projected their ideals thusly. Supposedly, however, Pietz likened himself as an objective sort and presented within his essay another encounter with a varying description of the matter. Another merchant, an Englishman by the name of Ashley had this to offer:

... it is certain that the Whidah [Ouidah] Negroes [Whidah was the principle slave port for Dahomey] have a faint idea of a true God, ascribing to him the Attributes of Almighty Power and Omnipresence. They believe he created the Universe, and therefore prefer him before their Fetishes; but they do not pray to him, or offer him any Sacrifices, for which they give the following Reasons: God, say they, is too high exalted above us, and too great to condescend to think of Mankind; wherefore he commits the Government of the World to our Fetishes, to whom, as the second, third, and fourth Persons distant in Degree from God, and our appointed lawful Governors, we are obliged to apply ourselves. And in firm Belief of this Opinion they quietly continue.<sup>120</sup>

This is closer to the realities of African cosmology however it should be noted that in African societies the application of gender (“he” as used by Ashley above) to the divine force was done to inform the patterns of roles in African life, and could be fluid in terms of gender and role, as was discussed in previous chapters. Nevertheless, we see from the two perspectives a broader picture being painted on the nature of fetishes. The various “objects”, or amulets, could possibly be more determined as the housings of spirits but, as covered previously, also the “spirit” of the aspects of life itself.

---

<sup>119</sup> Pietz, William. "The Problem of the Fetish, II: The Origin of the Fetish." *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 13 (1987): 23-45.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20166762> Accessed: April 6, 2017

<sup>120</sup> Ibid

Consequently, African people value all of creation and see the material and immaterial as one, as married to the body of creator. Thusly, the personification of God as man, or in the image of man did not take precedent over the understanding of the creator as omnipresent within all manifestations of creation. Why give offerings only to a singular ideological nucleus, an idea of spiritual embodiment, when there are flowers to be watered, animals to be fed, landscapes to be cultivated, and stars to be admired? This is how African spirituality permeates throughout all areas of people activity on the continent. This is also how the first of astronomers, geologists, botanists, medical professionals and other areas of people activity came into being –as the African sees the spiritual and physical realms as one. Africans concede to intimacy with all of creation and thusly find themselves in favor with the creator.

Pietz, in his supposed objectivity only presents the Euroentric perspective, terming African culture as “alien” because of its resistance to “rational” trade trade relations.<sup>121</sup> Europeans appearing on the African coast learned that while the African valued gold they would trade it for things that had, to the European imagination, no rational trade value. Thus Europeans, much in the thinking of their English counterparts in the Americas who traded (or rather what they thought was a trade) beads for land with the Native Americans, considered these Africans “childlike” in their thinking, for they valued things that, for the European, granted no personal fulfillment. Perhaps if they had attempted to understand it in terms of their “crosses” used to symbolize their God Jesus, they may have bridged a cultural barrier. However, even that would be an exaggeration beyond the truth. Whereas losing a cross would possibly mean a trip to the market to

---

<sup>121</sup> Ibid

replace it, losing anything of spiritual significance for the African was foreboding as all is sacred. This is not to say that all Africans walked everyday life with a pious zealously, however the zeitgeist was of such that what is regarded as sacred should be treated as such no matter the circumstances. To be clear, this is not a sign of “childlike” ideology but that of discipline, maturity and respect.

Furthermore, the use of the term “fetishes” should not even apply as it is Eurocentric in its origin and application and dislocates African people from their own realities. Pietz traces its etymology back to “the Latin facticius or factitius, an adjective formed from the past participle of the verb facere, ‘to make.’”<sup>122</sup> He goes on to transcribe, “Finally, the word could mean ‘factitious’ or ‘fraudulent’ as opposed to ‘genuine’ –the ‘unnatural’ fabrication of appearance, of the signifiers of exchange value, without the substance or use value this at the appearance promised.” This last definition, in essence, is the embodiment of the Eurocentric ideology regarding items of African spiritual significance. The term was never applied objectively and was meant to suggest that which is considered to be perverse. This should be indicated by the fact that the term has evolved contemporarily to the more common use of abnormal sexual fixation.

The work of George Hegel, perhaps the most preeminent European philosopher, is another prime indicator of the original perverse applications of the term towards African spiritual systems. Hegel, as Mazama makes the point to critique, was a European racist who stated, “Africans had no history.”<sup>123</sup> In fact, the ideas of a “childlike” and ahistorical people in regards to African people can be largely traced to the writings of Hegel. In Teshale Tibebu’s *Hegel and the Third World: The Making of Eurocentrism in*

---

<sup>122</sup> Ibid

<sup>123</sup> Mazama, Ama. *The Afrocentric paradigm*. (Trenton: Africa world press, 2003.), 20

*World History* he points out that Hegel divided the African continent painting northern African civilizations such as “Egyptians” as “not true Africans” but more “akin to Europeans.”<sup>124</sup> Hegel furthermore considered “the negro”, as he considered the “race” below the northern portion of the continent, as “animal man in all his savagery and lawlessness.”<sup>125</sup> Tibebe would point out that of all the racist Heel critiques, it is only what he considers the African that has been dubbed “animal man”, the most primitive of all.<sup>126</sup> While the term “animal man” was not originally of Hegel’s invention, he advanced the idea as his schools of thought permeated the European world. However, Hegel, in regards to the religion of Kemet posits:

But in contemplating the *Religion* of the Egyptians, we are surprised by the strangest and most wonderful phenomena, and perceive that this calm order of things, bound fast by legislative enactment, is not like that of the Chinese, but that we have here to do with a Spirit entirely different — one full of stirring and urgent impulses. We have here the African element, in combination with Oriental massiveness, transplanted to the Mediterranean Sea, that grand *locale* of the display of nationalities; but in such a manner, that here there is no connection with foreign nations — this mode of stimulating intellect appearing superfluous; for we have here a prodigious urgent striving within the nationality itself, and which within its own circle shoots out into an objective realization of itself in the most monstrous productions. It is that African imprisonment of ideas combined with the infinite impulse of the spirit to realize itself objectively, which we find here. But Spirit has still, as it were, an iron band around its forehead; so that it cannot attain to the free consciousness of its existence, but produces this only as the problem, the enigma of its being.<sup>127</sup>

Clearly what Hegel what suggests is that what he perceives as the “African element” is what “imprisons” the spirit of Kemet from as “an iron band our its forehead”, stifling the spiritual freedom of Kemet. As Tibebe correctly affirms, Hegel believed that

---

<sup>124</sup> Tibebe, Teshale. *Hegel and the Third World: the Making of Eurocentrism in World History*. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011.), 80-81

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, 179

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, 179

<sup>127</sup> Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, and John Trl. Sibree. *Philosophy of History*. (New York: Colonial Press, 1900.), 227

Kemet “(1) did not obtain self-consciousness and (2) had no history until the arrival of the Greeks.”<sup>128</sup> Despite their long history of documentation on their walls and in papyri, Hegel insists that it is the European element, the era Ptolemaic infiltration, through their interpretation and proper use of its history and culture, that essentially frees Kemet of its shackles of African primitivism, highlighting the aspects of its grandeur. He makes no mention of the so-called fetishes of Kemet, though certainly he has to be familiar with the works of de Broses or even of similar works as his willing to admit “an African element” that is so influential on the spiritual systems of Kemet, though erroneous in his suggestion of how the element affected Kemet proper. But indeed such artifacts as amulets of Ankhs, Scarabs, monuments such as Mirs, Tekhenu, the Hor-em-akhet, among others hold quite the same meaning as those of which found continent-wide, trans-generationally. There were particular fauna and flora that the people of Kemet adopted as totems, such as, but not limited to, the scarab, ram, jackal, falcon, and papyri. To that end, de Broses also attaches the descriptive of “savage” to Kemet for its fetishes; perhaps Hegel thought to spare Kemet of such insult, though he had already stripped the ancient African nation of its agency. The testament of de Broses is as follows:

The proofs of the reasoning would have indicated to us, as I say below, what the proofs of fact show us here, namely, that Egypt, as so many places had been savage. The proof of fact that shows us worshiping animals and vegetables, in a word, what I call fetishism, are no less numerous than precise. Egyptian morals, worships and actions have been roughly the same as those of the Negroes...<sup>129</sup>

Dancing and music was also spiritually significant to the ancient Kemites. Often music and dance are described to accompany Kemetic ceremonies, usually with an array

---

<sup>128</sup> Tibebu, Teshale. *Hegel and the Third World: the Making of Eurocentrism in World History*. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011.), 275

<sup>129</sup> Charles de Broses. *Du culte des dieux fétiches ou Parallèle de l'ancienne religion de l'Egypte avec la religion actuelle de Nigritie* (1760)

of instruments. Depicted often among other instruments was the use of the sacred sistrum, described in Kemetic works such as *The Instruction of Amenemope*.<sup>130</sup> The Mande people of West Africa, known well for the Griot tradition, are also known to use sistrums and Djabara (an apparent sistrum relative) instruments for ritualistic purposes.<sup>131</sup> Until further research affords us infallibility, we can only justifiably conjecture that the sistrum made its way to the west by way of millennia of cultural exchange and solidarity.

Another striking similarity of west-African spirituality with Kemet can be analyzed from the crossings of spiritual systems witnessed again on the American slave plantations. The Akan acknowledgement of spiritual distinction between a person's *ntoro* (spirit) and their *kra*<sup>132</sup> (soul) bares similarities with the Bambara's position of *ni* (soul) and *dya* (double).<sup>133</sup> These are strikingly similar to the Kemetic cosmological juxtaposition of *ba* (spiritual person) and *ka*<sup>134</sup> (interpretable, soul).

The last of these parallels can be drawn from burials. Again we can turn to West African custom brought over to America, synthesizing into Black cultural traditions found especially in the south. It is not unique to find Black gravesites adorned with artifacts "such as personal effects last handled by the deceased, plates, cups, broken glassware, seashells, white pebbles, trees newly planted to mark the occasion [among other]... *minkisi*, or sacred medicines, deployed to properly guide the deceased's spirit to

---

<sup>130</sup> Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol.2, (1976), 91,149

<sup>131</sup> Patrick R. McNaughton. *The Mande Blacksmiths: Knowledge, Power, and Art in West African Art*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1993), 68

<sup>132</sup> Linguistic comparison between Kemetic Ka and Akan Kra should be examined.

<sup>133</sup> Michael Gomez. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. (Chapel Hill: North Carolina. University of North Carolina Press 1998), 271.

<sup>134</sup> In some works the Ka is related as "double"

the ancestral realm.”<sup>135</sup> Arguably, no other ancient civilization in history is this most reminiscent of than Kemet as plethora artifacts and numerous writings from that era exists showcasing and expressing this very world-view.

One final and most important note should be made of Kemet and its relation to the rest of the continent. In Maluana Karenga’s *Maat: The Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: A Study in Classical African Ethics*, he puts forth the well substantiated position that, “The starting-point for any serious discussion of ancient Egyptian ethics is and must be the central concept of Maat.”<sup>136</sup> As Molefi Asante further postulates in *The History of Africa*, “In the minds of the ancient Kemetic people, Maat was the idea that it was necessary to possess order, balance, harmony, justice, truth, righteousness, and reciprocity as minima for holding back chaos in every aspect of life.”<sup>137</sup> Asante insists, with good measure, that within the formulation of national culture, this classical African ideal must be revitalized.<sup>138</sup>

As recent as the emergence of the African American we find so-called fetishes in the form of objects from Vodou, Voodoo or Vodoun spiritual systems.<sup>139</sup> What we also find significant is the ease that several African ethnic groups, although supposedly linguistically unintelligible to one another, bonded under apparent universal spiritual

---

<sup>135</sup> Michael Gomez. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. (Chapel Hill: North Carolina. University of North Carolina Press 1998), 275

<sup>136</sup> Karenga. *Maat, the Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: a Study in Classical African Ethics*. (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 2006.) , 5

<sup>137</sup> Asante, Molefi K. *The History of Africa: The Quest for Eternal Harmony*. (New York: Routledge, 2015.), 35

<sup>138</sup> Asante, Molefi Kete. *An Afrocentric Manifesto: Toward an African renaissance*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2008.), 70

<sup>139</sup> Michael Gomez. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. (Chapel Hill: North Carolina. University of North Carolina Press 1998), 283.

activities. As discussed in previous chapters, what is known today as “ring shouts”, Africans from west and west-central Africa bonded over this spiritual tradition, each bringing to it their own unique, yet similar, cosmological interpretations. Ring shouts were sometimes exemplified during church revivals with whites but commonly amongst the enslaved Africans in the field (especially late at night while the master slept) and even more commonly at funerals.<sup>140</sup>

### On Vodou: Requiring an African Spiritual System

Of all African spiritual tradition Vodou has perhaps been the most vilified. Prior to the 1780’s Vodou was considered a relatively harmless practice among the enslaved. However, this perception changed dramatically after The Haitian Revolution (1789-1804). Author Ina Johanna Fandrich’s fantastic scholarship bestows us with a book chapter “Defiant African Sisterhoods: The Voodoo Arrests of the 1850s and 1860s in New Orleans”, presented in Patrick Bellegarde-Smith’s edited work *Fragments of Bone: New African Religions in a New World*, in which we learn that preceding the Haitian Revolutionary War, various “fierce Voodoo rituals were at the core of the uprising against the colonial rulers and inspired the enslaved Africans ultimately to defeat the mighty army of Napoleon.”<sup>141</sup> The Haitian Revolution was of course the only successful enslaved African revolt in western history, resulting in the birth of what is now the only Black republic in the western hemisphere. The mayhem in Haiti saw rise to a number of refugees, both enslaved and free, who poured into New Orleans during and after the

---

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 267 -272

<sup>141</sup> Bellegarde-Smith, Patrick. *Fragments of bone: Neo-African Religions in a New World*. (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 2005.), 188

chaos of the war. Naturally, these Africans would bring their ancestral spiritual system along with them, seeing to the growth of New Orleans Vodou and its further spreading across the American south. American owners of the enslaved unsurprisingly feared and immediately began to vilify Vodou as they didn't want the influence to spread amongst the Africans on their plantations.<sup>142</sup>

However, for quite a while Vodou seemed to be tolerated in New Orleans. As Fandrich notes, "'Père Antoine' (Friar Antonio de Sedella), New Orleans's all-time most popular Catholic priest, was a close friend and ally of Marie Laveaux, the city's most famous Voodoo priestess. The two worked often together to minister, the sick, especially during the yellow fever epidemics."<sup>143</sup> However, after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the colonial system that had been established there by the French was quickly dismantled in the following decades. Englishmen who came to New Orleans seeking fortune did not readily understand Vodou practices and saw them as silly superstitions that served only as an annoyance to the social order they were attempting to construct. The once respected Vodou priestess system became increasingly subjected to the ire of the new colonial owners. It is to be noted that the French system of social order had three tiers or "castes", (1) the free whites, (2) the limited legal rights of the free people of color, and (3) the enslaved. However, the new American rulers were not so accustomed to such and worked quickly to dismantle this system leaving the free people of color with even more limited rights than before. Furthermore, out of the growing fear of the insurrection that had happened previously in Haiti, the white-supremacist society began to crack down on Vodou as practice. They implemented law making it a serious crime for free persons of

---

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 189

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 189-190

color to <sup>144</sup> It is significant to note that Vodou was a spiritual system in New Orleans primarily dominated by women. This is of course no strange revelation given African cultural heritage, as many African societies saw the women as head or distinguished among their spiritual traditions. One can even see this tradition carry over into the Black Church with the prominence of “Church Mothers” and the significant role Deaconesses play in that religious structure. Fandrich provides further foundation for this history:

About two thirds of New Orleans’ free colored population was female. Many of them had remarkable professional success as shopkeepers, restraint managers, cooks, small-business owners (mainly laundry shops), and wealthy real estate brokers. Nearly all Voodoo priestesses and a significant number of their followers were among these free women of color. Yet the majority of the city’s free women of color were staunch Catholics and had little or no connections with the local Voodoo houses. Nevertheless, because their considerable professional success in the business world had no female equivalents in the white society and this couldn’t easily be explained, all of these women were associated with Voodoo in some form or another.<sup>145</sup>

After 1850 police raids became common among the homes of free women of color due to the growing intolerance of Vodou. It is quite possible that many of these women, rather Vodou practitioners or not, were targeted due to the jealousy of their financial success by their white female equivalents. “The arrest of women of color on charges of practicing Voodoo continued throughout the 1850s and lasted until the late 1860s, well after the Civil Rights Act of 1866 was signed.”<sup>146</sup>

Increasingly Vodou began to become associated with witchcraft, especially during the emergence of the “African sisterhoods”<sup>147</sup> as whites and women of color with white parentage began to take part in Vodou rituals. What can be ascertained is that whites and

---

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 190

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, 190

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 196

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 197

women of women of some white parentage began to project their own cultural occultism upon Vodou, integrating it with practices such as cauldron brews, chalk-drawn circles. By the time of the silent movie era films such as *White Zombie* (1932) and *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943) propagandized even further the witchcraft elements that had no part in the original spiritual system itself. In these films and subsequent ones Hollywood introduced concepts such as “voodoo dolls”, which never existed in African cosmology however saw its precedence in European ritual magic. The use of the voodoo doll in film and popular culture is now so pervasive it features even in Disney animated films such as *The Princess and the Frog*.<sup>148</sup> Author Natalie Armitage writes exclusively on the subject in her chapter "European and African Figural Ritual Magic: The Beginnings of the Voodoo Doll Myth" located in Ceri Houlbrook and Natalie Armitage's *The Materiality of Magic: An Artifactual Investigation into Ritual Practices and Popular Beliefs*. Armitage submits that:

The contributing factors to the construction of this myth are numerous, with many rooted in negative depictions of race and Afro-Caribbean religious practice in the post-Colonial era in the United States and 20th-century popular culture.<sup>149</sup>

Clearly we can see that the spiritual system known as Vodou has been done a disservice by white supremacy. However, particularly in the rural south, contrary arguments might be given by members of the African American community as well as both white and Creole communities. Many may no doubt recall people who supposedly practiced Vodou. Stories of individuals turning into Black cats, casting charms and

---

<sup>148</sup> Armitage, Natalie (2015). "European and African Figural Ritual Magic: The Beginnings of the Voodoo Doll Myth". In Ceri Houlbrook and Natalie Armitage. *The Materiality of Magic: An Artifactual Investigation into Ritual Practices and Popular Beliefs*. Oxford: Oxbow. pp. 85–101.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid*, 86

enacting “roots” run rampant in these areas. However, it is important to note that not only were African people, particularly in the United States, cut off from mainstream African spirituality during the era of enslavement, and especially after the call to end the European Trade of Enslaved Africans in 1809, the chances of many of these deeds being both constructs of European occultism and contemporary fabrication becomes increasingly higher. Take for example the so-called “African Sisterhoods” in New Orleans. Not only was European occultism mixed into the practices there, the chances of fabrication on the part of the press and the “practitioners” are quite high. The press would see the need to sensationalize stories for the purposes of selling papers, and the practitioners themselves were certainly trying at best to keep the police out of their business. If a raiding officer just so happened to be superstitious, what better way than to keep them at bay than to tell them they’d have a “*root*” placed on them that would do unspeakable things to their physicality or livelihood. What can also be ascertained is that, much like the circumstances surrounding the criminalization of marijuana in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, African Americans, in effort to protect their loved ones, began themselves to condemn the practice in order to push a “politics of respectability” in the hopes it would save lives and livelihoods. However, what would have begun as a response for preservation, has now evolved into an abject lack of understanding and fear of their own culture. Nevertheless, African of the Americas in the investigation all aspects of their culture, should requite from the clutches of white-supremacy afflicted histories that especially which deals with spiritual matters.

## CHAPTER 5 ON THE PATH TO BLACK NATIONALISM

Nationalism on a Pan-African scale is an enterprise that, while informed by paradigmatic elements, is relatively new to the African consciousness. Nevertheless, the African world is dynamic, and when placed under the extreme pressures of such oppressive systems, like coal into diamonds, Africans manifested that which had already sat dormant within. So ancient in fact this dormant state that many of the first calls for Nationalism was under such terms as Ethiopianism, as Africans began to see themselves not only a part of the ancient world but inheritors of the rich history that gave birth to what had become known as human civilization.

### The Question of Agency

Before plunging into the various Black Nationalists and movements, what must first be discussed is the nature of African agency in asserting a nationalist front. Molefi Asante in his intellectual charge, *An Afrocentric Manifesto* argues against the likes of Michael C. Dawson as he asserts “Black Nationalism is the only true Black ideology since it finds its source in the early writings and discourses of Africans who resisted enslavement and racism.”<sup>150</sup> Much argument has been given to the concept of Black Marxism as a leading tradition of African American and Pan-African political movements. Recently members of the Black Marxist camp have erroneously argued themselves to be the “Black Radical Tradition”, perhaps seeing themselves as an

---

<sup>150</sup> Asante, Molefi Kete. *An Afrocentric Manifesto: Toward an African Renaissance*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 124

amalgam of the foundational intellectual properties of Black advancement. However, the historical record indeed proves that, despite what the Black Marxists may argue, the true Black Radical Tradition has never foundationally relied on the theories of Marx, and certainly needs not the endorsement of his ideals, but that of African people's cultural foundations and intellectual enterprises informing a nationalist agenda.

Ana Monteiro-Ferreira in her meticulously detailed monograph, *The Demise of the Inhuman: Afrocentricity, Modernism and Postmodernism* makes precise contentions in revealing that "Marxism and socialism perceive and address theories and ideologies of the European philosophical thought best reflected in Hegel's pronouncements that *Africa proper* was the home of the Negro, an inferior human species incapable of producing history and on the assumption of the European model as universal."<sup>151</sup> Such ideology, Marxism specifically, focuses primarily on class dynamics based on Eurocentric models, and ignores or betrays entirely the concept of race and pluralism of reality, perpetuating a universalism that stifles any paradigmatic African thought (or any other cultural thought than European). Therefore, Black Marxism, being not the true Black Radical Tradition is rendered inoperative when applied to African cultural dynamics. While some scholarship of Black Marxism has admittedly advanced many discussions of Black oppression, a Black perspective attached to a European paradigm still leaves Black people marginal within the theoretic framework. As Monteiro-Ferreira astutely points out:

...Marxism also failed (1) to acknowledge the existence and validity of other cultural, social, and economic experiences; (2) to include the parameters of the colonized experience in the discussion and assessment of causes and consequences of oppression; (3) to recognize that economic oppression is tainted and reinforced by other equality-subjugating factors like gender and race. In a

---

<sup>151</sup> Monteiro-Ferreira, Ana. *The Demise of the Inhuman: Afrocentricity, Modernism, and Postmodernism*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015.), 57-58

word, Marxism and the socialist agendas have traced their routes from the same hegemonic conceptualization pervasive in the Western paradigm ‘that has removed the colonized from history while usurping the role of decision maker of the world destiny’ (Memmi, 1967: 91).<sup>152</sup>

In fact, we see that despite African leaders such as Nkrumah, Sékou Touré, Lumumba, Amílcar Cabral, Nyerere and others having at one time adopted some of the ideologies of Marxism, they ultimately had to create their own political theories based on the needs of African people. They saw increasingly that their western training had provided them with an unequivocally false universalism that was not applicable to African realities. Monteiro-Ferreira points this out in the work of Cabral as he suggests “*the struggle against our own weaknesses*” as the primary struggle that will doom African liberation. For the failure to unfetter themselves from colonial mentalities is no true liberation but has the potential to actually continue the colonial project, creating, as Fanon would see it, nations of Black skins with white masks, devoid of agency and autonomy. Further, the Black Marxist should be charged with an array of valid questioning. What has the Black or errant-Black-Marxists ultimately produced in an attempt for the progression of African People? What paradigms have they presented that can be utilized in the ongoing struggle for autonomy and freedom? The Black Panther Party for Self Defense, though adopting some Marxist ideology later in its development, developed and organized primarily by the potency of Black Nationalist ideology and particular under the ideologies of Malcolm X. Maulana Karenga’s US Organization, Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam, Moorish Science Temple, Marcus Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association, Malcolm X’s Organization of Afro-American Unity, Martin Delany’s Black Nationalist movements, the Black Nationalist ideology and

---

<sup>152</sup> Ibid, 58

following of David Walker, and the African repatriation movements and activities of Henry Highland Garnet had and needed no Marxist foundation. Any suggestion to the contrary would be a provocatively fallacious crime against those great leaders and their sacrifice and courage.

Asante remarked that Dawson's charge of "radical egalitarianism" being the oldest of African American political traditions was a misstatement of "the nature of the early affirmation of culture and resistance to racism articulated by the first Africans to land in the English colonies."<sup>153</sup> Asante's contention is agreeable however the founding Afrocentrist is in error to suggest that Black Nationalism finds its source within those early discourses and writings in resistance to colonialism and racism. To be sure, the record shows that the encroachment of Europeans and the subsequent resistance struggles was a catalyst for *contemporary* Black Nationalism within penned and oratorical rhetoric. Undoubtedly, before this time there has never been a diasporic or Pan-African call for nationalizing. However, though this may indeed be a simple case of syntax, it is important to emphasize that, paradigmatically, Black Nationalism finds its inevitable roots in the interconnecting cultural models of Africa itself. Without taking into account the pre-existing cultural models that gives Black Nationalism its foundation, we are left with origins dependent solely upon African reactive interactions with Europeans. Thusly, what would remain is the contention that if not for Europeans, Africans would have no unifying basis. What would make this a question of syntax is of course such argument being antithetical to Afrocentric paradigmatic understandings of a cultural unity of African people transcontinental and transgenerationally.

---

<sup>153</sup> Asante, Molefi Kete. *An Afrocentric Manifesto: Toward an African Renaissance*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 124

## Birth of the Black Radical Tradition

Within the rhetoric coming out of the several schools of thought surrounding Ethiopianism was a central, unifying ideology based around a biblical passage, “Princes shall come of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God” (Psalms, 68:31). This passage represented in the hearts of Ethiopianism’s believers a beautiful allegory of Pan-African ties to an African nation known to be amongst the most ancient Christian nation in the world. Ethiopians had accepted Christianity as their state religion in 333 A.D., establishing it as one of the earliest Christian states during the rein of King Ezana of the Kingdom of Axum.<sup>154</sup> Africans both on the continent and in the Americas, armed with a racial pride backed with such esteemed history used religious rhetoric to claim a coming redemption for African people both spiritually and secularly. By the turn of the twentieth century Ethiopia became synonymous with Africa or people of African descent. Such early Black Nationalist as David Walker, Martin Delany, Marcus Garvey, J. Casey Hayford and Edward Blyden took up Ethiopianism’s cause, composed many literatures and gave many speeches based around the ideals.<sup>155</sup>

Martin Delany is often regarded as the “father of Black Nationalism” and one of the first, if not the first to write in fiction about the African continent beginning with his daring novel *Blake; or, The Huts of America* published and distributed by 1860. Delany, as an early proponent of Black emigration to Africa, often evoked the sentiments of

---

<sup>154</sup> Falola, Toyin. *Africa Volume 1: African History Before 1885*. (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2000.), 107

<sup>155</sup> Asante, Molefi Kete, and Ama Mazama. *Encyclopedia of Black Studies*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007.), 233

Ethiopianism in his many speeches and writings.<sup>156</sup> He and others such as Edward Blyden, Alexander Crummell, and Henry Highland Garnet, utilizing the steadily growing rhetoric of Ethiopianism, and on the aims of advancing the African Civilization Society, an organization whose effort was the repatriation of Black people in the Americas to Africa, became paradigmatic figures for Marcus Garvey and his United Negro Improvement Association.

Delany's early relationship with the black abolitionist Frederick Douglass seemed amenable to both but, as we'll discover, they and their two schools of thought became like warring factions over the struggle for the true ideology Blacks should follow for progress. Henry Highland Garnet's who during the antebellum era achieved much notoriety and infamy for his speech delivered at the 1843 Black National Convention, where he beseeched, "if hereditary bondmen would be free, they must themselves strike the blow."<sup>157</sup> This type of rhetoric, especially coming from the likes of a Black Presbyterian Minister, scared Frederick Douglass, as he feared his radicalism might hinder the abolitionist movement. However, one can argue that none more so than Delany held Douglass' attention as dangerous to his integrationalist platform.

Delany would throughout his life waiver back and forth on emigration to Africa, just as he would on his beliefs that God's plans were for the Black and white races to be separated. After the Civil War he believed once again in the possibilities of peace between Blacks and whites, while insisting still in the need for Black solidarity and

---

<sup>156</sup> Gruesser, John Cullen. *Black on Black: Twentieth-Century African American Writing about Africa*. (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000.), 3, 7

<sup>157</sup> Finkelman, Paul. *Encyclopedia of African American history, 1619-1895: from the colonial period to the age of Frederick Douglass*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.), 89

nationalist elements even if their fate was to remain within the United States. His racial egalitarianism blossomed during the early years of Reconstruction as he called for a “Triple Alliance” with whites. In his 1865 essay Delany suggested:

Capital, land, and labor require a copartnership. The capital can be obtained in the North; the land is in the South, owned by the old planters; and the Blacks have the labor. Let, then, the North supply the capital (which no doubt it will do on demand, when known to be desired on this basis), the South the land (which is ready and waiting), and the Blacks will readily bring the labor.<sup>158</sup>

What we see in the writings of Delany was perhaps indicative of his perceptions of the fickleness of Europeans as the failure of Reconstruction, so blatantly committed by white derelict and sabotage, led him once again to his separatist ideologies and back to the call for Black and Pan-African nationalism –though the ideals of separatism and nationalism be not always so literally affixed. The tensions between Black Nationalist camps and that of anti-Black Nationalists are seen also in the relationships between Delany and such figures as Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown who argued vehemently against reparation to Africa and increasingly grew to a position in which they would have been elated to see the vanquishing of race in the United States by way of intermarriage.<sup>159</sup> In fact, Frederick Douglass himself took for his second wife the white abolitionist Helen Pitts –despite the fact that Helen’s parents (also abolitionists mind you) were fervently opposed as Douglass was deemed unworthy for her as he was a Black man by nature of his Black mother. Regardless, Douglass grew adamant about his sentiments towards African repatriation, even going so far as to attack continental Africans as he opined in an 1859 address to the African Civilization Society:

---

<sup>158</sup> Delany, Martin Robison, and Robert Steven Levine. *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*. (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2003.), 12

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, 4, 468

The savage chiefs of the western coasts of Africa, who for ages have been accustomed to selling their captives into bondage and pocketing the ready cash for them, will not more readily accept our moral and economical ideas than the slave traders of Maryland and Virginia," he advised. "We are, therefore, less inclined to go to Africa to work against the slave trade than to stay here to work against it."<sup>160</sup>

The contextual arguments of African involvement in the trade previously addressed in previous chapters notwithstanding, Douglass points ring clear of sentiments shared by other prominent figures like the aforementioned Wells Brown and others of the estrangement they felt with Africa. While Douglass would admit to Black people in America being "a nation within a nation" he saw it more as imposed position resulting from the factors of white supremacy.<sup>161</sup> However, was this the overarching zeitgeist in the minds of the masses of African descendants in America and, if so, are contemporary Black Americans of this same conviction? Surely if it were we would have seen a languishing effect in nationalistic ideals juxtaposed to the scope and prevalence of Garveyism, the radical elements during the Civil Rights Movements of the 50's and 60's and the emergence of Black Power.

Collecting anthropological field research in the 1970s John Langston Gwaltney compiled his data into his masterfully crafted *Drylongso: A Self-Portrait of Black America* relates the nationalist sentiments of many African Americans he surveyed. Ms. Hannah Nelson, quite prudent in her assessments, relates:

---

<sup>160</sup> "Frederick Douglass' Address to African Civilization Society." Teaching American History. Accessed March 24, 2017.

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/african-civilization-society/>.

<sup>161</sup> Levine, Robert S. *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity*. (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.), 60

... We were a nation within a nation. I know that will probably bother your white readers, but it is nonetheless true that Black people think of themselves as an entity... We are interested in having all these things the whites have taken from everyone else –land and everything you can do with land. I don't know anybody who thinks you have to be with white people to enjoy all these things... Each day that we live like this, with more responsibility than any other people and no authority at all, our people become more disorganized. TV, movies, drugs, and school make our young men into walking disgraces, and we can do nothing about it so long as we live among white people. Do you think I would tolerate a school like that one Kwame goes to if I were running a school? Do you imagine I would create a warfare system which degrades women and children? <sup>162</sup>

Gwaltney's work is indeed a "portrait" of Black Nationalist sentiments which have survived since even before the eras of Delany. Asante concludes of Gwaltney's text, "The majority of African Americans see themselves as a nation within a nation, a people distinct and different from an ethnic group." Interestingly, Asante was offering a comparison to Dawson's work *Black Visions* in which "Dawson seemed ambivalent about his own data, particularly regarding what to make on this heavy emphasis on Black Nationalism within the African American community."<sup>163</sup> As Dawson's work came about in 2002, nearly 30 years after the work of Gwaltney's we see that Black Nationalist sentiment, while perhaps not always prevailing consciously, is an undergirded philosophy within the contemporary Black community.

Digressing back to the social conditions surrounding the Black Nationalism of Delany, it is important to address the ideals of Douglass, Wells Brown, and others in regards to the possible solution of the race problem in America. Harkening on Douglass' and others thoughts on intermarriage for the purposes of miscegenation and racial elimination. While Douglass may have offered the more clairvoyant position of race

---

<sup>162</sup> Gwaltney, John Langston. *Drylongso: a Self-Portrait of Black America*. (New York: New Press, 1993.), 8-9

<sup>163</sup> Asante, Molefi Kete. *An Afrocentric Manifesto: Toward an African Renaissance*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2008.), 123

being a superficial social construct and that supremacy and inferiority lies not in genetic phenotype, Delany possessed the more realistic vision of the evolution of race relations and the importance role of culture for the development of all people. Delany, offering a scathing and worthwhile factual rebuttal:

That it may be indelibly fixed on every mind, we place on record the fact, that the races as such, especially white and black, are indestructible; that miscegenation as popularly understood — the running out of two races, or several, into a new race— cannot take place. A cross only produces one of a mixed race, and a continual cross from a half blood on either side will run into the pure original race, either white or black; the fourth cross on one side from the half-blood perfecting a whole blood. A general intermarriage of any two distinct races would eventually result simply in the destruction, the extinction of the less numerous of the two; that race which preponderates entirely absorbing the other.<sup>164</sup>

What Delany is surely also referring to is perhaps what he knew to be prevalence on the part of Black people during that time to continue to miscegenation with whites in order to “pass” into white society, leaving forever behind their Africanity. Contemporary “love is love” arguments justifying and insisting the benignity of interracial relationships withstanding, what can be applied today from Delany’s words is the heartbreaking psychological condition of African people in the Americas, so affected by the illnesses of white supremacy they would rather rid themselves of not only their cultural backgrounds but, especially at that time, deny their parents, siblings and even abandon their children to live as a Euro-American.

Delany, and the proponents of the various charges of Ethiopianism for that matter, were not without error in their thinking and in some ways perpetuated racist Eurocentric ideas amongst their own people instead of alleviating them. Edward Wilmot Blyden, known as the “father of Pan-Africanism”, was a defender of the colonization movement

---

<sup>164</sup> Delany, Martin Robison, and Robert Steven Levine. *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*. (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2003.), 481

in Liberia, in which the American Colonization Society sent free Blacks wishing to repatriate to Africa. Blyden suggested that the national mission in Liberia was “the redemption of Africa, and the disenthralment and elevation of the African race.” Blyden’s idea toward slavery was evidently that of a necessary evil. Though he condemned the practice that continued the oppression of his fellow race, he also argued that God had allowed the enslavement and subjugation of African people in the Americas so that they may know Christianity. With the favor of Christianity they may now return to their ancestral homeland and bestow upon the Africans there both the gifts of Christianity and western civilization.<sup>165</sup>

Already we see that his ideals of divine providence served more the ambitions of European colonist than it did that of African redemption. This was the essential call of Ethiopianism from the perspective of African American Christians. Their earnestness in assisting their people from what they foresaw as a repressed state cannot be discredited. However, the mission of Ethiopianism was a mission ripe with the “*weaknesses*” Cabral would describe just decades later. To be sure, while many of these ideals remained, some disciples of Ethiopianism would develop more Afrocentric ideals that, while still not quite ideal, was further along than that of Blyden’s brand of thinking. Blyden himself, while remaining under the ideals of Ethiopianism, saw the errors of his thinking and gradually shifted towards a more African-centered ideology. Therefore, while Ethiopianism had its flaws, it served as a gateway to the Africans reintroduction to themselves and their culture, challenging the intellectuals of which to constantly question what they thought they knew of their history, and their place in the world.

---

<sup>165</sup> Moses, Wilson Jeremiah. *Classical Black Nationalism: From the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey*. (New York: New York University Press, 1996.), 21

The year was 1911; W.E.B. Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk* had apparently found itself on the international scene and drew response from one of coastal Africa's most prominent theorist of Ethiopianism. J. Casley Hayford, writing in his wonderfully crafted manifesto, *Ethiopia Unbound*, in flagrant response to W.E.B. Dubois' theory of Double Consciousness, regarded the theory as "one of the most pathetic passages in the history of human thought."<sup>166</sup> Du Bois' perceived "a world which wields him no true self-consciousness... this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American and Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body."<sup>167</sup> This thinking apparently sat in sharp contrast with Hayford's self-conscious Ethiopianism. Hayford's retort was piercing:

It is apparent that Mr. Du Bois writes from an American standpoint, surrounded by an American atmosphere. And, of course, it is not his fault, for he knows of no other. To be born an African in America, in that great commonwealth of dollars and the merciless aggrandizement of the individual, where the weak must look out for himself, and the cry of the innocent appeals not to whom who rides triumphantly to fortune, is to be entangled in conditions which give no room for the assertion of the highest manhood. African manhood demands that the Ethiopian should seek not his opportunity, or ask for elbow room, from the white man, but that he should create the one or the other for himself.<sup>168</sup>

Hayford's sharp indictment was not just of Du Bois but also of the great African American paradox. African Americans know innately, if not consciously, that they are

---

<sup>166</sup> Hayford, J. E. Casely, and Molefi Kete Asante. *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*. (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 2011.), 179

<sup>167</sup> Burghardt, Du Bois William Edward. *The Souls of Black Folk*. (Mineola, NY: Dover 1994.), 2

<sup>168</sup> Hayford, J. E. Casely, and Molefi Kete Asante. *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*. (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 2011.), 182

not American. Of course their citizenry is that of American, and they have contributed greatly –conceivably more than any other group –to the American project. However their cosmology has always been antithetical to the Eurocentric paradigms of American national culture. One can argue, with justification, that Africans have, in a sense, “Africanized” American culture to some degree. However, one cannot domesticate that which holds mastery over itself. Furthermore, no matter how much a snake sheds its skin, it is still a snake. It is the substance of American culture that matters, not how much African Americans have dyed its surface with their boundless sacrifice and beautiful aesthetics. This is not to say that African Americans cannot, just as the aforementioned Jewish peoples, make the most of their situation in America.

But for the American system to become wholesome for African people and still espouse its ideas of liberty for all, there requires a revolution the likes of which would tear asunder the current American system and rebuild it as a nation dedicated to the interests of all groups willing to participate in its rebirth as a bastion of multicultural enterprise. However, this would still not constitute a situation equitable to African autonomy. The only true nationalizing circumstance would be one in which the African continent is liberated, its wealth and possessions solely under the governing of African people, and the nations within, by way of their own prowess, able to secure the rights and liberties of both domestic and diasporic African people.

## The Religious Crux

As aforementioned, the nation of Ethiopia had instilled a sense of pride in African people the world over and their defeat of Mussolini and his Italian forces in 1896 somewhat affirmed in the minds of African people that providence was upon the African world and they would someday again rise as a powerful nation of Pan-African implications.<sup>169</sup> Early African Americans did not wholeheartedly adopt Christianity until near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the rise of Ethiopianism saw naturally a rise in African involvement with the Christian faith. This was quite a precarious moment in the history of the colonized and formerly enslaved.

Historically, spiritual systems or religions are birthed out of the cosmology of a particular group of people. Christianity, for example, developed during the Roman era when a small sect of Judaism declared itself to be disciples of Jesus the Christ, who, according to the biblical record, lived and taught in Palestine during the first millennium CE. Thusly, the original interpretations of the nature and divinity of Jesus began with this sect of Jews. The religion, like all religions, serviced the foundational ethnic group in such a way to guide their lives spiritually, mapping the various avenues of life and how one should navigate their way throughout life with the principles instilled by the culture itself and their spiritual head. While there are natural similarities between all religions, there are also differences unique to the cultural paradigms of the people who founded them.

---

<sup>169</sup> Asante, Molefi Kete, and Ama Mazama. *Encyclopedia of Black Studies*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007.), 233-234

However, Christianity, very much like Islam, soon found itself becoming what is known today as a world religion. While technically there are other world religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism, the uniqueness of a religion such as Christianity is that it was first subjected to the manipulations of Europe before it spread throughout the rest of the world. Even the Ethiopian brand that so inspired the proponents of Ethiopianism had to first be sanctioned by the Roman Catholic establishment through the facilitation of the church in Alexandria. To be sure, this does not mean that the Roman Catholic Church is the oldest extant Christian body in the world. Many believe that title actually belongs to the Egyptian Church, which according to their traditional beliefs, was founded by St. Mark in 42 CE.<sup>170</sup> However, Alexandria by that time had long been under European hegemony and cultural influence since the conquering of what is now to be known as Ancient Egypt by the Alexander in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, establishing the Ptolemaic dynasty by appointing his general Ptolemy leader of the country.<sup>171</sup>

Through the establishment of state-sanctioned Christendom, beginning with the acts of Roman Emperor Constantine I, and the decrees made at Nicaea and subsequent ecumenical councils, Christianity would be subsequently spread as a world religion encompassing the interpretations and cosmologies of Europe. Arguably, as the Palestinian writers of the New Testament were in a state occupied by Rome, the New Testament itself was already a somewhat quasi-European project –though this should be

---

<sup>170</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, the author of Ecclesiastical History in the 4th century, states that Saint Mark came to Egypt in the first or third year of the reign of Emperor Claudius, i.e. 41 or 43 A.D. "Two Thousand years of Coptic Christianity" Otto F. A. Meinardus p28.

<sup>171</sup> Asante, Molefi K. *The history of Africa: The Quest for Eternal Harmony*. (New York: Routledge, 2015.), 67

interpreted under precise contextual considerations.<sup>172</sup> Nevertheless, the first of interpretations that would become the absolute unifying dogma was that of Jesus' Christology.

Many theories were abound and some of the most popular included the pre-existence of Christ prior to the existence of the world as the *Logos* (the word), Arians' claims of Jesus not existing until God created the divine being, the Ebionite's assertion that Jesus was simply a human chosen by God as the messiah, and the Gnostics' docetic views arguing that he was but a spiritual being who only appeared to possess a physical body. All of these views existed in Palestine and Rome before the establishment of the first Ecumenical Council at Nicaea. Though there were those who asserted they possessed the correct understanding, various sects had largely left the nature of Jesus up to personal interpretation and there seemed to be no zealous effort to dogmatize the various interpretations of the Christian world until the Roman Emperor and his council decided it was time for such a dogma to occur.

To be sure, along with various other cultural influences, there are elements of African spirituality within the biblical scripture that should be well noted. Perhaps the most well known figure in African American history, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. touched on such in papers written while he was a student at Crozer Seminary in which he submitted that early Christianity assimilated aspects of the surrounding religions before eventually "triumphing" over them. King wrote "The Influence of the Mystery Religions on Christianity" during the first semester of his second year at the small seminary located

---

<sup>172</sup> Though this can be argued it is important to note the various cultural and religious influences on the beginning of Christianity stemming from areas in the Levant, Africa, Europe and the Far East.

in Chester, Pennsylvania. “Christianity triumphed over these mystery religions after long conflict. This triumph may be attributed in part to the fact that Christianity took from its opponents their own weapons, and used them: the better elements of the mystery religions were transferred to the new religion,” King writes.<sup>173</sup> King bolsters his thesis by introducing the various “mystery religions” and their influences on Christianity. As for the African element, he included a section on the Asarian myth of Kemet.<sup>174</sup> In the section entitled “The Influence of Osiris and Isis”, sourcing noted theologian Arthur Weigall, King submits:

The Egyptian mysteries of Isis and Osiris exerted considerable influence upon early Christianity. These two great Egyptian deities, whose worship passed into Europe, were revered not only in Rome but in many other centers where Christian communities were growing up. Osiris and Isis, so the legend runs, were at one and the same time, brother and sister, husband and wife; but Osiris was murdered, his coffined body being thrown into the Nile, and shortly afterwards the widowed and exiled Isis gave birth to a son, Horus. Meanwhile the coffin was washed up on the Syrian coast, and became miraculously lodged in the trunk of a tree. This tree afterwards chanced to be cut down and made into a pillar in the palace at Byblos, and there Isis at length found it. After recovering Osiris' dismembered body, Isis restored him to life and installed him as King in the nether world; meanwhile Horus, having grown to manhood, reigned on earth, later becoming the third person of this great Egyptian trinity.<sup>175</sup>

This myth has various incarnations but the central theme of trinity and redemption remain the same. What’s even more telling is the extent of which the iconography of Aset nursing Heru was adopted by the early Christians. King even mentions this further in his

---

<sup>173</sup> King, Martin Luther, Clayborne Carson, Peter Holloran, Ralph Luker, and Penny A. Russell. *The papers of Martin Luther King, Jr: Volume 1: Called to Serve January 1929-June 1951*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.), 296

<sup>174</sup> In the paper King uses the Greek corruption of the names for *jst* (Aset) and *wsjr* (Asar), Isis and Osiris respectively. Their son would come to be known in the Greek as Horus however his original name stood as Hrw (Heru).

<sup>175</sup> King, Martin Luther, Clayborne Carson, Peter Holloran, Ralph Luker, and Penny A. Russell. *The papers of Martin Luther King, Jr: Volume 1: Called to Serve January 1929-June 1951*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.), 302

description of Kemet's influence on Christianity. King's conclusion that "Mary came to take the place of the Goddess" is substantiated in further detail:

There can hardly be any doubt that the myths of Isis had a direct bearing on the elevation of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, to the lofty position that she holds in Roman Catholic theology. As is commonly known Isis had two capacities which her worshippers warmly commended her for. Firstly, she was pictured as the lady of sorrows, weeping for the dead Osiris, and secondly she was commended as the divine mother, nursing her infant son, Horus. In the latter capacity Isis was represented in tens of thousands of statuettes and paintings, holding the divine child in her arms. Now when Christianity triumphed we find that these same paintings and figures became those of the Madonna and child with little or no difference. In fact archaeologists are often left in confusion in attempting to distinguish the one from the other.<sup>176</sup>

The idea of the "holy trinity" being grafted from the Asarian myth had by King's time been well known to theologians. However, in place of Aset in the Trinity is now the genderless Holy Ghost. The Roman Catholics perhaps sought to compensate for this by the attention they drew to Mary in later years. However, the figure of Mary has yet to reach any equitable status with that of Jesus and God. This is perhaps reflective of the nature of ancient Roman attitudes towards women. Whereas in Kemet women had largely the same rights as men, in Rome the rights of women were highly limited, being not able to vote or hold public office.<sup>177</sup> Religious historian Karen Armstrong in her text *A History of God* lends her knowledge to the discourse:

...the Axial Age, which generally saw a decline in the status of women and the female. It seems that in more primitive societies, women were sometimes held in higher esteem than men. The prestige of the great goddesses in traditional religion reflects the veneration of the female. The rise of the cities, however, meant that the more masculine qualities of martial, physical strength were exalted over female characteristics. Henceforth women were marginalized and became second-class citizens in the new civilizations of the Oikumene. Their position was

---

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 304

<sup>177</sup> Bruce W. Frier and Thomas A.J. McGinn, *A Casebook on Roman Family Law* (Oxford University Press: American Philological Association, 2004), pp. 31–32, 457, *et passim*.

particularly poor in Greece, for example –a fact that Western people should remember when they decry the patriarchal attitudes of the Orient. The democratic ideal did not extend to the women of Athens, who lived in seclusion and were despised as inferior beings.<sup>178</sup>

Further, the rights of women in Palestine had diminished to abysmal social conditions. What can be inferred is that perhaps Greco-Roman influence, coupled with their own rising negative attitudes towards women internally, made its way into the biblical text as well. Armstrong once again lends her expertise:

Israelite society was also becoming more masculine in tone. In the early days, women were forceful and clearly saw themselves as the equals of their husbands. Some, like Deborah, had led armies into battle. Israelites would continue to celebrate such heroic women as Judith and Esther, but after Yahweh had successfully vanquished the other gods and goddesses of Canaan and the Middle East and become the only God, his religion would be managed almost entirely by men. The cult of the goddesses would be superseded, and this would be a symptom of a cultural change that was characteristic of the newly civilized world.<sup>179</sup>

The “newly civilized world” during the era of Jesus was being led by Roman colonization and cultural hegemony over various Mediterranean societies. Whatever influence the spiritual systems of Africa had over the Levant, now that Kemet had been colonized and Rome was on the rise, this influence quickly languished. The influence of so-called monotheism had erased the feminine presence in the roles of the divine. What is to be concluded from the history is that although elements of Christianity prior to being a world religion was lifted from African, particularly Kemetic culture, Christian faith had now largely become alien to African cosmology. Though it is a shame that the cultural cosmology of Europe affected the areas in which it conquered to such a degree, it is important to state that their cosmology is not a bad one, for its based on the basis of their

---

<sup>178</sup> Armstrong, Karen. *A history of God: the 4000 Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. (New York: Ballantine Book, 1993.), 50

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, 50

own paradigms. For African people to argue that their world-views are wrong would place them in the same philosophical position of the colonizers. European cosmology is simply good for them as it works for them. The issue is that it is causing chaos in the lives of the people they have colonized.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century proponents of Ethiopianism perhaps had no conceptualization of the history thus presented. Moreover, even if they had, many perhaps would have explained away such evidence and contentions with a bit of theological rhetoric. After all, when faith in the infallibility of the scripture is at the core of ones conscience, neither fact nor logic can penetrate such conviction until one opens their minds to those possibilities. One may explain that those other deities are simply heathen distractions from the true God sent to test true believers. Many others may cite verses within biblical scripture that condemns the tolerance of other deities, as they had not an understanding of the historical and cultural context of the era the scripture was written, and how carefully dogma is applied when couching religious beliefs in text. Few may contrarily conceive of the “similarities” that those earlier Gods are simply other incarnations of Jesus himself sent to the descendants of the Babel tragedy over various periods of time. As Jesus possess all knowledge of different tongues and different cultures, he had to come to them in their own way, citing Jesus’ proclamation from John 10:16 “I have other sheep that are not of this fold.” Whatever the position it is likely the same of sentiments that exists contemporarily regarding African people and the Christian faith. It is a position that has caused the Black Church, despite their unconscious understanding of their grasp on African cultural remnants, to demean and downright bully Black people choosing not to participate in the faith or adopting another spiritual system.

Interestingly, the great Edward Blyden would abandon the Christian faith, as he became increasingly more Pan-African in his scope. He eventually took up the religion of Islam and used it to facilitate his further development as a Pan-African thinker. Arguably, Islam on the western coast of the continent hadn't the same colonizing effect as Christianity. It came as a colonizing religion, sure, but Africans for some time were also able to take and do with it as best they pleased. On the western coast, the Africanizing of the religion to suit their cultural cosmologies enjoyed more success than that of Christianity. As Ronald Segal points out in his *text Islam's Black Slaves*:

Indigenous African social traditions of matrilineal inheritance seem to have successfully withstood the influence of Islamic patrilineage in the northern cities before the seventeenth century. There is considerable evidence that women, not least as queens, were prominent in public life. They participated in important ceremonies, attended mosques along with men, and were encouraged to become literate and to study Islamic sciences (elimu). They enjoyed equal rights of inheritance and property ownership with men, and in some coastal settlements, succession to rule proceeded through female members of the royal lineage.<sup>180</sup>

However, Islam also increasingly became quite problematic. Not only did the matriarchal traditions soon after diminish, Islam introduced an earlier, though arguably milder (depending on era and area) form of chattel slavery to the African continent centuries prior to the European's Slave Trade.<sup>181</sup> As Segal continues:

The coastal settlements were not, however, left to pursue their prosperity in peace. Increasingly, they came under pressure from two sides. One threat was from "northern" Arabs as well as the Portuguese, who would arrive suddenly by sea to pillage and to seize people for enslavement...some, if not all, of the coastal settlements were involved in slave trading and even slave raiding. That there were

---

<sup>180</sup> Segal, Ronald. *Islam's Black Slaves: The History of Africa's other Black Diaspora*. (London: Atlantic Books, 2001.), 98

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*, 89-102

slaves in their populations is certain. Muslim societies would have regarded the absence rather than the presence of slaves as extraordinary.<sup>182</sup>

This adds an extra dimension to the topic of enslavement in West Africa covered in the first chapter. Arab populations from the north were, along with Europeans, placing pressure on these nations to participate in the trade. To be sure, as aforementioned, slavery in Africa did exist prior to the encroachment of these two alien cultures, however they were mostly punitive systems. The various major Arab Caliphates, particularly the Abbasid, continued to wield tremendous political and or religious influence over the rest of the Islamic world well into the 16<sup>th</sup> century, maintaining at best their cosmological hegemony over the spread and maintenance of the religion. Ultimately, neither of these religions, Christianity or Islam, went through any systematic change, or cultural paradigmatic shifts in order to be wholesomely operable for African people.

### The Black Radical Tradition Evolves

By the time of Marcus Garvey's ascension to the public spotlight there were a few major Black economic hubs located in areas such as Durham, North Carolina, Jackson Ward in Richmond, Virginia and the town of Greenwood in Tulsa, Oklahoma. All three of these areas were known as "Black Wall Street" or "Little Africa" at various points in their history. After the Civil Rights Movement's triumph over segregation, desegregation became the major downfall of these towns as Blacks began to integrate into the neighboring white areas.

---

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 99

However, in Tulsa, three decades before the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education ruling, a race riot long superseded in crippling the economic hub before the effects of integration. Racist whites in the neighboring town, jealous of the success of Black people in Greenwood, accused a young Black boy of assaulting a woman elevator operator and organized a riot which saw to the destruction of homes and businesses, displacing near 10,000 Black citizens while upwards of 300 lost their lives.<sup>183</sup> Marcus Garvey is noted to have been infuriated by the various riots not only in Tulsa, but also in Black-populated towns such as East St. Louis (1917), Elaine, Arkansas (1919), Chicago (1919), and Washington D.C. (1919).<sup>184</sup> As Garvey's colleague, William H. Ferris, would later note, the "riots fed Garvey's agitation fires and he loomed upon the horizon as a dauntless and fearless race champion."<sup>185</sup>

Garvey was perhaps the quintessential Black Nationalist to arise out of late Ethiopianism. He was a culmination of the most fervent aspects of the movement. He possessed the theology of African renaissance, the profound love and thirst for knowledge of African people and history, a philosophy of strict independence, and ambitions of Pan-African advancement. Garvey and first wife Amy Ashwood founded The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Jamaica in 1914 before relocating to the United States. By 1918 membership had extraordinarily flourished as thousands of membership certificates brandishing the greeting "To the Beloved and Scattered Millions of the Negro Race" were issued. By June of 1919 Garvey calculated

---

<sup>183</sup> Messer, Chris M., Krystal Beamon, and Patricia A. Bell. "The Tulsa Riot of 1921: Collective Violence and Racial Frames", *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 37, no. 1 (2013): 50–59.

<sup>184</sup> The last three of which constitute major cities of the 1919 Red Summer riots.

<sup>185</sup> *Philadelphia Tribune*, Thursday, 27 June 1940

that the UNIA had a membership of over 2 million while the ever watchful Du Bois gave a conservative estimate of just under 300,000 who were paying members. Membership was of course restricted to only those of African ancestry and the requirement to donate 25 cents a month (2017 value of \$4.03 monthly, accounting for inflation) of disposable income greatly benefited the organization's treasury.<sup>186187</sup>

What Garvey's movement did reaffirm was that while after three centuries of African's displacement in the Americas had brought on an ambivalence of returning to their ancestral home, rather by knowledge of history or nature of condition, they still saw themselves as somehow connected to the African world. However, Garvey's movement began to crumble under the weight of what some perceived to be his heedless arrogance and poor management of certain divisions of UNIA operations such as the Black Star Line. In 1920, at arguable the height of the UNIA, Garvey organized the first UNIA Convention preceded by a huge parade beginning at the UNIA offices on 135<sup>th</sup> street.

<sup>188</sup>The Jamaican historian Colin Grant, author of the immeasurable narrative, *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* lends his insight into the parade's proceedings:

... the UNIA-sponsored event international convention would culminate in the crowning of a provisional president of Africa. His majesty would be elected by the delegates, and would be charged with governing an as yet undelineated African Empire constituting the 400 million Negroes of the world. The system of honours that Garvey proposed and the conferencing of titles on an imagined African government-in-exile was the one aspect of the convention that would

---

<sup>186</sup> Grant, Colin. *Negro With A Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey*. (New York: Oxford Univ. Pr., 2010.), 117, 164

<sup>187</sup> "CPI Inflation Calculator." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Accessed March 29, 2017. <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl?cost1=.25&year1=1918&year2=2017>.

<sup>188</sup> Grant, Colin. *Negro With A Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey*. (New York: Oxford Univ. Pr., 2010.), 242

receive the most unflattering rebukes from Garvey's critics. He thought his proposal no more absurd than Eamon de Valera's appointment that year as the provisional president of Ireland.<sup>189</sup>

Garvey, however, was no fool. Assuredly, what his first job as print worker and eventually manager at a large printing establishment in Jamaica had taught him was the power of propaganda. As most of the African continent was at the time colonized by Europeans, Garvey needed to appeal to his base not only in America but also the grassroots in his organization spread all over the Africa world, especially on the African continent itself. The need for the inclusion of prominent indigenous Africans in the organization he sought at best to meet. Thusly, for outstanding appeal Garvey included at the convention George O. Marke, who he had placed as the official representative of the Freetown division of the UNIA in Sierra Leone. Even more distinguished was the high-profiled Liberian Gabriel Johnson, soon duly installed as Potentate Leader of the Negro Peoples of the World, Johnson's family was among the most powerful Americo-Liberian ruling elite in Liberia. Johnson father was once elected the Liberian President in 1884 and his niece was married to then president, C.D. King.<sup>190</sup>

All of this W.E.B. Dubois however saw as a bit of a circus. Du Bois, now in his early fifties, had begun showing signs of evolving beyond the "double conscious" prognosis of his youthful thirties. Through much effort in diplomacy, cunning and plotting Du Bois had begun to establish his own Pan-African front. He had engineered the African conference in Paris and was hoping to capitalize on the accomplishment if he could keep the post-war powers from hindering him with any due resistance. Thusly, he grew increasingly concerned with the actions of Garvey and, as Du Bois perceived it, his

---

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, 243

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 244

absurd claims to an African empire. Garvey had already infuriated him a short while before as he'd received an invitation from the UNIA leader to inform him that at the convention a leader of the American Negro people would be elected by popular vote and Du Bois was, of course, an obvious candidate. On request that Du Bois submit his name for nomination, Du Bois retorted "I beg to say that I thank you for the suggestion, but under no circumstances can I allow my name to be presented."<sup>191</sup>

Marcus Garvey should be considered among the most ambitious and passionate leaders in the struggle for African freedom and autonomy. Many during his day, even those who were once considered close to him, turned away from the leader. In examining the record of witnesses, faults in Garvey's character, particularly his pomposity and obstinacy, hindered his activities and added to the growing number of detractors. However, many also failed to see the great possibilities of Garvey's visions and his unfettered dedication to the advancement of African people knew no equal. Even Du Bois had to admit his sincerity as he once wrote, "'He has been charged with dishonesty and graft, but he seems to me essentially an honest and sincere man with a tremendous vision, great dynamic force, stubborn determination and unselfish desire to serve."<sup>192</sup>

The UNIA's Black Star Line, financed largely by shares of stock purchased by his constituents, was a marvel for not only his age, but today even. As a charismatic orator and capable writer he persuaded masses of Black people to buy in to the industry and, as early consolation, he would show proof of their contributions by having their name displayed in the UNIA organ, the *Negro World*. One such shareholder wrote:

---

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 244 - 245

<sup>192</sup> Cronon, Edmund David, and John Hope Franklin. *Black Moses; The story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969.) , 208

I have sent twice to buy shares amounting to \$125 ... Now I am sending \$35 for seven more. You might think I have money. I do not ... but if I am to die of hunger it'll be all right because I'm determined to do all it's in my power to better the conditions of the race.<sup>193</sup>

Marcus Garvey inspired countless individuals and even though his efforts did not end in success, he should be counted among the most successful Black Nationalist leaders. The Black Star Line would soon crumble due to both mismanagement and lack of support due to people being influenced by the continuous attacks on Garvey by both white and black enemies. The end of Garvey's movement would also see the end of the most fervent ideals of Ethiopianism.

Following the death of Garvey in 1940, the rise of what is to be known as the modern Civil Rights Movement gave way to the dawning of figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Fannie Lou Hamer, and Malcolm X. These were the days when the most overt of nationalist cries were countered also by strong racial egalitarianism. The legacy of figures such as Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Dubois and William Wells Brown laid the groundwork for informal government relations with groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). However, organizational Black Nationalism, as it had always been, went on unendorsed by the state. At the height of Martin Luther King's popularity, the most well known Black Nationalist organization was the quasi-theocratic Nation of Islam (NOI). The most popular and charismatic character of which was Malcolm X.

---

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, 194

In childhood Malcolm's father, Earl Little, was local leader of the Omaha, Nebraska chapter of the UNIA and his mother, Louise Little, served as both secretary and the branch reporter, reporting news of local activities to *Negro World*. They instilled in all their children a sense of pride in their heritage and the spirit of self-reliance. Due to threats from the local Klu Klux Klan, the family eventually moved to Lansing, Michigan where, at the age of six, Malcolm X father died, presumably murdered, in what was officially ruled as a "street car accident."<sup>194</sup> The events shaped the psyche of young Malcolm however it wouldn't be until his adult years that he was able to put his childhood foundation towards any practical, and affective use.

In June 1953 Malcolm was named assistant minister of NOI Mosque No. 1 in Detroit, Michigan. By the middle of 1954 he was made leader of Mosque No. 7 located in Harlem, New York.<sup>195</sup> Malcolm is often cited as responsible for the growth of the Nation of Islam to such a degree that by 1960, just 8 years after joining, over 40,000 members had join the NOI.<sup>196</sup> Malcolm was charismatic, convincing and unabashed in his oratory. His rise to prominence came after, Hinton Johnson, one of the members of his Mosque, was brutally beaten by two New York City Police Officers. Initially Malcolm and just a small group of NOI members went to the Police Station demanding to see their brother Johnson. The police denied having any such a person and Malcolm informed them that until he was allowed to do so, his men would remain outside. The police at first scuffed at his remarks but when the gathering outside grew to over thousands of people, fearing a

---

<sup>194</sup> Vincent, Ted (March–April 1989). "The Garveyite Parents of Malcolm X". *The Black Scholar*. **20** (2): 10–13.

<sup>195</sup> Perry, Bruce. *Malcolm: the life of a man who changed Black America*. (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1992), 152

<sup>196</sup> "Malcolm X." *Biography.com*. October 05, 2016. Accessed February 21, 2017. <http://www.biography.com/people/malcolm-x-9396195>.

riot, the police gave in and allowed Malcolm to speak with Johnson. Furious at the condition he saw Johnson in; Malcolm demanded an ambulance take him to the hospital so that he may receive treatment. After Johnson's injuries were treated the police beseeched Malcolm to help disperse the crowd outside. On condition that brother Johnson would continue to receive treatment and that the officers would be punished, Malcolm abided. He stood outside and, silently, as he stood there he motioned his hand and the crowd slowly began to disperse. As Bruce Perry Reports in his biography *Malcolm*, "The obedience it accorded him prompted one white official to remark that no man should have that much power. What he meant, Hicks later stressed, was that no Black man should have that much power."<sup>197</sup>

By the time of the late 1950's and early 1960's Malcolm had become one of the most popular Black leaders in the country. Television, radio and newspaper outlets widely reported his comments and activities. Mike Wallace, famous today for his stint on the popular CBS broadcast 60 Minutes, and Louis Lomax, at that time a popular African American journalist, featured Malcolm on their 1959 program *The Hate that Hate Produced*.<sup>198</sup> As his popularity skyrocketed Malcolm was seen less as a leader of the Nation of Islam, thought the association always tailed him, but as a Black leader in his own right. By September of 1960 Malcolm had become a person of interest on the international scene as during the United Nations General Assembly he was invited by several African nations to attend their official functions. Among those he met were

---

<sup>197</sup> Perry, Bruce. *Malcolm: the life of a man who changed Black America*. (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1992), 165 -66

<sup>198</sup> Ibid, 174 -79

Ahmed Sékou Touré, the President of Guinea, and Kenneth Kaunda of the Zambian African National Congress and eventually first President of Zambia.<sup>199</sup>

Malcolm's break with the NOI came in 1964 after a few years of internal strife with NOI members and the nation's leader Elijah Muhammad. Leaving the NOI gave Malcolm the opportunity to work with other civil rights leaders, as he was not permitted to do so working for the NOI. He apologized for his past verbal assaults made on Martin Luther King and others and extended an invitation for solidarity and support on Civil Rights issues. Interestingly, despite Malcolm's history of verbally berating him, King himself had long been inspired by Malcolm and noted as being proud of him whenever he would hear of Malcolm speaking up for the rights of Black People. In fact, King in the last few years of his life seemed to be becoming more like Malcolm than many are willing to acknowledge.

Mrs. King in her interview for the PBS series on Civil Rights stated, "I know Martin had the greatest respect for Malcolm..." she said. "I think that if Malcolm had lived, at some point the two would have come closer together and would have been a very strong force."<sup>200</sup> "In the last years of their lives, they were starting to move toward one another ... While Malcolm is moderating from his earlier position, King is becoming more militant," writes David Howard-Pitney, author of *Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and the Civil Rights Struggle of the 1950s and 1960s*.<sup>201</sup> This evolving ideology can be heard in some clips from King's last years as he a few times proclaimed, "Black is

---

<sup>199</sup> Natambu, Kofi. *Malcolm X: Critical Lives*. (Indianapolis: Alpha Books, 2001), 231 - 233

<sup>200</sup> Blake, John. "Malcolm and Martin, closer than we ever thought." CNN. May 19, 2010. Accessed February 26, 2017.

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/05/19/Malcolmx.king/>.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid

Beautiful”. The best of evidence of regarding King’s affinity for Malcolm comes from King himself. In a letter he wrote to Betty Shabazz following Malcolm’s death King states, “I always had a deep affection for Malcolm and felt that he had the great ability to put his finger on the existence and the root of the problem.”<sup>202</sup> Like Malcolm, King also befriended Kwame Nkrumah. In 1957 he attended Ghana’s independence ceremony and upon his return preached a sermon in which he talked extensively about the plight of Africa:

You also know that for years and for centuries, Africa has been one of the most exploited continents in the history of the world. It’s been the ‘Dark Continent.’ It’s been the continent that has suffered all of the pain and the affliction that could be mustered up by other nations. And it is that continent which has experienced slavery, which has experienced all of the lowest standards that we can think about, and it’s been brought into being by the exploitation inflicted upon it by other nations.<sup>203</sup>

King may not have become as public about his feelings of cultural awareness and connection with the African people, but in reviewing this sermon one doesn’t have to question that, internally, he was passionate about the African continent. In regards to Malcolm’s supposed influence on Malcolm, while a “more moderate” position for Malcolm can be argued, Malcolm was still not the type of so-called moderate as King or the other Civil Rights Leaders. Malcolm wanted to work with King however he was also thinking and planning on a much wider scale than simple American civil rights. The renowned clergyman of Black Liberation Theology, James Cones, and author of *Malcolm & Martin & America*, adds to the discourse, "King was a political revolutionary. Malcolm

---

<sup>202</sup>Telegram from Martin Luther King, Jr. to Betty al-Shabazz. Accessed Feb 25, 2017. [http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/telegram\\_from\\_martin\\_luther\\_king\\_jr\\_to\\_betty\\_al\\_shabazz.1.html](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/telegram_from_martin_luther_king_jr_to_betty_al_shabazz.1.html).

<sup>203</sup> King, Martin Luther, and Clayborne Carson. *The papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume IV: Symbol of the Movement, January 1957-December 1958*. (Berkeley California: University of California Press, 2000.), 156

was a cultural revolutionary," Cone says. "Malcolm changed how black people thought about themselves. Before Malcolm came along, we were all Negroes. After Malcolm, he helped us become black."<sup>204</sup> Cone also reveals in his book some of the influences

Malcolm had picked up from Nkrumah while abroad in Ghana:

Malcolm also urged women to assume 'the chief responsibility for passing on black cultural traditions to the children' and to imbue black men with political militancy. 'Educate a man and you educate an individual,' Malcolm said, quoting an African proverb. 'Educate a woman and you educate an entire family.' He called Fannie Lou Hamer 'one of this country's foremost freedom fighters.' Meeting and hearing her helped Malcolm to realize that intelligence and commitment to freedom are not limited to the male gender. Against the strong objections of several of the old Muslim men who left the Nation of Islam to follow him, Malcolm began to insist that women must be given clearly defined and prominent leadership roles in the OAAU. For example, Maya Angelou was planning to return from Ghana to work with Malcolm as a leader in the OAAU.<sup>205</sup>

Indeed Malcolm had developed a more pre-colonial stance on the role of Black women and had even modified or eliminated from his thinking the more patriarchal and sexist dogmatism of the many forms of Sunni Islam. The Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) was to function as a Pan-African organization and he was apparently adamant about the role of women and he spoke as much in the few public forums before his death. During a November 1964 interview given in Paris the burgeoning Pan-African leader had this to say:

One thing that I became aware of in my traveling recently through Africa and the Middle East, in every country you go to, usually the degree of progress can never be separated from the woman. If you're in a country that's progressive, the woman is progressive. If you're in a country that reflects the consciousness toward the importance of education, it's because the woman is aware of the importance of education. But in every backward country you'll find the women are backward,

---

<sup>204</sup> Blake, John. "Malcolm and Martin, closer than we ever thought." CNN. May 19, 2010. Accessed February 26, 2017.

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/05/19/MalcolmX.king/>.

<sup>205</sup> Cone, James H. *Martin & Malcolm & America: a Dream or a Nightmare*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.) ePUB.

and in every country where education is not stressed it's because the women don't have education. So one of the things I became thoroughly convinced of in my recent travels is the importance of giving freedom to the woman, giving her education, and giving her the incentive to get out there and put that same spirit and understanding in their children. And I frankly am proud of the contributions that our women have made in the struggle for freedom and I'm one person who's for giving them all the leeway possible because they've made a greater contribution than many of us men.<sup>206</sup>

Malcolm's whole life, from the experience he had with his parents, his life of crime which gave him a wealth of knowledge of the Black underworld, to his experiences with the NOI lead to the development of his character. What's so important to note about him was that, much like Garvey, his following was gained under a cult of personality. However, the historical record has maintained that the idealization that Malcolm receives isn't without justification. Malcolm was a thoroughly discipline man, with a keen sense of justice and a genius level of political awareness. He spoke what he knew to be the truth and, unlike Garvey, he wasn't afraid to admit publicly if he was once wrong. Concerning his influence on Black Nationalism, one need only read his autobiography and understand that his life was in itself a Black Nationalist manifesto.

Malcolm transformed the spirit of the NOI starting with his act of kindness towards the battered brother Johnson. Certainly the streets of Black New York had not seen such coolness in the face of tyranny as he made his concession and broke the crowd of riot-ready sympathizers without uttering a word. His faithful devotion to Elijah Muhammad, a man who he truly believed to be Allah's chosen, was inspiring to his followers and indicative of a man willing to submit to powers whom he believed to be more than himself. His spiritual growth and self awareness leading to the end of his

---

<sup>206</sup> Malcolm X, "Paris Interview," November 1964, in *Malcolm X, By Any Means Necessary*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p. 179.

disillusionment with Elijah Muhammad before submitting to Allah by no other intermediary but his own convictions show true the willingness to adapt and evolve both physically and spiritually. His evolving view of the role of women in society exposed his embracing of pre-colonial and pre-Abrahamic African cultural attitudes towards women. Ultimately, this has also impressed the minds of countless Black people who read about such in Malcolm's own words or through the various recordings, biographies and video-biographies of his life. At the end of his life he was perhaps undergoing another evolution as he wanted his OAAU to promote further the exploration of African culture and how it should be applied to African Americans in order for their to be a cultural basis for solidarity among the African world. Sadly, he was not able to operationalize these ideals prior to being murdered.

Among the many people that Malcolm influenced were the founders of the Black Panther Party (BPP), Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seal. The Party was founded in October of 1968, three years after the assassination of Malcolm and just months after murder of King. Both Bobby Seal and Huey Newton were fierce admirers of Malcolm and pattern their early organizational structure off of Malcolm's belief of armed resistance. While their militancy was admittedly based on a paradigm of Malcolm's philosophies, they still concluded that there's was not an organization that purported to be in succession to Malcolm's Organization of Afro-American Unity. Newton, in writing on the founding of the Party, offered his explanation:

We read also the works of the freedom fighters who had done so much for Black communities in the United States. Bobby had collected all of Malcolm X's speeches and ideas from papers like *The Militant* and *Muhammad Speaks*. These we studied carefully. Although Malcolm's program for the Organization of Afro-American Unity was never put into operation, he has made it clear that Blacks

ought to arm. Malcolm's influence was ever-present. We continue to believe that the Black Panther Party exists in the spirit of Malcolm. Often it is difficult to say exactly how an action or a program has been determined or influenced in a spiritual way. Such intangibles are hard to describe, although they can be more significant than any precise influence. Therefore, the words on this page cannot convey the effect that Malcolm has had on the Black Panther Party, although, as far as I am concerned, the Party is a living testament to his work. I do not claim that the Party has done what Malcolm would have done... but Malcolm's spirit is within us.<sup>207</sup>

Perhaps Malcolm would not have seen the Panthers in the same light as his OAAU however there was another aspect of the Panthers that still made it markedly similar to his own political structure. While the Panthers began with a more patriarchal bend, it quickly evolved to include would-be womanist philosophies. As early as 1969 *The Black Panther*, the BPP's official organ, stated that men and women were inherently equal and ordered males to begin treating all women members equally as members. Later that year, the young, charismatic Fred Hampton, the Party's Chicago Chapter Chairman, held a meeting on the ills of sexism. Soon after the Panthers began referring to sexism as anti-revolutionary.<sup>208</sup>

The Panthers serve as the most visible Black Nationalist group to arise after the Civil Rights Movement and during the era known as Black Power. Like other groups before them the Panthers would offer the community services, assisting in poor Black families overcome the hardships of abject social and economic conditions. Interestingly, it would be their community programs, rather than their gun toting that drew the ire of the FBI, particularly that of FBI founder and director, J. Edgar Hoover. In a may 1969 memo the Hoover advises:

---

<sup>207</sup> Newton, Huey P., David Hilliard, and Wiese Donald. *The Huey P. Newton Reader*. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003.), 51 -52

<sup>208</sup> Lumsden, Linda. "Good Mothers With Guns: Framing Black Womanhood in the Black Panther, 1968–1980". *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* (2009), 86

The BCP (Breakfast for Children Program) promotes at least tacit support for the Black Panther Party among naive individuals and, what is more distressing, it provides the BPP with a ready audience composed of highly impressionable youths. Consequently, the BCP represents the best and most influential activity going for the BPP and, as such, is potentially the greatest threat to efforts by authorities to neutralize the BPP and destroy what it stands for.<sup>209</sup>

Of all the leaders to emerge from the Black Panther Party Kwame Ture perhaps most of all embodied the Pan-African idea within his Black Nationalist stance. Once known as Stokely Carmichael, Ture had popularized the slogan “Black Power” and led the famous Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). However, Ture did not stay long as member of the BPP. Citing differences in opinion on allowing white people in the organization, and, as a result of CIA “bad-jacketing”, he was also under suspicion from Newton that he may have been a spy. Kwame thusly parted ways with the BPP and soon found himself under the tutelage of Kwame Nkrumah and Ahmed Sékou Touré.<sup>210</sup>

Ture became an organizer for the All African People’s Revolutionary Party and spent the rest of his life dedicated to Pan Africanism.<sup>211</sup> He would return to the United States and give numerous speeches, particular at his Alma Matter Howard University, discussing issues concerning racism, imperialism, and the need for advancing Pan African unity. Ture had taken a philosophical position that the Panthers simply did not have the vision to advance. In truth, Stokely’s political path was more similar with Malcolm X’s philosophies than what the BPP could ever hope to be. Organizations

---

<sup>209</sup> <http://theplate.nationalgeographic.com/2015/11/04/the-black-panthers-revolutionaries-free-breakfast-pioneers/> (Accessed March 19, 2017)

<sup>210</sup> Robert Weisbrot, "Stokely Speaks" (review of Ready for Revolution), New York Times, November 23, 2003. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/23/books/stokely-speaks.html> (Accessed March 11, 2017)

<sup>211</sup> “Kwame Ture (aka Stokely Carmichael)." Commencement 1999 - Howard University. <https://www.howard.edu/secretary/convocations/commencement/1999/TureK.htm>. (Accessed March 11, 2017)

during that time may have reinforced themselves with aspects of cultural nationalism, however it was rare to see a group rigorous enough in their pursuits to construct from African paradigms an organization befitting Pan-Africanist ends. In fact, the only such organization from that time which still receives any large notoriety is Maulana Karenga's US organization.

Maulana Karenga founded US in 1965 along with co-founder Hakim Jamal. The organization from the start had as its organ the newspaper entitled *Message to the Grassroots*, which was used to introduce itself and its purpose and convictions as it dedicated the first issue to "Mrs. Betty Shabazz, the widow of our slain nationalist leader."<sup>212</sup> Therefore, in the years of its inception we see that US embodied the spirit of the Black Nationalist tradition. However, US is also a different manifestation altogether. The histories of figures such as Malcolm X and Marcus Garvey bare sufficient insight into their philosophies as they were carrying on tradition of the great zeitgeists of Ethiopianism and Black Nationalism proper. We may look at aspects of Malcolm or Kwame Ture's lives and see glimpses of Afrocentric development however none of them were able to operationalize their philosophies. With US we see an opposite and rather more desirous circumstance.

Author Scott Brown, in writing what seemingly is the only large body of work focused on the US organization, *Fighting for US, Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism*, makes the mistake, from a Black Nationalist standpoint, on focusing on telling a sordid narrative of Karenga and the US Organization's history rather than focus on the theories and philosophies. As the only

---

<sup>212</sup> Brown, Scott. *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism*. (New York U.P., 2005.), 39

major work on the US Organization it comes particular short sided when compared to, while newer, yet smaller depictions of Karenga, such as Molefi Asante's *Maulana Karenga: An Intellectual Portrait*. In taking to task the ineptness of Brown's work, what can be provided is a fair insight into the cultural nationalist organization US, its founder Karenga, and their influence on Black Nationalism and African ethos.

While organizational and biographical history is important, the development of US, within the context of its birthing out of the early Black Studies movement, came from an already African-centered and culturally informed place. Whereas organizations such as the UNIA and its leader, Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity and the Black Panther Party have within their histories the lessons and trials of cultural advancement, US' very philosophy was a synthesis of African culture informed by the cultural paradigms of Africa. Thusly, this organization cannot be analyzed and presented for its true significance by just presenting a history of Karenga, but by presenting the revolutionary theories and activities extant within that history.

To be sure, the life of Karenga should certainly be examined. No man or woman is above criticism and exoneration shouldn't be extended to anyone based simply on his or her popularity or admiration from others. However, in the book Brown drags out Karenga's 1971 conviction in a particularly biased manner, linking him to Huey P. Newton on the basis of rumors of Newton's alleged drug-induced tirades and tortures of Panther members suspected to be spies.<sup>213</sup> While Brown mentions the FBI numerous times, he gives no clear contextual analysis of the struggles and psychological woes imposed by the government on both US and the Panthers. Furthermore the mention of

---

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, 121 -122

COINTELPRO appears only once in the text –and only in the context of Karenga’s defense of himself.<sup>214</sup> To be clear, the Counter Intelligence Program, or COINTELPRO as it is known, initiated a series of covert and often illegal projects conducted by the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Under the direction of J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI utilized COINTELPRO methods in order to subvert and destroy Black Nationalist movements (and other movements). Karenga was but one of many victims of this government program.

Nevertheless, in further regard to Brown’s narrative, far from a text removing Karenga’s life from his work, Karenga should be examined in the context of the very theories and values he promotes (i.e., harmony, balance, and reciprocity). Has the man, from then to now, practiced exactly what he preaches? When such an impartial measurement is done, despite the results, then we can conclude the nature of the man over the course of his life. However, we should agree that that should still not take away from the programs he and so many others worked hard to establish and maintain for the sake of African people.

Brown was also seemingly intent on clouding the natures of Kawaida and Kwanzaa. As a supposed historical work the book is a passive diatribe, dislocating Karenga’s philosophies within pale and often subjective schemes and narratives. Reading Brown first details on Kawaida lends clear insight into the maladroit scholarship presented by Brown. Kawaida is not to be translated as “a total way of life”<sup>215</sup> as Brown posited but quite literally means “tradition” and more so now the “synthesis of tradition informed by and developed in practice.”<sup>216</sup>

---

<sup>214</sup> Ibid, 126

<sup>215</sup> Ibid, 34

<sup>216</sup> Asante, Molefi Kete, and Ama Mazama. *Encyclopedia of black studies*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007.), 290

Brown also erroneously conflates religion and spirituality, referring to Karenga's assertion of "spookism" as an attack on African spiritual systems.<sup>217</sup> This begs the question, how can Kawaida, a culmination of African cultural aspects, attack African spirituality when, in pre-colonial African paradigms, there is no separation of the secular and the ethereal? What Karenga was simply attempting to point out in his contentions on "spookism" is that European colonizers have plagued the African world with a religion and culture, dogmatized by their own world-view of white superiority and black inferiority, that presents a myth of spooks who threaten us if we don't worship them and demand we turn over our daily lives."<sup>218</sup>

If Karenga intended Kawaida to be an alternative to both European religious mythos and African spirituality then why would he gone through so much trouble to having translated and penned *Selections form the Husia: Sacred Wisdom from Ancient Egypt?* Interestingly, Brown cites the Husia supposedly to bolster the statement that, "by the 1990s Karenga had become a foremost scholar of classical African philosophy," but clearly he hasn't read it or he would have known that it is not simply a philosophical text but is indeed a spiritual text, the first known expressions of Maat, the Kemetic *Neferu* of truth, justice and rightness. What is seen in Brown's narrative of Kawaida is his attempt to transplant some of the abandoned developmental ideologies or even errant rhetoric to the standing body of theory revolving the contemporary paradigm. It is important to note that Karenga's theories are not his of his own making and neither does Karenga pretend

---

<sup>217</sup> Brown, Scott. *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism*. (New York U.P., 2005.), 35

<sup>218</sup> Karenga, Maulana. *Kawaida Theory: An Introductory Outline*. (Inglewood: Kawaida Publications, 1980.), 27

them to be. While it is true that he should be credited for synthesizing and making operative the paradigms of the African past, Karenga only made relevant the existing ethos of African culture –nevertheless, a significant feat.

Brown does well to recognize the intellectual movements that influenced Karenga and his development of US. He submits that Malcolm X’s Organization of Afro-American Unity had profound impact on Karenga and his development of US. “You must have a cultural revolution before the violent revolution. The cultural revolution gives identity, purpose and direction,” Karenga is quoted saying. This is akin to the OAAU’s charge that, “We must recapture our heritage and our identity if we are ever to liberate ourselves from the bonds of White supremacy. We must launch a cultural revolution to unbrainwash an entire people.”<sup>219</sup> The OAAU’s “Basic Unity Program” reiterated such as it declared:

Upon this establishment, we Afro-American people will launch a cultural revolution which will provide the means for restoring our identity that we might rejoin our brothers and sisters on the African continent, culturally, psychologically, economically, and share with them the sweet fruits of freedom from oppression and independence of racist governments.<sup>220</sup>

Clearly it is shown that, in concept, Karenga’s organization embodied the spirit of Malcolm’s OAAU more so than any other, including the Panthers. Karenga and the organization would later develop Kwanzaa, which was an attempt to reintroduce and maintain a sense of African communal values and responsibilities with those who become its practitioners. First celebrated in 1966, US members worked hard to spread the news of

---

<sup>219</sup> Brown, Scott. *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism*. (New York U.P., 2005.), 23

<sup>220</sup> Organization of Afro-American Unity, “Basic Unity Program,” in Steve Clark (ed.), *February 1965: The Final Speeches, Malcolm X* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1992), 258

the holiday and by 1998 it grown to have over 20 million celebrants throughout the African world.<sup>221</sup> The legacy of US is a legacy of restoration and victory. Now, with the understanding of culture as center, paradigms are in place to relocate the descendants of the enslaved with their own Africanity. The radicalism in the tradition is simply the brining full circle of African people with their own cultural identity and cosmology, remediating them with their African spirit.

---

<sup>221</sup> Brown, Scott. *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism*. (New York U.P., 2005.),161

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION: NATIONALIZING ON A CULTURAL BASIS

Within this concluding chapter we reach the aims of this thesis, a culmination of the histories introduced in previous chapters within theoretical applications to contemporary African American life. The reason for this is that each preceding chapter has put forth its own arguments for Nationalization, and together with new information presented in this chapter, they make cultural case for Nationalizing more abundantly clear. This has been a solitary project from its inception, guided by an overarching theme of cultural retention and calls for conscious remediation and maintenance. Both the data and the empirical evidence are clear, Africans *can go home again*, and can do so with the past as paradigm and the future as a blank canvas in which to paint the image of freedom they so choose.

#### It Begins with Family

What should be noticed throughout this text is a constant appraisal of the domains of Matriarchy among African American women as cultural retention and as a necessity for cultural function. This has served throughout the text as a remediation of the damages inflicted by the colonial problem, being in particular a problem that has long affected the relationships between Black women and Black men. Daniel Moynihan's *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, a United States Department of Labor Report, seen by many as an assault on the Black family structure, suggesting that if there was any hope for saving the black family, the black community would have to intensify and reinforce male dominance and "reestablish" a patriarchal model. As Moynihan's reports are

recently being revisited it is clear that many who took issue with Moynihan's assessments perhaps hadn't read the full report and only saw snippets of it in news outlets as the original was at that time still an internal document with limited copies.<sup>222</sup>

Regardless, the report contended that the problems lay in the fact that the extreme control that women had over the family unit was akin to a matriarchy, a model Moynihan advised would place Black people at a disadvantage within a racist, patriarchal society.<sup>223</sup> "The fundamental fact of Negro American family life is the often reversed roles of husband and wife," Moynihan posits. The report would cite the conditions of enslavement as the birthplace of this hierarchy in Black domestic life, as it "vitiated family life" and introduced "a fatherless matrifocal (mother-centered) pattern". He concluded that the only true remedy was the reestablishment of black "manhood" by government programs aimed at securing jobs for black males.<sup>224</sup>

Moynihan was a liberal democrat, the longest serving senator from the state of New York, and supported social programs dedicated to alleviating poverty, particularly in black neighborhoods. He saw his research to be noble and his suggestions to be a valiant effort in improving the conditions of an often ignored and mistreated "American" community. Of course, an Afrocentric analysis of Moynihan's data allows us to see that African people were simply operating in ways African people have operated in the past, despite the current repressive conditions. As has been discussed in previous chapters, the

---

<sup>222</sup> Revisiting the Moynihan Report, Cont.  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/06/revisiting-the-moynihan-report-cont/276978/> (Accessed, April 2)

<sup>223</sup> Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of- Labor, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington, D.C.: Official- Report, 1965), 15-17, 30-35

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid*, 15-17, 29

prevalence of matriarchy as a domain has always existed among African people. The slave plantations of the south did not produce but simply exploited and manipulated this ancient system for its perverse ends. To be sure, Moynihan's assessment that black males, by way of a racist system, have been left disenfranchised and thus the black community suffers because of it is not an inaccurate statement. Moynihan included a quote from the great Civil Rights leader Whitney Young's monograph *To Be Equal* in order to bolster his arguments:

Both as a husband and as a father the Negro male is left to feel inadequate, not because he is unlovable or unaffectionate, lack intelligence or even a gray flannel suit. But in a society that measures a man by the size of his paycheck, he doesn't stand very tall in comparison with his white counterpart. To this situation he may react with withdrawal, bitterness toward society, aggression both with the family and racial group, self-hatred, or crime. Or he might escape through a number of avenues that allow him to lose himself in fantasy or compensate for his low status through a variety of exploits.

Clearly we see this play out even contemporarily among young black men and as a result, Black women who expect of Black men that in which the dominant society mandates as appropriate respond both antagonizingly and perhaps even emasculatingly.

For this, Moynihan offers the expertise of Thomas Pettigrew:

The Negro wife in this situation can easily become disgusted with her financially dependent husband, and her rejection of him further alienates the male from family life. Embittered by their experiences with men, many Negro mothers often act to perpetuate the mother-centered pattern by taking great interest their daughters than their sons.<sup>225</sup>

However, the underlining problem is not simply that the black family unit was so manipulated and contrived by white plantation owners that it created the circumstances Black people deal with today. On the contrary, we've learned from John Blassingame work that the family unit, instead, persisted successfully on the plantation in spite of their

---

<sup>225</sup> Ibid, 34

oppressive condition. “The family, while it had no legal existence in slavery, was in actuality one of the most important survival mechanisms for the slave” Blassingame advises before submitting, “However frequently the family was broken, it was primarily responsible for the slave’s ability to survive on the plantation without becoming totally dependent on and submissive to his master ... [t]he important thing was not that the family was not recognized legally ... but rather that some form of family life did exist among slaves.”<sup>226</sup>

So here we have the foremost scholar on the history of enslavement at the time insisting instead that not only did the Black family unit remain intact but also, as mentioned in a previous chapter, already brought with them some sense of the independence of women, at once citing the Tonga declaration “woman has no chief.”<sup>227</sup> What can be inferred here is that a constant clash cultural retention and adherence to Eurocentric cosmology is at the core of African American male to female social conditions. Black women are often today associated as being boisterous, opinionated, *independent* and unwilling to submit to their men. But in the African paradigmatic context these are not necessarily negative traits. Discussed earlier was the concept of gender fluidity amongst pre-colonial and ancient African societies. Clenora Hudson-Weems, in her masterpiece, *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* touches on this within the contemporary context:

Another characteristic of the Africana womanist is flexible *role-playing*. This is a controversial topic today due to the predicament of the Africana man and woman, which dates back to American slavery, when neither partner was free to act out

---

<sup>226</sup> Blassingame, John W. *The slave community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*. (New York: Oxford, 1981.), 151

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid*, 177

the defined roles of men and women as set forth by the dominant culture. The Africana woman has never been restricted to the home and household chores, her male counterpart has more often than not shared the role as homemaker... Africana men, too, have not had the consistent experience of upholding the traditional role of the male as the head of the household.

Weems further asserts:

... On the other hand, to some degree, the Africana womanist accepts the traditional roles, some of which are valid and appropriate, since obviously there are some distinctions between the sexes, such as the biological difference between men and women. Women cannot share their biological role as childbearer, and men are still considered the protectors in most circles, and are expected to uphold the family and defend, physically if need be, both their women and children. Although Africana women do believe in and respect tradition roles, it must be established that those roles, for Africana women and men alike, have never been so clearly defined in the Africana community and thus, these roles have always been somewhat relaxed.<sup>228</sup>

It is interesting to note that empirically it is seen that some Black women tend to stay in relationships with Black men that do not always fit the model patriarch role the dominant society has demanded of them, as they are possibly jobless and or uneducated. These relationships, however, can possibly be toxic for Black women, as some Black men will exploit the situation. Often the Black man himself may feel, if only subconsciously, that his only value is the offering of sexual indulgence, yet still feel emasculated by the fact that sexual favors do nothing to support themselves or their partners financially. Often still infidelity becomes an issue as they seek the validation of other women in order to comfort their emasculated egos.

But is Moynihan necessarily correct to assert that a matriarchal domain cannot exist within a patriarchal system? There shouldn't be any reason that households in which

---

<sup>228</sup> Hudson-Weems, Clenora. *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*. (Troy, MI: Bedford Publishers, 2004.), 64

either the woman makes the most, or has equal if not a larger share in the affairs of the home hinders the growth of the Black nation. The paradigms for such in African history are numerous. After all, what would hinder a domestic setting in which there is a full-time stay at home father other than social pressures on the male? If the African American community could be consciously introduced to their own cultural paradigms that inform this matter it could expose the intersections between cultural retention and impositions from the dominant society. Such revelation would allow the Black male to realize that his role shouldn't psychologically emasculate him because his manhood is not culturally defined by the amount of money he brings into the home.

This is not to say that a complete "role reversal" is the model idea for a conscious resurrection of the domains of matriarchy. The idea is that gender fluidity when applied to relationships allowed the African man and African woman to navigate life harmoniously. The primary role of the African man was to show strength as a measure of security, which is why on the occasion of visitors an African man would open the door to any home in which he is the man of the house, but it is the woman who must agree to the visitor's entry. This is also not to say, as in the case of Nzinga, the Gikuyu and the Kandakes, that the man must always have physical prowess, but be capable of complimenting the woman by performing the roles agreed upon. Furthermore, the African man should not seek to exploit a situation to which, for example, he may find himself at home with no responsibility and every whim taken care of by the African woman. Rather conscious of it or not, that is a pretentious notion brought on by Eurocentric cultural hegemony. The roles of gender aside, African man viewed his woman not as servant but as equal and sought at best a relationship built on mutual

respect. Furthermore, Moynihan may also be referring to the wage and political disparity between men and women in the American system. However, the objectives of nationalism seek operations both within and outside of the American system, developing the political and economic conditions that equally benefit the Black man and woman.

## Final Considerations

The aims of this text was to present in narrative form cultural, spiritual, and intellectual arguments for African Americans to understand that the African world is theirs to engage and that there is indeed such basis for unity amongst themselves and with the African continent. In Anthony Browder's *Nile Valley Contributions to Civilization* he makes a point to say that:

It is important that African people look beyond the image of Africa which was created for them by Europeans. It is also most important to remember that Africans were the only immigrants who came to America against their will. They were stripped of their history, and had no humanity that their slave masters were willing to recognize. Their sole purpose for being was to provide free labor for the economic development of the country.<sup>229</sup>

This has been the reality for Black people in America. However, as much as the European project attempts to wipe clean the descendants of Africa of their humanity, Africanity remains a constant, though in many cases subconscious, truth for Black people in America. All that remains is the conscious reclamation of Africanity and restoration of African paradigms in order to navigate themselves as African people in whatever social and political setting. The act of nationalizing with culture as foundation alleviates many of the various issues encountered during previous nationalizing efforts.

---

<sup>229</sup> Browder, Anthony T. *Nile Valley Contributions To Civilization*. (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Karmic Guidance, 1996.), 27

Firstly, instead of the superficial foundations of so-called Ethiopianism, the identifiable social and spiritual remnants of African culture can be restored and serve as legitimate foundations. Furthermore, the application of the political ideologies of European scholars such as Marxism yields no centered perspective, as everything would remain relative to European experiences. Lastly, the lack of spiritual applications to social, political and economic activities of African people comes as a detriment not only from a spiritualistic standpoint but also a communal one. Established during enslavement and colonialism, the spookism present within Black American religious traditions serves only to stifle the power that the creator has already granted African people to shape their own realities.

The world religions of Christianity and Islam would need to be systematically conditioned for application to African realities. This would mean that the religions would have to be engaged from a point prior to European intervention and the African aspects of which would then have to be teased out and made central in order for it to be wholesome for African people. Perhaps revisiting the ideologies of early African Christian ideologues such as Arius would best benefit this venture. Arius' dogmatic premises were once the strongest ideological opposition to that of the Roman Catholic authority and were the basis for Constantine's Catholic faction calling the first ecumenical council in Nicaea in which they both shamed and made clandestine Arius and his following. Other African spiritual authorities arose to enrich the Christian faith during that era but were likewise considered heretic and thusly the Eurocentric dogmas prevailed. Furthermore, the protestant schism under the direction of Martin Luther, and the subsequent protestant denominations that followed, still upholds these dogmatic principles. It is mostly the

practices and beliefs surrounding the nature of personal salvation that were the foundation for the Luther's split with the church. Thusly, the Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist and other orientations are not absolved.

Nevertheless, in reestablishing African spiritual ties, the reengagement or further engagement with the ancestral realm serves both spiritual and communal purposes. The act of libation, for example, has both spiritual and communal application which benefits the nationalizing of African people by promoting unity amongst the living while also collectively engaging in the veneration of ancestors. In *Libation: The Afrikan Ritual of Heritage in the Circle of Life*, Kimani Nehusi, preeminent scholar of African cultural history and perhaps the most authoritative figure in the academy on African libation practices, submits that the ritual of libation "must be understood and explained in partial fulfillment of the need for Afrikans<sup>230</sup> everywhere to reclaim, reconstruct and fully repossess their own history and cultural heritage. Such process of repossession will constitute a restoration of identity that is perhaps the most important prerequisite for Afrikans to fulfill ... their own vast potential and undertake their own development..." What Nehusi is explaining here is a nationalizing element in the form of a spiritual ritual that is shared culturally throughout the African world. In America the retention of this ritual manifests itself often in very short form as a Black person would pour out some liquid, often from a bottle of liquor, and say something similar to "this is for the brothers who ain't here".<sup>231</sup> It has even been displayed in entertainment in movies such as the 1975 classic, *Cooley High*. Libation calls for community participation in the veneration

---

<sup>230</sup> Refer to Nehusi's text concerning this spelling.

<sup>231</sup> Nehusi, Kimani S. K. *Libation: an Afrikan Ritual of Heritage in the Circle of Life*. Lanham ; Boulder ; New York ; Toronto ; Plymouth, UK: University Press of America, Inc., 2016., xxiii

of ancestors and facilitates bonding between African people. On the matter of bonding, Nehusi explains:

This liquid has become sacred because it is blessed by the divine and sacred presences. Everyone takes a symbolic sip. This is sacramental. If a person does not wish to drink the liquid used, for example alcohol, then that individual may elect to pour a little onto Mother Earth, or onto the floor, as a symbolic act of participation. This symbolic drink is their way of participating in the ritual and it is as valid as swallowing the liquid.<sup>232</sup>

Moreover, traditional African spiritual systems do not separate what is regarded as sacred from that of the psychological realm. Thusly, the divine presence was not separate from the daily activities of African people. Each engagement with another human being was to be regarded as a spiritual as well as physical occurrence. There is no concept of a so-called “personal savior” because the community’s destiny is to either be saved or condemned together.<sup>233</sup> Thusly, the recapturing of African spirituality is vital to nationalizing efforts.

---

<sup>232</sup> Ibid, 34

<sup>233</sup> Thomas, Douglas E. *African Traditional Religion In the Modern World*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2015.), 22

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Akbar, Na'im. *Akbar Papers in African Psychology*. (Tallahassee, FL: Mind Productions & Associates, 2003.)

"Anna Nzinga, Queen." *African Biography*, Gale, 1999. *Biography in Context*, link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/K2421000058/BIC1?u=temple\_main&xid=813e2dba. Accessed 2 Feb. 2017.

Amadiume, Ifi. *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*. London: Zed Books, 1987.)

Araujo, Ana Lucia. Dahomey, Portugal and Bahia: King Adandozan and the Atlantic Slave Trade, *Slavery & Abolition*, 33:1, (2012)

Armitage, Natalie (2015). "European and African Figural Ritual Magic: The Beginnings of the Voodoo Doll Myth". In Ceri Houlbrook and Natalie Armitage. *The Materiality of Magic: An Artifactual Investigation into Ritual Practices and Popular Beliefs*. Oxford: Oxbow. pp. 85–101.

Armstrong, Karen. *A History of God: the 4000 Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. (New York: Ballantine Book, 1993.)

Asante, Molefi Kete. *The Afrocentric Idea*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006)

Asante, Molefi Kete. *An Afrocentric Manifesto: Toward an African Renaissance*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2008.)

Asante, Molefi K. *The History of Africa: the Quest for Eternal Harmony*. (New York: Routledge, 2015.)

Asante, Molefi Kete, and Ama Mazama. *Encyclopedia of Black Studies*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007.)

Bellegarde-Smith, Patrick. *Fragments of Bone: Neo-African Religions in a New World*. (Urbana, Ill: University of Illinois Press, 2005.)

Blassingame, John W. *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*. (New York: Oxford, 1981.)

Blake, John. "Malcolm and Martin, closer than we ever thought." CNN. May 19, 2010. Accessed February 26, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/05/19/Malcolmx.king/>.

Brown, Scott. *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism*. (New York U.P., 2005.)

Brosses, Charles de. *Du culte des dieux fétiches ou Parallèle de l'ancienne religion de l'Egypte avec la religion actuelle de Nigritie* (1760)

Browder, Anthony T. *Nile Valley Contributions To Civilization*. (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Karmic Guidance, 1996.)

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "'Better Is Good': Obama on Reparations, Civil Rights, and the Art of the Possible." *The Atlantic*. December 21, 2016. Accessed April 2, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/12/ta-nehisi-coates-obama-transcript-ii/511133/>.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "Bernie Sanders and the Liberal Imagination." *The Atlantic*. January 24, 2016. Accessed April 2, 2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/01/bernie-sanders-liberal-imagination/425022/>.

Coats, Ta-Nehisi Revisiting the Moynihan Report, Cont. <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/06/revisiting-the-moynihan-report-cont/276978/> (Accessed, April 2)

Collier, Andrea King. <http://theplate.nationalgeographic.com/2015/11/04/the-black-panthers-revolutionaries-free-breakfast-pioneers/> (Accessed March 19, 2017)

Cone, James H. *Martin & Malcolm & America: a Dream or a Nightmare*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992.) ePUB.

Cronon, Edmund David, and John Hope Franklin. *Black Moses; The story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969.)

Darby, R. "The Masturbation Taboo and the Rise of Routine Male Circumcision: A Review of the Historiography." *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 3 (2003): 737-57. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3790737> Accessed: April 5, 2017

David, Rosalie. *Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt*. (London: England. Penguin Books 2002)

Davidson, Basil. *Africa in History*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005.)

Delany, Martin Robison, and Robert Steven Levine. *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reader*. (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2003.)

Diouf, Sylviane A. *Fighting the Slave Trade: West African Strategies*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006)

Diop, Cheikh Anta. *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*. (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1974)

Diop, Cheikh Anta. *The Cultural Unity of Black Africa: the domains of matriarchy & of patriarchy in classical antiquity*. (London: Karnak House, 1997.)

Du Bois, William Edward Burghardt. *The Souls of Black Folk*. (Mineola, NY: Dover 1994.)

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Negro Church*, (Atlanta: Atlanta University Press, 1903)

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The World and Africa; an Inquiry into the Part Which Africa Has Played in World History*. (New York: International Publishers, 1965.)

Douglas, Frederick. "Frederick Douglass' Address to African Civilization Society." Teaching American History. Accessed March 24, 2017. <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/african-civilization-society/>.

Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African*. (Gloucester: Dodo Press, 2009)

Falola, Toyin. *Africa Volume 1: African History Before 1885*. (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2000.)

Finkelman, Paul. *Encyclopedia of African American history, 1619-1895: from the colonial period to the age of Frederick Douglass*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.)

Floyd, Samuel A. *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting its History from Africa to the United States*. (Oxford University Press, 1997.)

Frier, Bruce W. and Thomas A.J. McGinn, *A Casebook on Roman Family Law* (Oxford University Press: American Philological Association, 2004), pp. 31–32, 457, *et passim*.

Gates, Henry Louis. "Ending the Slavery Blame-Game." *The New York Times*. April 22, 2010. Accessed February 22, 2017.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/23/opinion/23gates.html>.

Gomez, Michael A. *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998)

Grant, Colin. *Negro With A Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey*. (New York: Oxford Univ. Pr., 2010.)

Gruesser, John Cullen. *Black on Black: Twentieth-Century African American Writing about Africa*. (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000.)

Gwaltney, John Langston. *Drylongso: a Self-Portrait of Black America*. (New York: New Press, 1993.)

Hayford, J. E. Casely, and Molefi Kete Asante. *Ethiopia Unbound: Studies in Race Emancipation*. (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 2011.)

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, and John Trl. Sibree. *Philosophy of History*. (New York: Colonial Press, 1900.), 227

Hudson-Weems, Clenora. *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*. (Troy, MI: Bedford Publishers, 2004.)

Husserl, Edmund. Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man or “The Vienna lecture”, May 10, 1935 lecture presented at the Vienna Cultural Society.  
[www.ischool.berkeley.edu.http://people.ischool.berkeley.edu/~ryanshaw/nmwg/edmund.husserl-philosophy.and.the.crisis.of.european.man.pdf](http://people.ischool.berkeley.edu/~ryanshaw/nmwg/edmund.husserl-philosophy.and.the.crisis.of.european.man.pdf). Retrieved October 23, 2016.

Jackson, John G. and Runoko Rashidi, *Introduction To African Civilizations* (New York: Citadel Press, 2001)

Karenga, Maulana. *The Language and Logic of Kawaïda: African Ways of Engaging the World*, <http://ibw21.org/commentary/the-language-and-logic-of-kawaida-african-ways-of-engaging-the-world/> Accessed: October 22, 2016

Karenga, Maulana. *Kawaïda Theory: An Introductory Outline*. (Inglewood, Calif.: Kawaïda Publications, 1980)

Karenga, Maulana. *Maat, the Moral Ideal in Ancient Egypt: a Study in Classical African Ethics*. (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 2006.)

Kenyatta, Jomo. Bronislaw Malinowski. (*Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu*. New York: Vintage Books, 1965)

King, Martin Luther, Clayborne Carson, Peter Holloran, Ralph Luker, and Penny A. Russell. *The papers of Martin Luther King, Jr: Volume 1: Called to Serve January 1929-June 1951*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.)

King, Martin Luther, and Clayborne Carson. *The papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume IV: Symbol of the Movement, January 1957-December 1958*. (Berkeley California: University of California Press, 2000.), 156

King, Martin Luther. Telegram from Martin Luther King, Jr. to Betty al-Shabazz. Accessed Feb 25, 2017.  
[http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/telegram\\_from\\_martin\\_luther\\_king\\_jr\\_to\\_betty\\_al\\_shabazz.1.html](http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/documentsentry/telegram_from_martin_luther_king_jr_to_betty_al_shabazz.1.html).

Levine, Robert S. *Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, and the Politics of Representative Identity*. (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.)

Lichtheim, Miriam. *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol.2, (1976)

Lincoln, Charles Eric., and Lawrence H. Mamiya. *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.)

Lumsden, Linda. "Good Mothers With Guns: Framing Black Womanhood in the Black Panther, 1968–1980". *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* (2009)

Macgaffey, Wyatt. "African Objects and the Idea of Fetish." *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 25 (1994): 123-31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20166895> Accessed: April 6, 2017

Mazama, Ama. *The Afrocentric Paradigm*. (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003)

McNaughton, Patrick R. *The Mande Blacksmiths: Knowledge, Power, and Art in West Africa*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.)

Messer, Chris M., Krystal Beamon, and Patricia A. Bell. "The Tulsa Riot of 1921: Collective Violence and Racial Frames", *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 37, no. 1 (2013)

Monteiro-Ferreira, Ana. *The Demise of the Inhuman: Afrocentricity, Modernism, and Postmodernism*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015.)

Moore, Antonio. "The State of our Imperfect Union: President Barack Obama's Racial Legacy." *The Huffington Post*. July 09, 2015. Accessed April 2, 2017. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/antonio-moore/the-state-of-our-imperfec\\_1\\_b\\_7540060.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/antonio-moore/the-state-of-our-imperfec_1_b_7540060.html).

Moses, Wilson Jeremiah. *Classical Black Nationalism: From the American Revolution to Marcus Garvey*. (New York: New York University Press, 1996.)

Moynihan, Daniel P. Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of- Labor, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington, D.C.: Official-Report, 1965)

Natambu, Kofi. *Malcolm X: Critical Lives*. (Indianapolis: Alpha Books, 2001.)

Nehusi, Kimani S. K. *Libation: an Afrikan Ritual of Heritage in the Circle of Life*. Lanham ; Boulder ; New York ; Toronto ; Plymouth, UK: University Press of America, Inc., 2016., xxiii

Newton, Huey P., David Hilliard, and Wiese Donald. *The Huey P. Newton Reader*. (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003.)

Oyèwùmí, Oyèrónkẹ́. *African Gender Studies: Theoretical Questions and Conceptual Issues*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, (England: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.)

Perry, Bruce. *Malcolm: the life of a man who changed Black America*. (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill, 1992.)

*Philadelphia Tribune*, Thursday, 27 June 1940

Pietz, William. "The Problem of the Fetish, II: The Origin of the Fetish." *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 13 (1987): 23-45.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20166762> Accessed: April 6, 2017

Rashid, Ismail. "A Devotion to the Idea of Liberty at Any Price: Rebellion and Antislavery in the Upper Guinea Coast in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" In *Fighting the Slave Trade*, edited by Sylviane A. Diouf, 139. City: (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006)

Ronen, Dov. "On the African Role in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Dahomey." *Cahiers d'études africaines* 11, no. 41 (1971)

Segal, Ronald. *Islam's Black Slaves: The History of Africa's other Black Diaspora*. (London: Atlantic Books, 2001.)

Silbiger, Steven. *The Jewish phenomenon: seven keys to the enduring wealth of a people*. (Lanham, MD: M. Evans, 2009.)

Tibebu, Teshale. *Hegel and the Third World: the Making of Eurocentrism in World History*. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011.)

Thornton, John K. "Legitimacy and Political Power: Queen Njinga, 1624–1663." *The Journal of African History* 32, no. 01 (1991)

Thomas, Douglas E. *African Traditional Religion In the Modern World*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2015.), 22

Thompson, Juan. "FADE TO WHITE: Black Music, White Artists=Big Money." *EBONY*. August 26, 2015. Accessed March 26, 2017.

<http://www.ebony.com/entertainment-culture/fade-to-white-black-music-white-artistsbig-money-504>.

Ture, Kwame. "Kwame Ture (aka Stokely Carmichael)." Commencement 1999 - Howard University. <https://www.howard.edu/secretary/convocations/commencement/1999/TureK.htm>. (Accessed March 11, 2017)

Vincent, Ted. "The Garveyite Parents of Malcolm X". *The Black Scholar*. **20** (2): 10–13. (March–April 1989).

Washington, Booker T. *Up from Slavery*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1995.), 11  
John W. Blassingame. *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.)

Weisbrot, Robert. "Stokely Speaks" (review of Ready for Revolution), New York Times, November 23, 2003. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/23/books/stokely-speaks.html> (Accessed March 11, 2017)

Wilkinson, Toby. *The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt*. (New York: Random House, 2010)

Wilson, Amos. *Blueprint for Black Power: A Moral, Political and Economic Imperative for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Afrikan World InfoSystems, 2011)

Wright, Kweli I. So Just How Cosby-ish Is 'Black-ish'? [www.ebony.com](http://www.ebony.com/entertainment-culture/so-just-how-cosby-ish-is-Black-ish-343#axzz3uvKhZLXL)  
<http://www.ebony.com/entertainment-culture/so-just-how-cosby-ish-is-Black-ish-343#axzz3uvKhZLXL> . Accessed: Dec. 20, 2016.

X, Malcolm "Paris Interview," November 1964, in Malcolm X, *By Any Means Necessary*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p. 179.

X, Malcolm. Organization of Afro-American Unity, "Basic Unity Program," in Steve Clark (ed.), *February 1965: The Final Speeches, Malcolm X* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1992), 258

Zimmerman, Andrew. *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010.)