

The Possibility of Pre-Colonial and Colonial Political Thoughts of Africa in the Contemporary Period: “African” And “Western” Political Thoughts Compared

The principal objectives of this paper are:- (i) to rationally explore the pre-colonial and colonial African political thoughts; (ii) to critically examine the contradictions between “African” and “western” political thoughts; and (iii) to show the possibility of indigenous African political thoughts to the contemporary period. It is obvious that this days, the majority of African countries are blindly accepting and absurdly imitating the western political philosophies. Since the official intrusion of Europeans till now, African state leaders have been acting and behaving based on the dominant western political thoughts and systems. In line with this fact, many scholars arguing that African governments complete dependency on the occidental political ideologies and models clearly proves the myths of a white men that ‘Africans do not have native political thoughts and philosophies’. To the contrary, I will argue that precolonial and colonial African people had their own unique political thoughts and systems of political governance. In the near and distant past, people of the continent have been solved their multidimensional problems and brought relative peace and security compare to European counterparts by using its own indigenous political cultures and values. Accordingly, my position throughout the paper will be “a critical appraisal” of traditional and colonial African political thoughts in the contemporary period. I strongly believe that the majority of precolonial and colonial African political thoughts are consistent or compatible with the psychology, culture, economy, and history of African people. So, for better and stable Africa, in this study, I will provide a new trend/approach in the choice of African political and economic ideologies i.e. ‘a critical re-appropriation and rational implementation’ of ancient colonial African political thoughts and philosophies.

Key Words: Africa, colonial, precolonial, Socialism, Nationalism, Humanism, Negritude, Ubuntu, and Indigenous Political Thought.

Introduction

Africa is a vast and diverse continent, comprising fifty four (54) independent states and many other de facto and de jure territorial states. With only a few exceptions Ethiopia and Liberia, these are new states; most of them achieved independence in 1960s. As a result, this year is known as the year of Africa. To merge these states together and talk about “the pre-colonial and colonial African political thoughts” is somewhat misleading or hasty generalization because there are so many important differences among them. There is for example, a wide

1 cultural gap between the North African states and the black African states south of
 2 the Sahara. The geographic, economic and demographic differences are often wide
 3 and striking, as witnessed by the huge states Nigeria and Libya on the one hand
 4 and the tiny states Mauritius, Gambia, Burundi, and Ruanda on the other hand
 5 (William Trodoff, 1997: 1-3).

6 Despite the differences in terms of language, religion, color, ethnic
 7 background, demography, geography, etc. there are many things Africans share in
 8 common. Some of these common features among African states are; all states of
 9 Africa are colonial creations, all states are ex-colonial except Ethiopia & Liberia,
 10 in the time antiquity, African people were governed by indigenous values and
 11 cultures, African people were believed on the principle of brotherhood, fairness,
 12 consensus, equality, and peaceful coexistence. Moreover, recently states of the
 13 African continent have the following bad common features:- poverty,
 14 technological backwardness, corruption, high illiteracy rate, civil war, political
 15 instability, social insecurity, high immigration rate, violation of human rights and
 16 so on (Tordoff, 1997: 4-12). Accordingly, it is not fallacious or hasty
 17 generalization to call the political thoughts and philosophies of pre-colonial and
 18 colonial society as "African".

19 Before going to discuss about the tradition of African political thought, let me
 20 first discuss about the meaning and nature of political thought. "*Political thought*
 21 *is coeval with political life. Political philosophy, however, emerged within a*
 22 *particular political life*" (Strauss & Cropsey, 1987: 1). In the light of the above
 23 conviction, political thought is as old as human race and political thought is comes
 24 first or earlier than political philosophy. In terms of age, Political thought is older
 25 than political philosophy. In other words, political philosophy is emerged after the
 26 political life of a given society. Hence, every human society has political thought
 27 because according to Strauss, human beings and political thoughts are created
 28 equally/at the same time (Strauss & Cropsey, 1987: 1-3 & Strauss, 1988:12).

29 The discourse on African political thoughts and philosophies is a neglected
 30 field of study. Researches on African political values and systems are remains
 31 quite marginal (Pieter Boele Van Hensbroek, 1998: 7). Even some studies on
 32 Africa declared the claim that African people do not have philosophy in general
 33 and political philosophy in particular. This Eurocentric claim is came to reality due
 34 to the absence of scholarly researches in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-
 35 colonial African indigenous political thoughts and values.

36 As a separate field of study, African political thought is a relatively new
 37 discipline. It was only in the late 1960s that is emerged as different and distinct
 38 from other i.e. the so called western political philosophy. In essence, African
 39 political thought refers to the original ideas, values, principles, beliefs, and blue
 40 prints of African people for the betterment of their continent in different respects.
 41 African political thought covers the political systems, political values and
 42 institutions from the ancient period (Kush, 6th Century BCE) to the present period.
 43 More importantly, African political thought also refers to the political theories,
 44 philosophies and ideologies developed by various native African scholars and
 45 statesmen, as articulated in their speeches, autobiographies, writings, and policy

statements in different periods (Guy Martin, 2012:1-2).

According to some African political scholars, the political thought of the continent has divided in two to main groups. These are precolonial (traditional) and colonial (modern) African political thoughts. For them, precolonial African political thoughts had purposes like: - preserving peace and security, bringing integrity and equality, defending external enemies, creating good life and so on. They strongly believed that the traditional African political thoughts were better in resolving and managing conflicts compare to the political thoughts of other regions. Moreover, when we come to the colonial African political thoughts they hold additional purposes i.e. the task of emancipation, dignity and cultural rehabilitation. Like the ancient political thoughts of the region, the colonial political thoughts have been met their intended goals (i.e. emancipation, dignity and cultural rehabilitation). To strengthen this, Guy Martin has stated the next proposition:-

A major distinction must be made here between indigenous and modern African political thought. The former was developed during the so called golden age of African history and refers to the governance of ancient kingdoms and empires (such as Egypt, Kush, Nubia, Axum, Ghana, Mali, Songhai, and Kanem-Bornu), but it was also developed by such scholars as Ibn Khaldun, Al Bekri, Ibn Battuta, and Leo Africanus, and it is associated with indigenous African political systems and institutions. To the contrary, modern African political thought emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and was developed by African scholars such as James Africanus, Horton, Edward Wilmot Blyden, and Kwame Nkrumah (2012:2).

In light of the above paragraph, Africans have their own unique political thoughts both collectively and individually. These collective and individual thoughts have been provided practical solutions to political, economic, social, and cultural problems of the continent, and they varied according to historical circumstances and a constantly changing African and world political environment. Based on this fact, scholars in different African universities strongly argue that in order to resolve the existing problems of the continent wisely, we should go back to the primitive Africa and re-implement the indigenous political thoughts of ancient society.

As far as my reading is concerned, among African scholars, there are three dominant narratives (positions) regarding the choice of African political ideology. The first narrative is; for the betterment of future Africa, we should rehabilitate the precolonial and colonial African political thoughts. The second one is; Africa will solve her huge problems by completely accepting and implementing the western political philosophies. The third position is; Africa will not be free from the globalization process and it is better to govern the entire continent by mixing/merging both the 'African' and 'Western' political ideologies because the current problems in Africa are created both by internal and external causes.

For me, the three narratives are worthless in solving the real problems of Africa. They are unfit in tackling the multi-dimensional problems of the people. As a reason, here is I have formulating a new approach to the choice of African

political and economic ideology compare to the above three narratives. This new approach is entitled “a critical appraisal of the precolonial and colonial African political thoughts in the contemporary period”. Meaning, a rational implementation of ancient and modern African political thoughts might eradicate the dense and sophisticated problems of Africa.

I personally believe that some of the traditional African political values and thoughts are unable to solve the existing complicated problems of the region (i.e. poverty, frequent famine, corruption, civil war, economic inequality, public riot and the like). The glitches that we experiencing and hearing throughout the continent of Africa are wide and intricate. Thus, it is impossible to bring long lasting solutions for African people by wholesale practice and adaptation of our previous political legacies. For me, the good political trajectory in Africa is a careful and rational appropriation of our political legacies. Hopefully, in this new approach we Africans will minimize the dominant problems of the continent which are created by internal and external forces.

Finally, the paper consists five main parts. The first part of the paper is introduction that focus on the nature of African political thoughts. The second issue of this term paper is examining the shared values and world views of African people. The third sub-topic shows the contradiction between African and western political thoughts. The fourth part preaches the possibility of indigenous African political thoughts (i.e. precolonial and colonial) in the contemporary period. The last sub-topic is conclusion that stresses on critical points of the study.

The Shared Values and World Views of African people

Do Africans have commonly shared values and world views compare to people of other continents? What makes Africans special in terms of culture, religion, politics, technology and economy in comparison with the western societies? Regarding these questions, prominent intellectuals of the continent like Kwasi Wiredu and Odera Oruka argued that Africans do have their own matchless political, cultural and religious values and thoughts. They do have distinctive way of observing and understanding the components of this empirical world. Accordingly, Africans way of organizing reality is different from Europeans way of organizing reality (Kwasi Wiresu, 2001:171).

What are the shared values and world views among African people? Regardless of differences in terms of color, language, religion, race, demography, and resource, the people of African continent do share identical values and world views. These similar cultural values and world views are survived from the time antiquity to the present time. The external world most of the time identified the people and the continent of Africa by the following shared values and world views.

Here after, I shall present the unique features and world views of African people in comparison with the western societies. Why because, the westerners

1 themselves wrote that Africans do not have commonly shared values and
 2 competent way of looking the cosmos. They added that there is nothing in
 3 common among the people of Africa. As a researcher, this comparative study
 4 between 'African' and 'Western' world views has the following significances such
 5 as: - (a) to disprove the western claim that Africans do not have common values
 6 and world views; (b) to show the supremacy of African way of understanding
 7 nature; and (c) to publicize the exploitative and idealistic nature of Western values
 8 and world views.

9 The first shared value among African people is a religious way of living. The
 10 majority of African people are too religious. African culture is basically religious
 11 and more affiliated with spirituality. The people of Africa believed that God is the
 12 creator and regulator of this universe, and all things are existing in a related and
 13 united state of form. With the same token, the lion share of African people have
 14 viewed the world in terms of connected or dependent existence. For example, the
 15 'part' in Africa does not exist without the appearance of the 'whole'. This
 16 statement is identical with the claim that the hand of a man will not appear without
 17 the existence of his whole body but a man exist without having hands (Orville
 18 Boyd Jenkins, 1991: 11-12).

19 To the contrary, the western societies are secular in orientation. Their culture
 20 is basically naturalistic or scientific in its approach. Unlike African societies, they
 21 (Europeans) believed that a regular set order is exist in the universe. Things in this
 22 physical world do have an independent existence. For Europeans, the part (an
 23 individual) can exist without the whole (society). In line with this belief, I have
 24 argue that westerners ignored their own famous claim that "man is a social
 25 animal". Since the 4th century BC, the ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates
 26 and Aristotle strongly preached the proposition that human beings are a social
 27 being. An individual couldn't fulfill his/her desires out of a community. This
 28 shows that the confusing personalities of the western society and also the lacuna
 29 between African and Western way of understanding nature (Jenkins, 1991: 11-12).

30 The second common feature of African people is a relational view of the
 31 world. The African perceived the cosmos in relational way. Meaning, Africans
 32 explain and understand reality in terms of events and relationships. In Africa, the
 33 relationship between individuals and their roles in events is more important than
 34 the individuals and their separate identities. However, westerner's view of 'reality'
 35 is in terms of 'substance'. The European view of ultimate reality centers in
 36 substance. Hence, the western societies try to define and understand reality in
 37 terms of objects and their descriptions. For them, what is important is not the
 38 relation, but an entity with its special attributes (Jenkins, 1991: 12-13).

39 The African culture sees the universe as dynamic and active. This is the third
 40 shared view among African people. For us, the world is under a constant change
 41 and uncontrollable. It refers to many factors in life cannot be known, controlled
 42 and predicted. For Africans, humans are the mercy of the forces of life. An
 43 individual is unable to control and manipulate his/her destiny. But, when we come
 44 to the western community, the world is mechanical and static. For them, every

effect has a definite cause, or for every given effect, there is a given cause (Jenkins, 1991:13-14).

The above kinds of western belief have lead them to control the world and the environment. For Europeans, the environment has an independent existence, as a result, they simply exploit and manipulate the physical environment. To the reverse, the Africans believed that the environment has a dependent existence with human society. That is why Africans do have a profound culture of treating the physical environment harmoniously and friendly. So, where ever you go in Africa, there is a peaceful interaction and coexistence between society and their physical surrounding. In these days, huge environmental crises and losses are occurred due to the evil deeds of the western societies. Their world view has pushed them to mistreat the ecosystem. So, I personally argue that westerners should change their view towards environment and should take the risk of global warming and ecological imbalance in the contemporary period (Jenkins, 1991: 13-14).

The fourth communality of African people is their perception of 'truth'. They try to excavate the truth of this empirical world in terms of experiences and relations. In Africa, events and human experiences are crucial in order to know and explain the truth of something. For Africans, 'truth' cannot be predicted even with known facts and evidences. They believed that human reason or intellect is unable to know the ultimate truth and it is incapable of articulating the objective truth of this physical world. As a result, for Africans, knowledge, information and facts are irrelevant to reach on the hidden reality of this universe. To the opposite, westerners do have a distinct position i.e. they understood truth by the degree to which statements correspond with expected patterns of logical reasoning and accepted facts. Thus, they defined truth in terms of valid data and sufficient information (Jenkins, 1991: 14-15).

Giving special place to the "verb" in a certain statement is the fifth shared view among African societies. In the African languages, the verb system is crucial to meaning. Why Africans focus on the verb system in a certain proposition? Because, verbs are words that express action, relationship, condition and event. We Africans construct the meaning of a certain discourse by emphasizing on 'verbs'. For a clear understanding of this issues, let us look the following point depicted by Orville Boyd Jenkins:-

For Africans verb has a very significant place in meaning. Because, for Africans, activities and relationships are primary. For example: - the noun "love" seeing in terms of activity, feeling, and commitment between people. In the African context, the noun "love" is a verbal reference to the actions and obligations which express a living relationship. "Love" exists if people act lovingly. The same is true the noun "Justice" exists if people act justly. Thus, social obligations are more real and concrete than ideas and concepts in the African setting (1991:16).

Unlike the above view of African people, not the "verbs", but "nouns" and "adjectives" are the key to meaning in European languages. As we all know the

1 world is made up of different entities/things, and in turn Europeans give priority to
 2 the description and explanation of objects. In this regard, there is a common
 3 consensus among westerners i.e. the primary task of a certain white man should be
 4 describing and understanding an object. They are struggling to bring an objective
 5 reference to abstract nouns. For example:- when we talking about the word “love”,
 6 somehow we get the idea that there is some “objective” or “real”” thing called
 7 “love” and that exists in its own somewhere in the universe. This clearly indicates
 8 that the primary role of western societies is to describe and attribute a certain
 9 entity, and then understand it. This shared culture of western society lead them to
 10 control, manipulate, and change the world in general and their physical
 11 environment in particular (Jenkins, 1991: 16-17).

12 The sixth shared view of Africans is fall in to the category of time. We
 13 Africans most of the time focusing on the past and the present. We are interested
 14 in knowledge of our ancestor’s history and the present situation. For Africans, it is
 15 inductive and more uncertain to guess the future based on past and present
 16 evidences and facts. For them, the future is unknown and unpredictable. In this
 17 aspect, for example, “you know how much you have passed through; you do not
 18 know how much you still have left”, and “tomorrow is pregnant, who knows what
 19 it will deliver” are the two famous proverbs of *Yoruba* and *Igbo* people
 20 respectively which truly show the uncertainty of the future. However, the majority
 21 of western societies give greater emphasis to the future. For them, the future of an
 22 individual and his or her plan deserves a highest value than the past and the
 23 present (Jenkins, 1991: 18).

24 The last but not least shared values of African people is their commitment to
 25 group identity. For Africans, the group has a right but the individual in a certain
 26 community should shoulder multi-faceted obligations. The individual should
 27 sacrifices his/her interest for the common good of his/her polity. The individual
 28 being in Africa, will have privileges and enjoy rights after the accomplishment of
 29 his/her societal duties. Therefore, group identities like religion, language, color,
 30 and ethnic background are take precedence over individual identities. To the
 31 reverse, westerners do have anti-thesis of this shared view of African people. To
 32 make vivid this contradiction between “Africa” and the “West”, I have stated the
 33 following note:-

34
 35 *In the African situation, group identity and relational obligations are*
 36 *paramount. In the west, things are very individualistic. Westerners believe in*
 37 *individual rights, not obligations. Western concepts of justice are developed in*
 38 *terms of rights and protection of those rights. Europeans define themselves*
 39 *individually, and in small family groups, whereas African societies are*
 40 *organize in very close-knit, broad family groupings. The group is what is*
 41 *important, the group is the point of identity. The individual is defined by*
 42 *his/her relationship to the group. Obligations to the group as a whole are*
 43 *more important than individual rights and privileges (Jenkins, 1991: 20).*
 44

In a nut shell, by having the above basic shared values and world views among African people, I will deduce the political thoughts and philosophies of the continent. Because, the political and economic philosophies of a certain people rests on their beliefs and cultural values. Accordingly, I shall briefly discuss the features and attributes of African political thoughts (i.e. precolonial and colonial) in the following sub-topic.

Contradictions between “African” and “Western” Political Thoughts

Does Africa has distinct political thought compare to other regions? What are the features of African political thoughts? The political thoughts African societies and scholars are consistent or not to the people of other continents? Who is the owner of African indigenous political thoughts? In this sub-topic, I will briefly discuss and examine these questions.

Kwasi Wiredu argued that pre-colonial African societies had their own indigenous political thoughts to regulate the whole affairs of its empires. The precolonial and colonial African people have been solved the political social, economic and other chronic problems of their age by using the homegrown African political philosophies. These ancient people of Africa were completely relied on their native political systems to eradicate some of the obstacles of good life and secured polity (Wiredu, 2001:171). However, I witness that in the post-colonial period, almost all political leaders of Africa had omitted the political legacies of pre-colonial and colonial period and instead they tried a lot to adopt and implement the western model of political administration. The immediate post-independent African leaders had left the native African political traditions and stated to a new sort of political governance by using the principles and theories of western societies. Accordingly, in the following few paragraphs, I will show you the special characteristics of African indigenous political thoughts and their incommensurability with the culture and philosophy of the western world.

In ancient Africa, there was no difference between civil society and state. Unlike the western political philosophy and tradition, the distinction between the state and civil society was largely irrelevant in traditional life of African society. In pre-colonial Africa, the state and civil societies were work together on the basis of cooperation without a sense of superiority and inferiority, suppression and domination. Unlike the western political tradition, there was no absolute separation between the state and civil society in pre-colonial Africa. In traditional Africa, civil societies had tremendous role on important affairs of a state. Like the state, civil societies were directly engaged in the political life of the people. In ancient times, there was no clear demarcation between the state and civil societies. However, in western political system, civil societies do not involve directly in the political affairs and agendas of a state. So, I believed that our best political tradition i.e. the fusion of state and civil society worn-out from the land of Africa

1 by the collaborative effort of post-independent African leaders and western
2 scholars (Wiredu, 2001: 171-172).

3 Communalistic political life is one of the other features of African political
4 philosophy. The fundamental principle of this communalistic political philosophy
5 was: adjust your interests to the interests of others even at the possible cost of
6 some self-denial. In other words, the individual's interests are to be adjusted to the
7 society at large. More briefly, the political philosophy of precolonial and colonial
8 African societies was established on the principle of: giving priority to social
9 interest than single individual's interest. Hence, the political philosophy of pre-
10 colonial Africa was highly inclined to social democracy than western origin of
11 liberal democracy. Accordingly, socialism or social democracy is the other feature
12 of traditional African political thought. In social democracy, individual benefits
13 are sacrificed to the public good (Wiredu, 2001: 171-172).

14 In pre-colonial Africa, people had more civil motivation than political
15 motivation. They were far from the political process and state administration. The
16 majority of pre-colonial African societies had a greater interest in civil matters and
17 cases. They were less affiliated in issues which have political elements. Meaning,
18 they have been passed their precious time in doing things having huge coincidence
19 with civic affairs. But, the people of the west do have a different reality because
20 they are more close to politically sensitive issues. They are more critical to things
21 which have political imperative than civic imperative. Aristotle's famous claim
22 (i.e. man is a political animal) is may be the best example to show the close
23 linkage between the western societies and politics. This proposition of Aristotle
24 doesn't work if we go to the traditional African community because the people
25 were highly alienated themselves from the political process. These days, because
26 of the political teachings of the west, the people of Africa have lost their native
27 political culture and trying to answer questions of good life from political
28 perspective. I personally believe that the present chaos and civil wars in different
29 parts of Africa are caused due to this culture of Europeans (Wiredu, 2001:173).

30 The traditional African communities had been administered their day to day
31 business without formally constituted institutions. They had brought relative peace
32 and security without western type of institutions. For example, in ancient period,
33 African empires had their own respective defense forces and these armies had been
34 performed their duty without payment and well organized institutions. From this
35 historical fact, anyone can deduce the claim that the nonexistent of institution
36 doesn't limit the fair and good practice of ancient African people and kings. To the
37 contrary, western societies are not smart enough to build peace and security
38 without strong and legally established institutions. In the western world, the
39 efficacy of institutions truly affect and directly determine their level of progress in
40 all directions (Richard L. Sklar, 2005:23).

41 When we come to the present Africa, western type of institutions and
42 organizations are means of corruption and subjugation. Top government officials,
43 now a days, embezzled the material and financial resources of their respective
44 countries by using western model of institutions as a means. For example,
45 according to the report of Ethiopian Federal Supreme Court Public Prosecutor in

November, 2018, a giant government institution called Metals Engineering Corporation (METEC) has been embezzled more than 37 billion *birr* since the year 2010. This is a single case in Ethiopia. It is obvious that this amount of money illicitly goes to western confidential banks through an artificial foreign model of institutions. This manifests that western model of institutions in Africa served as means of corruption and mal-administration. Thus, I personally believed that the traditional form of institutions in Africa were better in resolving people's grievances and problems than the present western created institutions and bureaucracies.

Political power in traditional Africa was decentralized. Political power was not concentrated in the hands of a single man or few men rather it was shared and divided among rulers of lower unities. The political philosophy of primitive African societies was advocating a kind of self-rule and self-administration. Political tribalism was a peculiar philosophy of ancient African people. For example, in traditional Africa, there were many small kingdoms and statesmen had equal power and existed in the same politically defined territory. However, the modern form of state structure is copied from the western world. In the west, people totally give absolute political power to the central government. That is why their political philosophy i.e. globalism is contrary to our political thought i.e. tribalism which allows the existence of many source of political power (Richard, 2005: 27).

The day to day lives and activities of traditional African societies were governed and regulated by unwritten pure moral principles. People of pre-colonial Africa have been conducted their affairs on the basis of **pure moral principles** which were not written and imposed by other party or body. Societies were willingly abided with these moral codes without any coercion or forceful order. However, in the western and eastern political philosophy, history shows that people of their respective territories were ordered by written laws and rules beginning from around 5th C BC. On wards this era, people of the west and the east were administered their political, economic, social, and other relevant issues by gradually amended and changed laws and rules (Wiredu, 2001: 171).

The other characteristic of traditional African political philosophy was: non-party type of government based on the principle of consensus. In this form of political tradition, people were reached at almost complete consensus on the basis of rational discussion. The traditional Africans had the culture of sitting under the umbrella of a big tree(s) and rationally discuss on many critical issues until they agree. No party(s) were gain or lose something by this culture of rational discussion and consensus because there were no a collection of opposing political parties but a set of individual groups were involved in this fairly held discussions. By the political discussion of this process, few individuals might be dissatisfied but not the party(s) that are represented a lot of people (Wiredu, 2001: 174).

Unlike the western political philosophy, there was a win-win political style in traditional African societies. In the contemporary period, the rationale of multiparty system conducted on the basis of win-lose style. If one party is get the vote of simple majority, then it will have executive power immediately. In this

1 system, the winning of one party or collide parties implies the failure of other
 2 parties which have relatively lesser individual supporters or ethnic groups.
 3 Therefore, like the traditional non-party political system of Africans, the modern
 4 period of western multiparty politics don't satisfy almost the whole population.
 5 Rather, the politics of multiparty system will bring conflict and war among
 6 competing political parties and their respective supporters. It might be the cause of
 7 human and material destructions. As a result, Kwasi Wiredu argued that:-

8
 9 *My argument will be that consensual governance in our tradition was*
 10 *essentially democratic; that the majoritarian form of democracy seen in the*
 11 *multiparty systems in Britain and the United States is drastically antithetic to*
 12 *both our own traditions of democracy and the complexities of our*
 13 *contemporary situations; and that, although the kinship basis of our political*
 14 *systems of old cannot be re-invoked in this day and age it is still a practical*
 15 *proposition to try to fashion out a contemporary nonparty form of government*
 16 *based on the principle of consensus. In this way perhaps we can hope to*
 17 *restore the lost continuity between the state and civil society in Africa (2001:*
 18 *174-175).*

19
 20 From the above quotation we can understand that party politics is not
 21 indigenous to Africa. Rather it is an imported legacy from the western world
 22 especially during and after colonialism. The oldest heritage of African political
 23 system was non-party form of government. Hence, because of the above
 24 mentioned problems of western party system, Wiredu strongly recommended
 25 Africans in order to restore the pre-colonial nonparty form of representation based
 26 on the culture of rational discussion and consensus. So, nonparty basis of
 27 representation and the reliance on consensus in decision making process are the
 28 unique features of traditional African political system (Wiredu, 2001: 178-183).

29 The last but not the least contradiction between "African" and "western"
 30 political thought is simply the dilemma between dualistic and monolithic forms of
 31 political governance. In other words, the traditional African community had
 32 adopted a dual structures of government. There were dual polities or two
 33 coexistent dimensions of government in Africa. These two types of governments
 34 were called sovereign and traditional. Both sovereign and traditional governments
 35 had equal legitimacy and political authority. Accordingly, the societies were free
 36 to submit their cases either to the sovereign or the traditional one. For me, this is
 37 an opposite political system compare to the western world. Because, the western
 38 societies allow only a monolithic form of political governance. One dimensional
 39 government or single source of political authority is the common and dominant
 40 tradition of the west (Richard, 2005: 27-30).

41 In light of the above propositions, I certainly believe that the African form of
 42 mixed government structure is more valuable than the west. Because mixed form
 43 of political administration permit people to follow multiple directions in order to
 44 overcome problems. So, this system leaves people with different options. For
 45 example, if a society doesn't satisfy by the decisions of a sovereign ruler, then

he/she has the right to go to a traditional leaders/chiefs. But, according to my empirical observation, this kind of dual state administration has been deteriorating across many African states.

The Possibility of Pre-Colonial and Colonial African Political Thoughts in the Contemporary Period

The political philosophy of every state across the globe is emanates from the cultures and beliefs of its people. The past history and current situation of a state are most of the time served as the base of people's political system. It is the world's experience that a certain community designs and creates a political and economic ideologies by considering their own culture, level of education, economy, history, religion, ethnic background, demography and the like. It is proved that a political philosophy which is constructed from a people's culture and history will certainly bring security, equality, freedom, dignity and prosperity.

To the contrary, the post-colonial African political philosophies are directly copied from the occidental world. Those political and economic philosophies are came to reality and this world because of the culture and belief of western societies. In other words, the principles of western type of democracy, Marxism, liberalism, neo-liberalism, capitalism and the like are the direct products of western societies psychological makeup, historical background, and cultural practice. As a result, the post-colonial African political systems and ideologies didn't solve the critical questions of the mass in different arenas because they lack cultural and historical basis.

I strongly believe that the incommensurability between "African" and "western" world views and cultural settings didn't only brought the failure of western political thoughts in Africa, but it has been produced instability, conflict, insecurity, poverty and so on across many African states. It is an observable fact that many African people have been killing one another because of the western type of electoral system. It is obvious that hundreds of bloodsheds in Africa took place in the eve and morrow of a certain election. For example, between the years 2005-2009, a number of presidential and parliamentary elections were conducted in countries such as Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Nigeria, Togo, Uganda, Zanzibar, and Zimbabwe. However, in all countries there had been election-related conflicts that caused a huge human and material destruction. More than fifteen election related violence were took place within five years. This shows that how much the western type of election in Africa can be a source of conflict than a means of peaceful transition of political power (Mangu, 2006: 5-6). This single case shows us western origin of political and economic thoughts are not a blessing but a curse in the land of Africa.

Everywhere in Africa, political philosophies having western attachments are failed and at the same time creating political, economic, social, and cultural

1 problems. History teaches us the overall conditions and surroundings of Africa do
 2 not allow the flourishing of an imported political as well as economic theories.
 3 The soil type of Africa is uncondusive for any kind of alien political thoughts and
 4 theories. So, what shall we Africans do to change the worst situation and equally
 5 to lay down a foundational stone for better future?

6 As a researcher, I believe that the indigenous African political thoughts could
 7 bring long lasting solutions for problems that Africa is currently facing. For me,
 8 our pre-colonial and colonial political thoughts are relatively speaking emanated
 9 from the minds of individual African sages and from a collective view of African
 10 societies.

11 Recorded histories have shown us the traditional as well as colonial African
 12 political thoughts have been served as a panacea for different African headaches of
 13 the time (i.e. lawlessness, war, famine and colonialism). For example, problems
 14 related with lawlessness, war, famine, mobility, succession and the like were
 15 ultimately treated by the traditional African political thoughts. With the same
 16 token, problems related with subjugation, exploitation, domination, inequality,
 17 dignity, and self-administration were tackled by the colonial African political
 18 thoughts such as Negritude, African Humanism, African Socialism, Pan-
 19 Africanism, and African Nationalism. Scholars of the area argued that these
 20 indigenous political thoughts of Africa gave rise for African emancipation, dignity,
 21 self-rule and cultural rehabilitation (Albet Kasanda, 2005:36-42).

22 In light of the above historical reality, in African past, people had been
 23 resolved problems of their time by using its indigenous political thoughts.
 24 Regarding this, the most difficult question in these days is; 'does our former
 25 political thought is capable of overcoming the current hardships that Africa is
 26 encountering'? For me, yes we can solve our recently emerged problems by a wise
 27 and rational implementation of indigenous African political thoughts. I firmly
 28 argue that the wholesale practice and implementation of our political legacies
 29 would not completely resolve the challenges that we are facing now. Rather, a
 30 critical appraisal of the pre-colonial and colonial political thoughts would help us
 31 in eradicating our worst circumstances. Therefore, a rational appropriation and
 32 systemic implementation of indigenous political thoughts is, for me, a best
 33 possible way of bringing good life and establishing strong polity.

34 35 36 **Concluding Remarks**

37
38 The major objectives of this study are to answer questions such as: - (a) what
 39 does African political thought mean? (b) Do Africans share common cultural
 40 values and world views? (c) Does Africa has unique political thought compare to
 41 other regions, if yes, what are their special features? (d) Is there consistency
 42 between "African" and "western" societal values and practices? (d) Did Africans
 43 had been practiced identical political thoughts stating from the time antiquity up to
 44 the official introduction of imperialists? (e) What are the causes for the failure of
 45 western political and economic theories in the land of contemporary Africa? (f)

1 What are the possible solutions for the current political problems that Africa is
 2 facing? Hence, the paper has struggled a lot to provide satisfactory answers to the
 3 questions mentioned above.

4 To meet the whole objectives of the study, I have framed five main sub-topics.
 5 The first sub-topic is focused on meaning and feature of African political
 6 philosophy. The second sub-topic is emphasized on the shared values and world
 7 views among African people. The third sub-outline is stressed on the
 8 contradictions between “African” and “western” political traditions. The fourth
 9 sub-issue is underscored the typical political traditions of African people. The final
 10 sub-portion is underlined on the possibilities of pre-colonial and colonial African
 11 political thoughts in the contemporary period.

12 Let me start my summary with the definition and nature of African political
 13 thought. African political thought refers to the original ideas, values, principles,
 14 beliefs, and blue prints of African people for the betterment of their continent in
 15 different respects. African political thought covers the political systems, political
 16 values and institutions from the ancient period (Kush, 6th Century BCE) to the
 17 present period. More importantly, African political thought also refers to the
 18 political theories, philosophies and ideologies developed by various native African
 19 scholars and statesmen, as articulated in their speeches, autobiographies, writings,
 20 and policy statements in different periods.

21 Regardless of differences in terms of color, language, religion, race,
 22 demography, and resource, the people of African continent do share identical
 23 values and world views. These similar cultural values and world views are
 24 survived from the time antiquity to the present time. The external world most of
 25 the time identified the people and the continent of Africa by a number of shared
 26 values and world views. Some of these shared values are: - (i) The people of
 27 Africa do have religious/sacred way of life; (ii) A relational view of the world; (iii)
 28 They understand this universe as dynamic and active; (iv) They try to comprehend
 29 a certain truth by using experience; (v) They emphasize on the “verb” to recognize
 30 the meaning of a certain statement; (vi) their concept of time is rotating around the
 31 “past” and the “preset” only; and (vii) They do have strong commitment to group
 32 identity.

33 Besides the above shared values and world views, there are also specific
 34 communalities among African people in the areas of political philosophy. These
 35 shared political philosophies among African people are:-

- 36
- 37 • In ancient Africa, there was no absolute separation between state and
- 38 civil society. They had adjudicated a certain issues with complete
- 39 fusion.
- 40 • Favored a communalistic political tradition. The right of an individual
- 41 was sacrificed for the common good of a society.
- 42 • Focused on civil issues than political cases.
- 43 • Brought relative peace and security without formally established
- 44 institutions.

- Inclined with a decentralized form of state structure.
- Governed by pure moral principles.
- Advocated a non-party type of political system.
- Ruled by a dualistic or mixed form of political governance.

These are the few among the many distinct features of pre-colonial and colonial African political thoughts. As we discussed in detail in the main body of the study, the people of Africa had been resolved a number of obstacles (political, economic, social, and cultural) of their time by applying one of the above mentioned political traditions.

According to some African political scholars, the political thought of the continent has divided in two to main groups. These are precolonial (traditional) and colonial (modern) African political thoughts. For them, precolonial African political thoughts had purposes like: - preserving peace and security, bringing integrity and equality, defending external enemies, creating good life and so on. They strongly believed that the traditional African political thoughts were better in resolving and managing conflicts compare to the political thoughts of other regions. Moreover, when we come to the colonial African political thoughts they hold additional purposes i.e. the task of emancipation, dignity and cultural rehabilitation. Like the ancient political thoughts of the region, the colonial political thoughts have been met their intended goals (i.e. emancipation, dignity and cultural rehabilitation).

Therefore, from the history of African political system and practice, we can extract/dig out the fact that the indigenous pre-colonial and colonial African political thoughts have been contributed a lot in bringing relative peace, stability, dignity, emancipation, self-administration, and at the same time in avoiding exploitation, domination, and enslavement. In light of this historical reality, the paper conclude that a wise and rational appropriation of indigenous political thoughts do have a strong power and capability to overcome the chronic problems that Africa is facing today.

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