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COLLEGE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

This Course Book “**African Studies**” has been exclusively written by experts in the discipline to up-date your general knowledge of African Studies in order to equip you with the basic tool you will require for your professional work as a basic school teacher and administrator.

This three-credit course book of thirty-six (36) sessions has been structured to reflect the weekly three-hour lecture for this course in the University. Thus, each session is equivalent to a one-hour lecture on campus. As a distance learner, however, you are expected to spend a minimum of three hours and a maximum of five hours on each session.

To help you do this effectively, a Study Guide has been particularly designed to show you how this book can be used. In this study guide, your weekly schedules are clearly spelt out as well as dates for quizzes, assignments and examinations.

Also included in this book is a list of all symbols and their meanings. They are meant to draw your attention to vital issues of concern and activities you are expected to perform.

Blank sheets have been also inserted for your comments on topics that you may find difficult. Remember to bring these to the attention of your course tutor during your fortnightly meetings.

We wish you a happy and successful study.

Dr. W. K. Yayoh
Dr. Alex Wilson
Dr. M. Q. Amlor
Mr. Frimpong-Nnroh
Mr. M. Alidza

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**Prof. Isaac Galyuon
(Provost)**

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Answers to Self-Assessment Questions

SYMBOLS AND THEIR MEANINGS



INTRODUCTION



OVERVIEW



UNIT OBJECTIVES



SESSION OBJECTIVES



DO AN ACTIVITY



NOTE AN IMPORTANT POINT



TIME TO THINK AND ANSWER QUESTION(S)



REFER TO



READ OR LOOK AT



SUMMARY



SELF- ASSESSMENT TEST



ASSIGNMENT

UNIT 1: AFRICAN STUDIES AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE**Unit Outline**

- Session 1: The Nature and Scope of African Studies
Session 2: Factors for the Late Development of African Studies
Session 3: The Evolution and Growth of African Studies
Session 4: Objectives and Impact of the Discipline
Session 5: Challenges facing the discipline
Session 6: The State of the Discipline

You are welcome to this very interesting and important subject called African Studies. This opening unit introduces you to the subject. It tries to give you a panoramic view of what the subject is all about. The unit is divided into six sessions.



Session one deals with the nature and scope of African Studies. It begins by looking at a definition of African Studies. The second session examines the factors that were responsible for the late development of the subject while session three traces the evolution and growth of African Studies. Session four covers the objectives and impact of African studies. The fifth unit brings to the fore the challenges facing the discipline while unit six concludes by examining the state of the discipline.

**Unit Objectives**

As stated in the overview, this unit gives you a general understanding of African Studies as an academic discipline and its contribution to our understanding of African people and the people who have their roots in the African past. Therefore at the end of your study of this unit, you should be able to:

- (1) explain what African Studies is;
- (2) state the objectives of African Studies;
- (3) explain the factors responsible for the late development of African Studies;
- (4) describe the development and growth of the discipline;
- (5) discuss the challenges facing African Studies, and
- (6) evaluate the state of the discipline.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- difficult topics if any and
- issues that are not clear.

SESSION 1: THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF AFRICAN STUDIES

Join me as we go through session 1 of unit 1. We shall look at the nature and Scope of African Studies in this session.



Objectives

By the end of the session, you should be able to:

- a) define African Studies,
- b) explain the Nature and Scope of African Studies and
- c) identify the various disciplines that make up African Studies



Now read on...



1.1 What is African Studies?

To many people, perhaps including you, African Studies is about drumming and dancing. But you will soon find out, at the end of this unit, that there is more to African Studies than drumming and dancing.

Since its emergence as an academic discipline in the second half of the twentieth century, there have been disagreements on the exact definition of African Studies. These disagreements stemmed from two different perspectives that emerged in relation to the scope of the discipline.



What are these perspectives?

Eurocentric perspective, for example, limited the scope of the discipline to sub-Saharan Africa. This view sought to exclude Egypt and the larger civilizations of North Africa from Africa. Afro-centric view on the subject, on the other hand, included Arabs and Islamic regions of Africa.

In recent years, new dimensions have been introduced into African Studies which tend to expand the scope and shape the definition of African Studies. For instance, there has been an increasing awareness of the relevance of African Diaspora experience to the understanding of Africa's influence on the world.



What do we mean by African Diaspora? Discuss this concept at your F.T.F (face-to-face) meetings.

All these perspectives have influenced the way we define African Studies. Simply put, African Studies is the study of everything African. What does this definition mean to you? On a broader note, African Studies is an inter-disciplinary field that focuses on the

study of Africa, its Diaspora, its culture, history and adopts African-centred approach to solving African problems.

It is clear from the above definition that there is no one subject called African Studies. On the contrary, it is a combination of various disciplines in as much as those disciplines help us to study and understand Africa and its people. The more we understand African people the easier it becomes for us to find African solutions to African problems. In other words, the focus of the various disciplines which make up African Studies centres on enhancing our understanding of African people, the development of the continent, the design of African solutions to African problems as well as the place of the continent in world affairs.

Could you write down those subjects involved? I am sure your list will include history, religion, literature, geography, linguistics, economics, sociology, anthropology, political science, music, philosophy and art. The various subjects help in deepening our understanding of African people.

Does your list include subjects from the pure sciences? I am sure it does not. You can imagine the specific contributions that pure sciences can make to the advancement of knowledge about Africans. Attempts are being made to incorporate pure science subjects into African studies. The foods we eat, the herbal medicine we use, the need for standardisation of herbal medicine, among others, are all issues in African studies and these have to do with pure sciences. In the rural areas in Ghana, people can preserve dead bodies for days without recourse to a morgue, by simply using herbs. About 60 percent of rural folks in Africa depend on herbal medicine.

It will be fascinating, for instance, to find out the chemical composition of these herbs, document them, and perhaps, help the traditional herbal medicine practitioner to standardise these traditional medicines.

We also realise from the definition that African Studies is concerned, not only about Africans on the main land continents, but also about the people who have their roots in the African past.

Who are those who have their roots in the African past? Here, we are referring to the overwhelming number of Blacks living in the Diaspora - outside the African continent. These people find themselves at wherever they are either through voluntary migration or through forced migration such as the slave trade.

In opening the Institute of African Studies at Legon in 1961, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah stated that African Studies must include the origin and culture of peoples of African descent in the Americas and the Caribbean for the purpose of cross-fertilization of ideas.

Many of these people in the Diaspora consider Africa as their home - the land of their ancestors. Despite their dispersion, Africans in the Diaspora continue to maintain African traditions and customs, particularly in Cuba, Brazil, Haiti, Trinidad, among other places. A good number of them have returned to Africa and they have made significant contributions to their communities. The phenomenon of the returnees was part of the Back to Africa Movement. We want to know what specific contributions Africans have made to the overall development of the places of their exile.

African Studies is concerned about the phenomenon of the returnees; their efforts at surviving, and the contributions they have made and are making to life in Africa after their return. Write down some of the African-Americans that have returned to Ghana. I hope your list includes Isaac Hayes and Ritha Marley. Isaac Hayes has set up a computer school in Ada and Rita Marley has settled in Aburi.

Scholars of African Studies use scientific approach to study Africa. By this we mean they employ the rules of scientific methodology in gathering, analysing and interpreting data. Findings from the scientific enquiry are used to address pressing issues in Africa such as democratization, population, health, the debt crisis, conflicts, and poverty, among many others.

History actually pioneered the way in the restoration of the African past. Africanist historians undertook vigorous data collection methods using various sources such as diaries, memoires, newspapers, oral tradition and artefacts. In this way, the foundation was laid for other disciplines to use their methodologies in helping us to have a broader understanding of African people.

What do we mean by ‘Afro-centric’ approach? Afro-centrism was first espoused by Molefi Kete Asante in 1980 in his *Afro-centrism: The Theory of Social Changes*. The concept denotes an African-centred way of studying Africa, its people as well as people of African descent. To be Afrocentric, therefore, is to place Africans and the interest of Africa at the centre of our approach to solving the problems of the continent.

Afro-centrism does not mean that there is one African culture that all Africans should share as critics of Afro-centrism would like us to believe. Afro-centrism is simply concerned with African-centred curriculum.

It is also important to note that although the focus of African Studies is primarily on Africa, we also go beyond Africa, in order to have a better understanding of the African situation. For example, to understand the motive and nature of the scramble and partition of Africa, we need to study those aspects of European history that will enhance our understanding of the issues involved. Although history does not repeat itself, as some people will erroneously suggest, historical events have parallels from

which we can draw useful lessons. Similarly, we cannot have a clearer appreciation of the civil war in Angola without studying the East-West conflict in what is generally referred to as the ‘Cold War’. Sometimes, we study the economies of countries outside the African continent for the purpose of comparison.

 SUMMARY

So far, we have found out the meaning of African Studies. We have examined a definition of African Studies. We also looked at the nature of the discipline, its scope and the methodology used by scholars in the discipline.



Self-Assessment Questions

Exercise 1.1

True or False

1. African Studies is only about studying Africans on the main continent.
2. The pure sciences are not relevant to Africans.
3. African Studies is concerned only about the African past.
4. Research method in African Studies is multi-disciplinary.



Assignment

Write down the contribution of returnees to the development of Africa, particularly West Africa

SESSION 2: FACTORS FOR THE LATE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN STUDIES

Until the late 1950s, African Studies did not assume prominence in universities. No serious research was directed at Africa as an object of study. In this session, you will read about some of the reasons that accounted for this trend of affairs.

**Objectives**

At the end of the session, you will be able to:

- a) state the philosophical argument for the exclusion of African Studies from academia until the late 1950s;
- b) explain the historical arguments for the late development of African Studies and
- c) identify the role of missionaries in the late development of the discipline.

Now read on...

**2.1 Philosophical Arguments**

Several philosophical arguments were advanced to show that Africa did not form part of world civilization. One notable British historian, Arnold Toynbee, held the assertion that Africans had not contributed positively to any civilization. Many scholars from the West such as John Burgess, William Summer, Josiah Strong and J. D. Fage sought to prove to the world that Blacks belong to an inferior race. Similarly, James MacQueen said that if Britain really wanted to do good in Africa, she must teach Africans that white men were their superiors.

So in the words of Rudyard Kipling, civilising Africans was the ‘Whiteman’s burden’. These statements were in line with Darwin’s revolutionary principles of survival of the fittest.

Write down your impression about the above misrepresentations. Write down the contributions that Africa has made to the civilization of the world. I hope your list will include some of the contributions that Egyptians have made in the field of science, writing, building, etc. What about the achievements of the old Sudanese empires such as Mali and Songhai in the field of education, for instance?

Mention can also be made of Asante, Benin and the Nuk artistic achievements. You will find that these statements made by some Western philosophers were erroneous as they were derogatory.

According to Basil Davidson, the development and growth of society and civilisation in Africa really contradict this stereotype of centuries-long stagnation. This aptly says it all for Africa. Africa's contributions to the civilization of the world are now well documented.

Could you explain why Europeans came out with all these misrepresentations? They certainly sought to justify the enslavement and subsequent colonization of Blacks wherever they existed. The overall effect of these misrepresentations was that people felt Africa had nothing to offer the intellectual community, hence the delay in the development of African Studies as an academic discipline.

2.2 Historical Reasons

Some Western historians argued that Africans did not have history and that they did not contribute anything to the history of the world. This kind of thinking was reignited by Darwin's *Origin of Species* published in 1859 and highlighted some key issues of racial science. The discussion of racial differences then was part of a broader movement toward the classification of species and the attempt to measure differences in physical as well as behavioural ways. This belief was reinforced by misguided social Darwinists at the turn of the twentieth century who saw Africans as belonging to an inferior race destined to extinction, in tune with Darwin's evolutional principle: 'the survival of the fittest'. Civilising Africa was as the English poet, Rudyard Kipling, puts it, 'the white man's burden'. As an inferior people, Africa has nothing for Europeans to learn. Thus an important factor in the late development of African Studies is the shifting European attitude towards races of Africa.

For example, one George Hegel, a German, declared that Africa did not constitute part of the history of the world. They went on to justify this kind of thinking by giving a very narrow definition of history. Their definition of history recognised only written records as sources of historical knowledge.

Why is this definition unacceptable? By this definition, most of Africa was excluded from historical considerations.

You will recall that except for Egypt, Ethiopia, Nubia and some early Sudanese states, Africa had mostly non-literate societies before the advent of the Europeans. Some Western scholars attributed even Egyptian civilization to non-Africans. It took intensive research by scholars such as Anta Diop, Louis Leakey and others to refute such intellectual dishonesty.

The fact that non-literate societies existed in sub-Saharan Africa prior to the advent of Europeans in the fifteenth century did not mean those societies did not have history. It is really improbable for any society to exist without its history. In the African context, history exists in various forms.

I hope you have heard about oral traditions. What does it mean? Note your answer down for FTF. To exclude Africa from the academic community on the account of the existence of non-literate societies prior to the coming of the Europeans is incorrect. Nevertheless, this kind of thinking delayed the development of African studies.

2.3 The Work of Missionaries

Missionaries who came to Africa were responsible in one way or the other for the late development of African Studies as an academic discipline. The missionaries denounced everything African. This included our music, dance, and sculpture. In consequence, the products of those mission schools tended to shy away from African languages, religion, music, history and all that identified us as Africans. We were made to believe that our own was not good enough. This perception was responsible, in large part, for the marginalisation of African Studies.

What is your name?

I am sure you have an European name as your first name. You are not the only person. For years, missionaries made us believe that African names should be discarded for European ones in order for one to go to heaven. That kind of indoctrination was a deliberate attempt to suppress African culture and history.

Most of the earlier books on Africa were written by missionaries and the kind of picture they portrayed about Africa to the outside world created the impression that Africa was not worthy of study.

Some missionaries presented a picture of Africans which reflected static, small societies with people who exhibited nothing but savagery. The ‘tribal’ image presented of Africa did not help matters. It made people feel that Africa was not important to be studied. The curriculum of most of the early schools built by missionaries reflected European culture and values to the detriment of African cultural values.

2.4 The Role of Africans Themselves

Africans themselves contributed in no small way to the negative image about the continent. The inability of Africans to shape their own destiny during the slave trade and subsequent colonization of the continent was a contributory factor. While accepting the role of Europeans in creating all the conditions for the slave trade to thrive, we also have to acknowledge the stark reality that Africans contributed in making the trade successful.

Admittedly, Europeans did not go into the interior to capture slaves. The slave raiders were themselves Africans selling their own people into slavery. Some African chiefs in west and central Africa sold their own people to European slave traders.

Make a list of some slave traders for face-to-face discussions. Discuss also, the concept of domestic slavery.

Similarly, some African chiefs contributed in no small way to the colonial effort. Many of them acted as collaborators in the colonial enterprise. They worked with European colonial officers in formulating and implementing colonial policies in Africa. This created antagonism between chiefs and their subjects, particularly in Ghana.

Have you heard about Native Police (*Ahenfie* Police)? What effect did it have on traditional system of authority? Note your answer down for face-to-face discussions. So have you realised that Africans themselves contributed in projecting a bad image of the continent to the outside world?

SUMMARY

We have examined some of the factors that accounted for the late development of African Studies as an academic discipline. We noted some of the philosophical reasons, historical arguments, the role of missionaries as well as the role of Africans as factors responsible for the late development of the discipline. We also noted in this session the factors that were responsible for the late development of African studies as an academic discipline. We also realised that Africa made invaluable contribution to the civilization of the world.



Self-Assessment Questions

Exercise 1.2

True or False

1. The development of African Studies started long before the twentieth Century
2. Basil Davidson was one of the philosophers who saw nothing good about Africa.
3. Darwin's evolutionary principle of survival of the fittest was in tune with the assertion that Africa belonged to an inferior race.
4. Non-literate societies do not have history.
5. Non-literate societies existed in Africa before the coming of the Europeans.



Assignment

1. Write down some of the contributions that Africa has made to the civilisation of the world.
2. Visit a court of a chief and observe the *Okyeame* make libation. Find out whether there is any history in what he says.
3. Make a list of other sources of African history apart from written documents and oral traditions.

SESSION 3: THE EVOLUTION AND GROWTH OF AFRICAN STUDIES

Welcome to another interesting session. In this session, we shall try to identify the factors that led to the evolution and growth of African Studies as an academic discipline. We will find out that the processes leading to the emergence of African Studies as a legitimate field of studies in institutions of higher learning began outside the African continent. We will also note that although the subject emerged as an academic discipline in the early 1900s in the west, it was not until the early 1960s that it became part of the mainstream curricula of African universities. Several factors account for its emergence and growth on the continent.



Objectives

At the end of the session you will be able to:



- a) explain the role of Black students in the USA in the evolution of African Studies;
- b) identify the effects of the emergence of nation-states in Africa on the evolution of African studies;
- c) discuss the contribution of African universities and scholars to the evolution of African Studies and
- d) explain the role of oral tradition in the evolutionary process.

Now read on...



3.1 Student Movement in the 1960s in the USA

We read in our previous session that prior to the 1950s Africa was not the object of a systematic focus of any discipline. From the 1960s, however, things began to change in favour of African Studies. One of those positive developments was Black Students and the Civil Rights Movements in the 1960s.

These students observed that they were made to study America, Europe and other continents excluding Africa. The students therefore demanded the introduction of African-American and African Studies programmes in their institutions of higher learning. Thus the students were instrumental in the evolution of African Studies as an academic programme. Some of the notable leaders in this evolutionary drive were William Edward Burghardt DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Carter G .Woodson, and Martin Luther King Jnr.

Which other student activists from the Civil Rights Movement do you know?



Note your answer down for FTF discussion.

African Studies therefore started in the United States as Black Studies in consequence to the struggle by Blacks to see African Studies incorporated into the curricula of universities in that country. This was part of the struggle against years of discrimination and domination suffered by Blacks in the United States. But it was also an essential part of the broader Pan-Africanist and *Negritude* agenda, whose collective core objective was to assert the African identity on the global scene.

It is important to note that in the United Kingdom, the School of Oriental and African Studies began in the 1930s with the focus on providing orientation for colonial officers who were to be deployed in Africa.

3.2 The Emergence of Nation-States in Africa

The other important development that bolstered the development of African Studies was the emergence of independent nation-states in Africa.

By the mid 1960, most countries in Africa had gained independence. This development drew considerable international attention to the continent. The new African nations took their rightful places in the UN and they assumed considerable importance in world affairs. Other countries outside of Africa began to take interest in studying Africa and its people. This was the era of the ‘Cold war’ when there was competition between the US and Russia for influence, particularly in Third World countries. As nations from both side of the ‘iron curtain’ began to develop interest in African affairs, the field of African Studies was revolutionised. For example, at the end of the Second World War, we saw the US government’s growing interest in Africa which crystallised in the federal government funding of university programmes that specialised in the study of Africa. This led to a phenomenal increase in enrolment in African Studies programmes in that country.

What does the ‘Cold war’ really mean? Note your answer for face-to-face discussion.

3.3 The Establishment of African Universities

Following the independence of African states, African universities began to spring up staffed by African scholars on the continent. Hitherto, the few universities which existed were full of expatriate lecturers.

These foreign lecturers designed the curricula of the various African universities to project the cultural values of Europeans and to serve the imperialist designs. African music, art, religion, etc. had no place in the curricula of the universities. According to Onwubiko, colonial education was designed to create in Africans a dislike for things African. This in effect made educated Africans to shy away from African Studies. In the process, we began losing our identity as Africans.

The establishment of African universities staffed by African scholars was important in the evolution of African studies. It helped in projecting the image of Africa, particularly in the realms of art, music, and traditional religion. It has also helped in deepening our understanding of Africa and its place in world affairs. African ethnomusicology, languages, religion, for instance, have now become important subjects most sought after by students and researchers in and outside of Africa. The need to make Africa the focus of research and teaching became an important element in redesigning the curricula of African universities. Africanists in the University of Ghana, Legon, Ibadan and Dar es Salam started the process that was to culminate into the treatment of Africa as a field for serious academic work. Ghana's pioneering role of projecting what Kwame Nkrumah called 'the African personality' was given a further boost with the cutting of the sod for the establishment of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana in 1961.

Write down the names of some African scholars who helped in restoring and projecting Africa's lost image. Discuss your list at FTF meetings.

3.4 The Acceptance of Oral Tradition

The acceptance of oral tradition as a credible source of historical knowledge was instrumental in the growth of African studies. This was made possible through the untiring efforts of scholars such as Jan Vansina (a Belgian historian), Louis Leakey, an archaeologist, among others. This facilitated the development of African Studies by making it possible for the history of non-literate African societies to be reconstructed. Since then, history has been responsible for the restoration of the African past. African historians have helped us to have a comprehensive understanding of Africa and its people. Some African scholars such as Kofi-Zerbo, J. F. Ajayi, Adu Buahen and K. O. Dike, led the way. Certainly, some western scholars such as Basil Davidson, also made considerable contribution to the growth of African Studies, particularly in the realm of history.

Write down the type of oral tradition you know. Note your answer down for FTF meeting.



3.5 The Establishment of African Studies Association

In 1957, African Studies Association was formed following the holding of its first meeting in that year in New York City. Participants with special interest in Africa were drawn from history, sociology, anthropology, economics, etc. for the maiden meeting. The objectives were to collect and promote knowledge about Africa, stimulate and facilitate research among scholars interested in studying Africa. In fact, the association provides a platform for scholars in and outside Africa to meet and exchange ideas. Through its mouthpieces – *The African Studies Review* and *ISSUE* – the Association helps in disseminating research findings about Africa.

Lots of criticisms have been levelled against the association, particularly about its relationship with African scholars on the continent and the fact that it is dominated by whites scholars whose agenda may be different from that of the association. Also the establishment of the headquarters of the association at Rutgers University in New Jersey and not in the mainland African continent is criticised by some scholars. Nevertheless, the formation of the association emboldened the zeal of advocates of African Studies. Membership of the association's board of directors has been made to include scholars from the African continent. This ensures that views from the main African continent are represented in the decision-making process of the association.

Since then, African Studies centres have been established in notable universities in the US. Mention can be made of University of Florida, Indiana University, North Western University, Boston University, Stanford University, UCLA and many others. It is important to note also that the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) established in 1916 has been promoting research and teaching with a focus on Africa since 1938.

Japan also has a centre established in 1979. The list is endless and it shows that African Studies has been expanding by leaps and bounds since the 1960s.



We have seen that various factors attributed to the evolution and growth of African studies. Some of these factors were internal while others were external. Since the 1960s a lot of interest has been generated in the study of Africa with African Studies centres being established all over the world.



Self-Assessment Questions

Exercise 1.3

True or False

1. African Studies Association was formed in Africa.
2. African independence came during the era of the 'Cold War'.
3. Jan Vansina was one of the historians who pioneered the use of oral traditions.
4. The main objective of African Studies Association is to promote the study of African-Americans.

Fill in the blanks

5. The establishment of African universities with African lecturers helped in projecting the image of Africa in the field of and
6. African universities staffed by African scholars was instrumental in the of African Studies.

SESSION 4: OBJECTIVES AND IMPACT OF AFRICAN STUDIES

From our discussions so far, we observed that Africans have specific problems which African Studies has to solve. The discipline therefore has certain specific objectives aimed not only to restore Africa's ancient past but also solve contemporary problems. Since the 1960s African Studies has made significant impact both on the continent and beyond.



Objectives

At the end of the session you will be able to:

- a) state the objectives of African Studies and
- b) explain the impact the discipline has so far made.



Now read on...



4.1 Objectives of African Studies

African Studies has many objectives. We will try in this session, to identify and discuss some of the major objectives

4.1.1 To Offer Students the Opportunity to Study Africa from all Facets

Indeed, one of the main objectives of African Studies is to give students the opportunity to study African history, religion, culture, institutions as well as languages and arts. We observed in our previous sessions that until the 1960s Africa did not form part of the mainstream academic disciplines in institutions of higher learning. African history, for instance, was seen as a marginalised theme within the framework of colonial power. African Studies therefore seeks to make specific contributions that will help advance knowledge about Africa and its people. We have been talking much about history.

Do you know why? To solve Africa's present problems, we need to understand how we have gotten to where we are.

4.1.2 Projection of the African Personality

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah noted that the personality of the African was stunted by the slave trade and colonialism. The African became a commodity to be sold or exchanged with consumer goods. It was said that the price of a horse in Salaga market was higher than that of a slave. African Studies therefore seeks to restore the African personality from the ruins by restoring Africa's ancient glory.

4.1.3 The Projection of African Cultural Values and Tradition

Globalisation has brought a lot of changes and these changes are taking place all over the world. African culture and traditions are being subordinated to the glorification of

western values. African traditional music, languages, etc. are losing their importance. For instance, the youth in Ghana now prefer ‘Rap’ music to traditional ‘highlife’ music.

Similarly, most Africans prefer western dress to African dresses. We see an increasing number of Africa’s who have no history, culture or identity other than those given to them by missionaries and colonialists. They have no confidence in their ability to solve their own problems.

Our African women, for instance, who perm their hair, bleach their skin and paint their faces, are products of cultural globalisation. They have been made to embrace European concept and image of beauty and to disown African conception of beauty.

The stark reality is that, we are being culturally globalised and so we are losing our identity as Africans. It is therefore the aim of African Studies to reverse this trend of affairs.

How can African Studies do this? One sure way of reversing the trend is through the promotion of the study of African culture, history and institutions in African centred ways. Africans will then take pride in what makes them Africans and have confidence in their own ability to solve problems. In this way, Africans will be seen to be asserting their identity within the global village.

African Studies seeks to provide a conceptual and philosophical framework as a bulwark against the foisting of the humanism of the West on Africans; a humanism that upholds Eurocentric interpretation of African issues and apply western paradigm to African problems.

4.1.4 Finding African Solutions to African Problems

In the past, African problems, be they economic, social or political were viewed from the stand point of imperialism. This trend continued into the post-independence era where the cultural premise of Africa’s development was grossly underestimated. The ominous consequence of this was the failed attempt to use western paradigm in addressing African developmental issues. Despite the huge investment made in Africa over the years, the problems of the continent still persist.

African Studies therefore seeks to instil in people the awareness of the need to move away from Eurocentric interpretation of African issues. African Studies encourages researchers in the discipline to relate research and teaching to the pressing problems facing Africa in a manner that is free from the propositions of the colonial era. By so doing, Africans will be solving their problems in a much more realistic and efficient way.

Thus African Studies seeks to inspire in our present and future generations, a better understanding of African institutions and values, while at the same time, equipping them with requisite skills of appreciating contemporary problems of Africa.

What are some of the pressing issues facing Africa? I am sure your answers will include democratic development, human rights, identity, good legal systems, poverty, social changes, the debt crises and decentralisation.

4.1.5 Promotion of Unity among Africans

This is another important objective of the discipline. The problem of national integration has been a thorny issue facing African countries since independence. The partition of Africa which started in 1884/85 carved out about 53 countries, bringing people with diverse cultural and historical background to form one country.

Why does this constitute a problem? The problem of national integration has been a thorny issue. Since the inhabitants of these artificially created states have sentimental attachment to their ethnic groups, it is difficult for them to embrace the concept of shared nationality. To get over this problem, African Studies aims to expose people to various cultures in the continent.

By so doing, people will understand their own culture within the context of tolerance towards other people's cultures.

4.2 Impact of the Discipline

African Studies has made remarkable impact since the 1960s. The impact is felt both in and out of Africa. It aims to undertake research which will inform or influence the formulation of policy on Africa. Now there is hardly any internationally acclaimed university that does not offer African Studies programme.

4.2.1 The Provision of a Comprehensive Understanding of Africa

The subject has brought Africa onto the centre stage treating it as the primary focus of a systematic research. With its rigorous and systematic methodology and data collecting procedures, African Studies has enriched our understanding of Africa in a very remarkable way. It has helped not only in restoring African's past but also in providing a more comprehensive understanding of the African phenomenon. African Studies centres have been established in many states in the US while many universities in Europe expanded their African Studies programmes.

The African Studies association's annual meeting brings together over 1000 participants from the world. This has helped in strengthening the African presence in academia.

Augustine Konneh noted that the commitment of universities to African Studies is providing a scholarly environment and that the prestige the discipline brings to a university is important for the existence of the programme at a university.

4.2.2 The Field of Religion

African Studies has led to a situation where African traditional religion has been restored and given the same recognition that is accorded other religions of the world. African Studies has shown that traditional religion helps people to find meaning in life, in much the same way as other religions. It has brought to the fore the similarities between African traditional religion on one hand and Christianity and Islam on the other. African traditional religion is now a recognised field of study.

4.2.3 The Field of Anthropology

The impact of African Studies can be seen in the area of anthropology. It has led to a positive change in people's perception of African culture and societies. African Studies has deepened our understanding of African societies and cultures. African Studies has brought about a change in the use of derogatory terms to describe African societies. For instance, words like 'tribe' is no longer in vogue. Instead, the word 'ethnic' is now considered more acceptable in describing a group of people.

In the same vein, words like 'bride price' are discarded in favour of 'bride wealth', and 'paganism' for 'traditional religion'. African music, dance and art are now very important subjects that attract scholars and researchers in their numbers to the continent. Ethno-musicology, for instance, is now a fascinating field of academic endeavour.

Write down the names of celebrated Ghanaian ethno-musicologists. I am sure you will not forget the pioneering efforts of Dr. Ephraim Amu and Prof Nketia.

4.2.4 Establishment of Linkages between Africans and those in the Diaspora

African Studies has helped in strengthening the cultural ties between Africans on the main land and those in the Diaspora. Scholars in the field meet regularly at conferences and workshops to discuss their findings about Africa. There are linkages between universities on the main continent and those abroad where collaborative research is undertaken to find solutions to some of the problems facing Africa.



African Studies has laudable objectives. These objectives aim to provide Africans with the opportunity of assessing and asserting themselves. Since the 1960s, the discipline has made significant impact which has succeeded in echoing the views of Africa and its people.

Self –Assessment Questions**Exercise 1.4****True or False**

1. African Studies aims at helping Africans to reassert themselves.
2. African Studies promotes cultural globalisation.
3. Globalisation means Africans should do away with their culture.
4. African Studies is all about drumming and dancing

Assignment

1. Make a list of African cultural practices that you think should be preserved.

This is blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear and
- difficult topics, if any.

SESSION 5: CHALLENGES FACING THE DISCIPLINE

Although African Studies has gained international recognition and has indeed made a great stride, it is still beset with a plethora of problems. In this session, we will examine some of the many obstacles that the discipline faces.



Objectives

At the end of the session you will be able to:

- a) identify some of the problems facing African Studies and
- b) explain the problems so identified



Now read on...



5.1 Inadequate Resources

A lot of money is required for undertaking research in traditional societies in Africa. Researchers sometimes spend years in the field to master the languages of the society they study in order to have a deep appreciation of cultural values or historical processes. Researchers do this sometimes at the peril of their health and life. Data collection is therefore a laborious exercise. Researchers must often have to hire informants and pay them. Unfortunately, money for researchers in African Studies has not been forthcoming. Most African governments have not been able to devote enough resources to the study of the continent.

5.2 Lack of Interest in African Studies

It is disheartening to note that Africans are not interested in studying themselves. Ironically, it is foreigners who rather show a great deal of enthusiasm in the subject. African Studies has to compete with already established subjects for recognition in African universities.

Given the option, would you choose to read African Studies? Most students in our public universities would not have read African Studies if it had not been made compulsory. The effect of this is the domination of the discipline by western scholars. This development thwarts our effort to correct the numerous misrepresentations of Africa and its people.

5.3 Scarcity of Publishing Houses

In Africa, scarcity of publishing houses is a thorny issue that hinders the efforts by researchers to publish their findings. In fact, researchers find themselves in a state of frustration and bitterness for want of publishers. Even after they have put their manuscripts together it can take years to have them published. The cost of the final works often becomes very expensive. This makes it difficult for research findings to be made available for the consumption of the public.

5.4 Disagreement among Scholars

Disagreement usually arises over the work and membership of the African Studies Association. There have been dissenting views about the direction that the association should go. This has led to a split within the association. Scholars in and outside of Africa have been critical about the methodological premises of some members, particularly western scholars. Most scholars from Africa, the Caribbean and the US have expressed concern about the domination of the association by western scholars. This is partly responsible for the emergence of splinter associations such as African Heritage Studies Association and the Joint Committee on African Studies. These divisive tendencies have led to a break in the front of the association.



Whilst some of the problems facing African Studies have to do with the methodological direction of the discipline, others have to do with scarcity of resources and disagreement over membership of the Board of Directors of the African Studies Association. The multi-disciplinary nature of the subject itself has brought about a variety of approaches to the treatment of the African experience. To harmonise these varied sets of ideas and concepts in the study of Africa constitutes a major problem.



Self -Assessment Questions

Exercise 1.5

True or False

1. African Studies Association was formed out of the African Heritage Association.
2. Researchers in African Studies put their lives at risk.
3. African Studies is fraught with disagreements between African-Americans and Africans.
4. Scholars in Africa do not make their findings available.

SESSION 6: THE STATE OF THE DISCIPLINE

African Studies has made tremendous strides since the 1960s to the point where one can now say that the discipline has come to stay.



Most prestigious centres of higher education have introduced African Studies programme into their curricula. These centres have turned out scholars who continue to make considerable contribution to the advancement of knowledge about the continent.

Objectives



At the end of the session, you will be able to identify the state of African Studies in:

- a) Ghana and
- b) other parts of the world

Now read on...

6.1 The State of African Studies in Ghana

Ghana's pioneering role in projecting the African identity was given a further boost with the establishment of the Institute of African Studies at Legon. The sod was cut by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah in 1961 to mark the opening of the institute. As a semi-autonomous institute within the University of Ghana, it was set up to lead the crusade in conducting research into all aspects of life of African people. Since its establishment, the institute has attracted scholars and researchers outside and within Africa.

The multi-disciplinary nature of its programme affords the institute the ability to undertake research and teaching in a wide range of fields. At the moment, the institute has about 23 research fellows with specialisation in various aspects of African Studies.

Aside carrying out research, the institute also offers courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels for all second year students of the university for three semesters. Students have to pass their examinations in African Studies in order to qualify for the award of a degree. The institute also runs an M.A, M.Phil and Ph.D programmes.

Under the M.A and M.Phil programmes, students undertake course work for the first year after which they present project work or a thesis in the case of the M.Phil students.

In addition to their areas of specialisation, students take courses in African social and political systems. The programmes annually attract a large number of both local and foreign students.

Over the years, the institute have collected a lot of oral historical and archival materials. These primary materials on various aspects of Ghanaian culture and traditional institution as well as history are kept at Manhyia Palace in Kumasi and at a documentary centre at the Institute in Legon. These materials are invaluable for rigorous research into aspects of the history and culture of Ghana. Research findings of the institute are made available through the institute's publications which include the *Research Review*, *Dawuno*, *Okyeame* and *IAS Bulletin*.

The institute's library also has collections mostly on Africa. These collections include books, journals as well as students' theses. The library is therefore a very important resource for local and foreign researchers and students.

Similarly, at the University of Cape Coast, students are required to select two courses from a number of courses for a credit value of 3. The first semester course takes two credits while the second semester course takes one credit. This general African Studies programme services all departments in the university and it counts towards the award of the first degree. Below are some of the general African Studies courses run in the University of Cape Coast under the aegis of the Department of African Studies:

- Religion in Africa
- Language and Ethnicity
- Democratization and Development
- Africa in the Uni-Polar World
- Slave Trade and Globalisation
- The African in Dispersion
- The African Family
- Democracy and Governance in Traditional Africa
- Survey of Selected Societies and Cultures in Africa
- The OAU and the African Union
- Reproductive Health and Development
- African Economies and Development
- Conflict Prevention and Management in Africa

The courses are selected from the perspective of the arts and social sciences and they focus primarily on topical issues of development in Africa.

The Department of African Studies has lecturers who are experts in the cultural, social, political as well as the thought systems of the various ethnic groups in Africa. These lecturers lead and facilitate effective and efficient collaborative research and teaching on the various aspects of African Studies. The department receives, on regular basis, a number of foreign students and researchers.

The department is therefore positioned to promote the development of high calibre faculty, expansion of research opportunities, innovative teaching and exchange of ideas through linkages within and outside of Ghana. At the beginning of the 2003/04 academic year, the department started a first-degree programme in African Studies. Twenty students enrolled on the programme to start with.

The decisions which informed the design of the first degree programme at UCC were many and varied.

First, it was observed that African universities offer degrees at the graduate level only. Therefore the need for the vacuum to be filled informed the department to introduce the bachelor's degree in African Studies.

Second it is envisioned that the first degree will create interest in students learning about themselves. The programme will create early interest in developing and promoting an African framework for tackling problems facing the continent of Africa in students. Students could, at a very early stage, acquire the skills of gathering a body of data that facilitates the dissemination of knowledge from an African-centred point of view. In this respect, students will be required to undertake community-based projects during the course of their studies.

The resurgence of multiparty democracy in Africa and the intensification of globalisation in recent decades have brought in their wake a new wave of enthusiasm for African Studies. Researchers, students and institutions in and outside of Africa are becoming interested more than ever in issues relating to Africa. This development has raised African Studies to new heights.

What is globalisation? Discuss this at your FTF meeting.



In order to meet the challenges of the discipline in the twenty-first century, the University of Cape Coast has transformed the Department of African Studies into a Centre of African and International Studies. This is to expand the research capacity of the university and to introduce graduate programmes at the masters and doctoral levels.

The University of Cape Coast continues to introduce new courses that take into account emerging themes in African Studies as a way of enhancing the relevance of the discipline.

Other public universities in the country have also introduced African Studies programmes into their curricula that expose students to various issues in Africa.

6.2 Problems Facing African Studies in Ghana

The progress made in the promotion of African Studies notwithstanding, the discipline faces a lot of problems which impede its development in Ghana. While some of the problems are general problems facing other disciplines, there are those which are peculiar to African Studies.

One of such problems is office space. Most departments of African Studies in the country do not have enough office space. With the exception of the Institute of African Studies at Legon, departments in other universities have inadequate infrastructure. There is also the problem of funding research in African Studies in our universities. Research funding has been dwindling over the years. These constraints, among many others, have made it difficult for us to realise the vision for which the founders introduced African Studies into our centres of higher learning.

6.3 African Studies outside Africa

Ironically, African Studies has received greater attention in academia outside Africa than it does get on the main continent. Indeed, the passion for African Studies abroad has increased in recent years. The resurgence of democracy, in Africa since the 1990s has brought in its wake a new wave of enthusiasm for African Studies. Researchers, students and policy makers outside Africa are becoming interested more than ever before in issues relating to Africa.

In the US, African Studies is becoming more and more popular with the universities. Some of the universities which established African studies centres include North Western University, Boston University, Stanford University, University of Florida, Indiana University and Michigan State University.

Mention must be made of the prestigious School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, the African Studies Institute of Upsula, the Centre of West African Studies, Birmingham, as well as the Centre of African Studies at Kyoto University.

SUMMARY

We realised that African Studies has developed and that more and more people are becoming interested in issues affecting Africa and its people.

One striking observation however, is that while Africans are not passionate about studying themselves, people outside Africa show a great deal of enthusiasm for the subject. Nonetheless, the development of African Studies has certainly dispelled the low esteem which hitherto characterised indigenous knowledge. It is the hope that with time a lot more people will come to appreciate the need for us to move from Eurocentric paradigms that do not solve Africa's problems and adopt home-grown solutions.

Dr. Kwame Nkrumah charged African universities to have the sense of duty to produce devoted men and women with imagination and ideas who, by their life and actions, could inspire our people to look forward to a great future. This charge is still valid today.

Self –Assessment Questions



Exercise 1.6

True or False

1. African Studies does not have the same intellectual importance like other disciplines.
2. Institutions in developed countries do not have African Studies programmes.
3. African Studies was introduced in Ghana during the colonial period.
4. The Institute of African Studies, Legon, was established to study Ghanaian culture, history and institutions.
5. Discuss why Africans are not enthusiastic about African Studies.
6. Examine the development of African Studies.
7. Examine the state of African Studies in Ghana.

This is blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear and
- difficult topics, if any.

UNIT 2: AFRICAN SOCIETIES AND CULTURES**Unit Outline**

- Session 1: Introduction to the African Continent
Session 2: Culture Areas of Africa
Session 3: Major Ethnic Groups in Africa
Session 4: Religious Beliefs, Rituals and Practices in Africa
Session 5: African Traditional Popular Culture
Session 6: African Governance Systems

After the introductory lecture on African Studies as an academic discipline, you are welcome to Unit 2 titled African Societies and Cultures. The main aim of the unit is to give a broad overview of the African continent and how the people live in their natural ecological regions. This unit is divided into six broad sessions.

OVERVIEW

The first session of Unit 2 introduces students to the African continent and its geography. The second session explains the culture areas of Africa by isolating the diverse cultural traits of the naturally occurring regions. In session three we study some of the major ethnic groups found on the continent of Africa, which allows us to appreciate the unity and diversity of the rich material cultures of the people of Africa. Session four is interesting because it further examines some indigenous belief systems, rituals and practices of sub Saharan Africa. Also discussed in session five is the idea of African popular culture, while the sixth session is about the governance systems of Africa prior to colonial rule. The six interwoven topics that constitute Unit 2 prepare students to further understand the specific themes in the remaining four sessions in this module.

Unit Objectives

Unit 2 is designed to give students in-depth knowledge of the African continent, and a fuller understanding of its geography. More importantly, it highlights the commonalities and differences of her rich cultural heritage.



At the end of the unit students should be able to:

1. describe the origin of the name Africa and its geographical regions;
2. differentiate the culture areas of Africa;
3. identify some of the major ethnic groups found on the African continent;
4. discuss some of the major rituals, beliefs and practices found in Africa;
5. explain the idea of African popular culture; and
6. classify the indigenous governance systems of pre-colonial Africa

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- difficult topics if any and
- issues that are not clear.

SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

I believe that all of us in this lecture room can describe ourselves as proud Africans. Therefore, we shall in Session 1 of Unit 2 learn about the origin of the name Africa and pay due attention to its geographic regions. The early misconceptions about the African continent that overlooked the great African civilizations are also discussed in this session. An interesting segment of this session is Africa in antiquity which points conclusively to the continent being the home of early man. The session ends with a survey of Africa in the contemporary world.



Objectives

By the end of the session, the student should be able to:



- a) explain the origin of the name Africa;
- b) demarcate the geographic regions of Africa;
- c) discuss some misconceptions about the African continent;
- d) describe some of the great African civilizations before contact with Europeans;
- e) explain the contributions of archaeological excavations on the continent to world civilization; and
- f) recount Africa's role in the contemporary world

You may proceed to read the first unit...



1.1 The Origin of the Africa Name

Afrocentric scholars have attempted to derive the origins of the name Africa from various etymological positions. First, the name is believed to have been derived from *Ifriqiya*, the name of an area in modern Tunisia which means *sunny place*. Second, the Latin prefix, *Afri-*, referred to the Carthaginians who lived in North Africa in modern day Tunisia and the suffix *-ica* was used to denote land; hence, Afri-ica meant “*land of the Carthaginians*.” Third, Flavius Josephus who wrote the *Antiquities* hypothesised that the continent was named after *Epher*, grandson of Abraham (Gen.25:4) whose descendants invaded Libya or Tripolitania. Fourth, Leo Africanus (1488-1554) proposed the Greek word *Aphrike* meaning ‘without cold’ to indicate “*a land free of cold and horror*.” Fifth, the Greek word *aphros* meant foam, thus *Aphrike* referred to “*land of foam or land of big waves*.” Sixth, Massey in 1881 derived the Africa name from the Egyptian phrase *af-rui-ka*, meaning to “*turn toward the opening of the Ka*,” and since *Ka* was the energetic double of every person, *opening of the Ka* when referred to the womb made “*Africa the birthplace*.” Seventh, Michele Fruyt derived it as the “*south wind*” or “*rainy wind*.” It is significant therefore, that all the seven varied etymologies of the name Africa discussed so far appeared to be more descriptive as indeed they referred to the climatic and or geographical features of the landmass (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa#cite_note-Sayre-2).



What do you know about the geographic regions of Africa? You need a political map of the continent to enable you to fully understand Session 1.2.

1.2 The Geography of Africa

According to Thompson (1966:1ff), “about 150 million years ago, all the world’s land may have formed one giant continent called **GONDWANALAND** with one large and uninterrupted ocean”. However, due to tectonic activities that is, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, the cracks and fissures led to the earth’s centre pushing the newly separated pieces away from each other. The result was that North America drifted west from Europe forming the gap which became the Atlantic Ocean. And while Australia drifted down under, South America also pulled away from Africa. Indeed, Thompson (1966) asserted that “even though this theory of one giant continent has not been completely proven, the coastlines of Africa and South America look very much like two neighbouring pieces of a jigsaw puzzle”. Further, if the theory was to hold sway, it would conveniently explain away the existence of about 4,000 mile long gash along Africa’s eastern side called the *Great Rift Valley*. This landmark valley runs from Ethiopia and Somaliland south toward the Cape of Good Hope, as well as north along the floor of the Red Sea into the Mediterranean ocean.

The location of Africa makes it almost surrounded by the sea; Atlantic to the west, Mediterranean to the north which separates it from Europe, Indian ocean to the east whilst the Isthmus of Suez joins Africa to Asia. Africa stretches from the northernmost point Ras ben Sakka in Tunisia on latitude $37^{\circ} 21' N$ to Cape Agulhas its southernmost point in South Africa on latitude $34^{\circ} 51' S$. This covers a total distance of 8,000km (5,000 miles). From east to west, Africa stretches 7,400km (4,600 miles) from Ras Hafun in Somalia on latitude $51^{\circ} 27' E$ to Cape Verde also on latitude $17^{\circ} 33' W$. The total coastline of Africa is 26,000km (16,000 miles). The World Population Statistics 2014 gives comprehensive data on the continent of Africa. First, it is the second largest after Asia and covers an area of 11,725,385 sq miles (approximately 30.2m km²) which comes to 6% of earth’s total land area. The population of Africa is again second to Asia and by February 2014; the projection was put at 1.069 billion people which is approximately 15% of the world’s total human population (cf. www.worldpopulationstatistics.com/population-of-africa-2014/). On the continent, Nigeria has the highest population of 170m in 2012 while the three islands of St Helen, Ascension and Tristan de Cunha are the least populated with a total population of 7,729. Africa is made up of 54 sovereign states including the island of Madagascar and nine territories.

Evidence shows that there are three geographic zones in Africa namely Atlas range in north Africa, the coastal plains with the river basins and lakes and the plateau region in eastern and southern Africa with the highest point being Mount Kilimanjaro at 13,321 ft above sea level. However, Molefi Kete Asante (2007:2) has held that there were three

geographical engines that drove the cultures and societies of Africa viz: the Saharan Generator, the Rainforest Home and the Great Rift Valley.

Saharan Generator- More than 8,000 years ago, the 3,600,000sq miles Great Desert had a thriving agriculture and the arid Sahara desert was a large fertile landmass, and the cradle of African civilisation. By 3,000 BCE, the Sahara region got drier receiving little rain, and as the rivers failed, entire communities were forced to disappear. Farming people and cattle raising villages moved to escape the desolation. Thus, by 1,000 BCE, the Sahara had already become too dry to sustain a huge population (Asante ibid).

African tropical rainforest- This was the forest of tall trees in a region of year round warmth, with an average of 75.250 inches of rain annually. The rain forest no doubt supported human activity with its plants, trees and animal life. Copious rainfall all year round supported agricultural and food production. Great civilisations that flourished in the rainforest were the Twa, Ibo, Fang, Mbuti, Kongo and Ijaw (Asante op. cit 3-4).

The Great Rift Valley- The Great Rift Valley is an immense natural geographical rift stretching 3,000 miles from Mozambique in South east Africa to Syria in South west Asia. The valley is between 16 to 40 miles in width and a few hundred to several thousand feet deep. They were believed to have been created circa 35 million years ago during the separation of the African and Arabian tectonic plates. The rift has high peaks such as Ruwenzori or *Mountains of the Moon*, Mounts Kenya, Kilimanjaro and Meru. Furthermore, deep lakes in the world are also found here including the 4,700 feet deep Lake Tanganyika. The rift valley has been a rich area for finding the ancestors of modern humans; indeed it is the valley of the hominids and *Homo sapiens* where some of our human ancestors have been found particularly the Olduvai gorge in modern day Tanzania (Asante op. cit.: 5).

1.3 Misconceptions about Africa

According to Asare Opoku (1986:1) the early literature on Africa written mostly by non-Africans, who were mainly European explorers, missionaries or anthropologists brought ethnocentric European misconceptions to bear on the subject matter. Referring to the indigenous African people, Robert Moffat stated that “Satan had erased every vestige of religious impression from their minds.” Leo Frobenius is quoted as follows “None but the most primitive instincts determine the lives and conduct of negroes who lacked every kind of ethical inspiration.” Further Stanley wrote that “Africa was a place governed by insensible fetish” (Opoku op cit: 2). Oliver and Page (1966:13) and Alao (2005) maintained that Stanley popularised the notion that Africa was the Dark Continent because it was the last continent to be opened to the gaze of the outside world, and the last to experience the full impact of European people. Significantly, the misnomer ‘the Dark Continent’ meant that the Europeans and Americans saw Africa as a mysterious continent which was supposedly full of savages and wild beasts. The

darkness related to geographical barriers: deserts, rivers, waterfalls, jungles, coastlines without harbours all of which stood between explorers and the heart of Africa. Thompson (1966:14) concluded that “most rivers in Africa started high above the sea and cascaded steeply downward before they emptied their waters into the ocean; and no boat yet invented can climb up a waterfall”.

Furthermore, Africans were regarded as ‘natives’ who were a horde of largely ‘naked savages.’ The derogatory nomenclature ‘native’ is attributed to Richard Burton. Meanwhile, Sir Samuel Baker after his trip to the Upper Nile in 1866 said that the African “mind is as stagnant as the morass which forms its puny world”. Consequently, Dean Farrar came up with the division of all humanity into three great classes, namely: *savage races, semi civilised races and the too civilised races*. Other strange ideas held about Africa included also grandmothers’ tales borne only out of naivety and wild imagination, namely: (a) That Africa was populated with monstrous people with tails, (b) That Africa had amazons or fierce women warriors who allowed no men into their tribes and who slew all their male children, (c) That Africa had animals such as serpents that flew through the air and breathed forth heat and fire (dragons) (d) That Africans slept on trees (e) That Africans were cannibalistic and finally (f) That Africans fought insensible inter tribal wars among others.

Meanwhile, the mid C19th saw the propagation of the *Hamitic hypothesis* that stated that “everything of value found in Africa was brought there by the Hamites, who were allegedly a branch of the Caucasian race” (Sanders 1969:521). Seligman also wrote that “the incoming Hamites were pastoral ‘Europeans’ arriving wave after wave, better armed, as well as quicker witted than the dark agricultural Negroes” (Sanders op cit.). Commenting on the Hamitic hypothesis, Alao (2005:13) explained that “the origin of advanced societies found in Africa is credited to white-skinned ancestors the Hamites, who were supposedly a sub-group of the Caucasian race but superior and more advanced than Negroid populations of Sub-Saharan Africa”. Additionally, Benjamin Disraeli justified British imperialism in Africa by misappropriating the poet Rudyard Kipling’s phrase, the ‘Blackman’s burden’ to mean the missionary crusade of the European to be undertaken to “civilize and Christianize the black African.” The French equivalent of this crusade was called *mission civilisatrice* (see Kottak 2004:670-672). Finally, the misconception that Africa had no culture, no history and no civilisation prior to the advent of the Europeans into the continent was the last straw in the misrepresentation on Africa. Georg Wilhelm Hegel a German philosopher had stated that: “the history of the world travels from east to west; for Europe is absolutely the end of history, Asia the beginning...Africa is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit.” Furthermore, Trevor-Roper flatly rejected the idea that “there can be any African history; rather...there is only history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness...and darkness is not a subject of history.”

However, in refuting the various misconceptions, Oliver and Page argued that at the beginning of this modern period of history, Africa was far advanced than Australia when it was discovered by the Europeans. The aborigines lived as hunter-gatherers, using tools that belonged to the Mesolithic or ‘Middle Stone Age’ cultures which had been abandoned by European and African peoples between three to six thousand years earlier. Indeed, Africans at this time were equipped with tools of iron that aided their farming occupation. The real reason why the Europeans did not go inland and seize the gold mines of West Africa or Southern Rhodesia was that the Africans there were already well enough organised to exploit these resources themselves and to keep the overland trade in their own hands. It was in large measure the progress already made by the Africans in earlier centuries that enabled them to resist the modern age for so long (Oliver and Page 1966:14). Thompson (1966:12) also wrote that “men have constantly migrated across the face of the African continent, sharing ideas and discoveries contrary to the Eurocentric misconceptions. Traders have criss-crossed the Sahara Desert to the North; while east coast Africans have dealt with merchants from China, India and the Arab lands.” Meanwhile, Alao (2005:17) argued that it is a misconception to think that history only begins when men take to writing. Indeed, to equate history with written records is myopic. Therefore, to view the absence of any written records as the absence of any events worthy of historical study amounts to misinterpretation of history. Clearly, therefore, the accounts of many European writers, explorers, traders and administrators on the continent were simply inaccurate and this tended to make their sources unreliable for the reconstruction of African history and its cultural past. These Eurocentric views that deliberately looked down upon African societies as being timeless entities without past or future, and without culture or civilisation, also overlooked prehistory on the African continent. However, Franz Ansprenger (2002) defended the place of African history in global affairs by citing evolution of the human race and the corpus of history about Egyptian civilization. Recently, Molefe Asante (2007:20) took issues with Fage (1978:5-6) who had written that “the people of North Africa-presumed light-skinned Hamites belonged to the Neanderthal group, while those, south of the Sahara belonged to the Rhodesioid group. In fact, the impression of Rhodesioid as a distinct biological or cultural group is fanciful, except for its spirited attempt to associate Cecil John Rhodes, one of the key British imperialists in Africa to such a thought (Asante 2007:30). The truth as Molefe Asante wrote it is that “prior to 2000 BCE, all the people of northern Africa, the Amazighs or Berbers were black in colour and had lived there long before the rise of Islam and the religious fervour that led to the conversion of the people.”

Write out some other misconceptions about Africa that you have read that are not mentioned above. Suggest three ways by which such misconceptions about the African continent can be dispelled.



1.4 Great African Civilizations

Africa has been home to great civilisations and Egypt's historical traditions reach back to about 4000 BC, when a group of nomads settled in north eastern Africa and became farmers. Under Menes and his successors, a strong government that developed, centred on the figure of the Pharaoh, a ruler who came in time to be linked with the gods. The links with the sun-god Re [Ra] made the god-kings children of the Re, thus a Pharaoh could not die. This is the notion of divine kingship. The god-king Pharaoh was powerful enough to keep the country and the government he headed at peace for long periods of time. Consequently, Egypt began to develop a civilisation of such splendour with highly developed forms of communication, travel, architecture and measuring time (Thompson 1966:34-36). The art of writing *hieroglyphics* was developed so also was paper from papyrus that aided in recording prehistory. Other ancient African civilisations were Nubia, which meant *Land of Gold*. The kingdom of Kush had knowledge of and made use of metals. It is remembered also for its famed capital Napata. Molefe Asante emphasized that the factor of iron making on the African continent jump-started African cultures because the discovery led to the manufacture of tools which allowed early humans to gain mastery over their environment. In the East central Africa and West Africa the production of long lasting tools only went to improve the quality of life. Thus by 1200 BCE, knowledge of iron-smelting had spread to other regions of the world. Indeed, the rise of Meroe as an iron-making society according to Asante (2007:7) in the Nile valley sparked a critical turn in Africa's history. Furthermore, the temples of Kush were known centres of learning and at the height of their civilisations Egypt and Nubia built pyramids and tombs to preserve the dead bodies of their kings. Thompson (1966:48ff) credited the Kushite king Piankhy with love for horses, strict code of military honour, fighting with an army, and bronze and stone-tipped weapons. The new capital of Kush, Meroe, became a buzzing trade and commercial centre where cotton from India, silk and bronze from China, ebony and ivory as well as skins from the forests and grasslands of Africa were sold and tribute and taxes paid. The kingdom of Axum that emerged around northern Ethiopia took over the declining power of Kush around 400 BC. It had its own language called Ge'ez, and it was also noted for giant obelisks. Amharic, the longest written language in Africa is still spoken in Ethiopia.

Other kingdoms grew in Africa. Fage (1961:34) wrote that "West Africa was really the land of the Negroes who the Arabs of North Africa called, *Bilad-es-Sudan*." Today, the pure-blooded Negro are more likely to be found in the forest than to the north of it due to the penetration and influence of the non-Negro peoples of North Africa. Also, the fact remains that the forest lands made transport and communication difficult for the light skinned Arabs to penetrate. Earliest records of Negroes occur in Egyptian paintings circa 3000BC, but they dominate all Africa south of the Sahara today with the exception of Ethiopia and the Hamitic people of the horn of Africa. Fage (1961:4) divided the Negroes into Negroes of West Africa (West Sudanic) and Negroes of East, Central and Southern Africa (East Bantu men). Meanwhile, Adu Boahen (1966:5)

chronicled the history of *Bilad-es-Sudan* circa 1060 where there was a university in Timbuktu circa 1000AD. However, the Sudan from 4000BC onwards had been habited with a flourishing agriculture across the Niger bend with the introduction of the use of iron. Ancient peoples such as the Soninke, the Mandinke, the Serer, the Susu, and the Songhai of the Sahel and forest peoples like the Akan, the Yoruba and the Temne have enjoyed a flourishing empire. The caravan trade across the Sahara between 3000-2000 BC and the introduction of the camel around the first century AD allowed the desert to be travelled. At the height of its civilisation, traders from the Sahara, North Africa, Egypt, and the Middle East exchanged their wares: glass beads, ear-rings and bangles, items of clothing and later Arabic works for gold, ivory and slaves usually obtained from the forest regions (Adu Boahen 1966:4). The kingdom of Mutapa (Monomotapa Portuguese) was a Shona kingdom which stretched between the Zambezi and the Limpopo rivers in Southern Africa in present day Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The kingdom of Monomotapa (from the Shona Mwenemutapa meaning Prince of the conquered land) was a kingdom that grew into the Great Zimbabwe circa C15th. The Zulu kingdom under its legendary king Chaka [Shaka] is a South African empire founded around 1709 by Ka Manlandela and it is noted for its long battles with the British Empire in the 1870's, during the Anglo-Zulu war. It is therefore, impossible to overlook all these illustrations of African civilizations and culture and deny Africa a place in world history.

1.5 Africa in Antiquity

Africa has been denied its own agency for too long because of the records couching Africa as the recipient of everything and the creator of nothing. Historical records show that the invading Greeks plundered the ancient civilizations of Egypt and appropriated their intellectual property and knowledge; while the pyramid of Gizeh and others that stand today demonstrate arithmetic, geometry and architecture from Africa in antiquity. Consequently, the Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop proposed the important thesis that "Africa was not only the cradle of humanity, but also the cradle of civilisation" (Diop 1993). The Egyptologist, Diop, challenged the racist doctrine that gave credence to the Hamitic hypothesis and concluded that "not only was Africa the home of humanity and civilisation, but that Europe had "stolen" or "distorted" much of the African records." Indeed, Africa in pre-history through antiquity was home to all living humans, thus Jackson (2001:3) wrote that "civilisation emerged first on the continent of Africa and all other continents are the inheritors of those first humans who occupied the African landmass."

1.5.1 Africa and Prehistory

Archaeological excavations speak to the time before writing was available by providing a corpus of fossilised bones, stone tools and artefacts for scientists to arrive at incontrovertible evidence that support African origin of humanity.

a. Proconsul

According to Oliver and Page (1966:14) archaeologists today are increasingly sure that it was in Africa that man's ancestors became differentiated from the other primates. These fossilised remains of *Proconsul*, an erect ground-living creature, the least specialized primate yet known to science were found by Dr. Louis Leakey on Rusinga Island in the north-east corner of Lake Victoria in a geological stratum datable to some 25 million years ago. The currently agreed distinction between man and other primates is that man makes and uses tools. *Proconsul* was not man but an advanced form of primate who on purely physical grounds might be accounted as the 'presumed' ancestor of man. See also Hoebel (1972) for further reading.

b. Australopithecus – Southern Ape

In 1925, a South African scientist Raymond Dart made a find in a cave in Taung in South Africa where he discovered the buried skull of a six year old creature. Dart named this bipedal creature *Australopithecus* to mean Southern Ape. Richard Leakey also found "Skull 1470" in 1972, near Turkana in Kenya which looked quite human. The findings of Dinqnesh (called Lucy by the Americans) in 1974 in the Hadar region of Ethiopia by Maurice Taieb and Donald Johnson proved very conclusive. She was an upright bipedal belonging to the species *Australopithecus afarensis* and is dated to 3 million years ago. *Australopithecus afarensis* has also been found in Chad. In 1975, the remains of an *Australopithecine* group of thirteen adults and children were also found near Hadar in Ethiopia. The following year in 1976, human footprints were discovered close to an extinct volcano near Olduvai (Asante 2007:12-13).

c. Zinjanthropus- East African Man

The Olduvai Gorge is part of the Rift Valley which was once the site of a lake and many successive tribes of early men camped on its shores, where they made tools, killed their game and left their dead. The Olduvai Gorge is located in Northern Tanganyika or modern day Tanzania. *Zinjanthropus*, which means east African man, is believed to be the earliest tool maker and thought to have lived nearly two million years ago. Physically, he was small and rather ape-like, and along the top of its skull, there ran a thick bony crest necessary to support the muscles of a large heavy jaw. *Zinjanthropus* was more accustomed to use his teeth than his fingers depending on small stones as tools.

d. Homo habilis -Able/handy man

Dr. Louis and Mary Leakey found the remains of another type of humanoid thought to be the precursors to humans which is *Homo habilis* or able man. Being hominids, they were human-like creatures that were bipedal and walked upright on two legs and had large brains. Asante (2007:11) explained that by

standing upright and stretching their hands over their heads, *Homo habilis* could see long distances and spot predators who hunted them for food. Thus Oliver and Page (1966:16) could write that “Africa remained at the centre of the inhabited world” and to Asante (2007), the first hominids to stand upright did so, on the African continent.

e. ***Homo erectus-upright man***

The word *homo* means man, and *Homo habilis* differs from *Australopithecus* in at least three respects. First, the skull of *Homo habilis* was rounder and higher and the cranial capacity was nearly 700cc. That of *Australopithecus* was 400cc whereas that of modern man is 1450cc. Second, *Homo habilis* had the ability to climb trees and third, *Homo habilis* made use of stone tools to cut meat and fight predators. Indeed, historical records indicate that *Homo erectus* appeared about 2.3 million years ago and looked just like a modern human with a cranial capacity of 1000cc. There are two schools of thought on the emergence of early man. These are the *polygenic model* that suggests that humans emerged in different parts of the world or developed directly from *Homo erectus* in different regions of the world. However, the second school the *monogenic model* which is very popular, argues that the evolution of humans was a single event that occurred in Africa and that *Homo sapiens* or modern man expanded outward, driven by the Sahara pump when populations were displaced (Asante 2007:13-14).

Indeed Oliver and Page (1966:18) believed that in Africa, the most dominant type of *Homo sapiens* to emerge at the beginning of the Palaeolithic period was a type ancestral to the modern Bushman, who are believed to be the oldest race to live on the continent. They occupied most of the drier and more open parts of the continent, from the Sahara through to the Ethiopian and East African plateaux to South Africa. The modern Pygmies are believed also to be Negroid. The fourth race akin to the Caucasian are called ‘proto-Hamite’ by Leakey and they possessed special characteristics of southwest Asia who moved into Africa. These Caucasoid proto-Hamites exhibited material culture called Capsian, which meant that they buried some of their dead. They were also believed to have culture comparable to Natufian and Capsian, because they manufactured long, thin parallel-sided blades, made pottery for storage and cooking. The four racial types recognised as indigenous in historical times are the Bushman, Pygmies, Negroes and Caucasoid Hamites. The first three racial types are black Africans. It is believed that the Hamites entered Africa in the Upper Palaeolithic times while the other three types evolved out of older African stocks encountering each other and exchanging ideas. Indeed, in antiquity, Africa is the birth place of earliest man and also the birth place of one of the world’s earliest and greatest civilisations (Thompson 1966:29).

1.6 Africa in Contemporary World

Asante (2007:17) was categorical that humans first appeared on the African continent, and according to the archaeological and biological records, the first humans to be able to manage their own affairs in the physical environment in which they lived were Africans. However, at the turn of the twenty first century, some Europeans still believe that Africa is one country and students studying in Europe have often been asked by the naive questioner “if they knew individuals from other countries.” Meanwhile, they would be the first to deny being Norwegians if indeed they were Dutch, Germans or English. There is a sense therefore in which African critics have concluded that attempts at recommending economic packages for Africa under structural adjustment or budgetary support have all been couched in the same format and language to solve African problems. At all events, the IMF and World Bank economic prescriptions have followed the same set patterns that did not do justice to the diversities of African peoples.

In contemporary times there are 54 sovereign states in Africa which are members of the UN besides the nine territories and their governments that have been recognized by some individual sovereign states. All these states have worked harmoniously with the UN to promote world peace. The numerous UN peace-keeping missions in troubled spots in the world, the Middle East, Kosovo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Darfur and Lebanon among others have had African troops in these war torn areas to promote peace. The international statesman Bosumuru Kofi Annan of Ghana served as UN Secretary General (1999-2007), Madiba Nelson Mandela until his death remained an iconic stature as a symbol of world peace and international reconciliation. Mo Ibrahim industrialist and billionaire, Wole Soyinka Nobel laureate in Literature among others have all shaped the conscience of the world and placed the African continent at the centre of the global stage. The AU which comprises all the 54 sovereign states of Africa, bar Morocco due to the Western Sahara question, have conducted African affairs and promoted continental peace and harmony. The call to establish an African High Command to assist member states plagued by armed insurrection, ethnic conflicts and military adventurism remains the high point in carving a positive image of Africa at the world stage to provide Afrocentric solutions to African problems. Besides, regional groupings maintain peaceful cooperation and strict non-interference in the affairs of member nations while regulating movement of goods and people. Regional bodies such as: Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern Africa Development Commission (SADC), and the Maghreb Union have mediated in civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone and at the same time intervened in electoral violence in Kenya and Zimbabwe and the Arab spring. African members of OPEC have contributed immensely in addressing the oil crisis and regulating the price of crude oil. Equally important are Embassies and High Commissions in African states that have allowed for international diplomacy to be deepened. Membership of international organizations such as IMF, World Bank, Commonwealth, WTO etc have made a

positive impact in international geopolitics. It bears stressing also that in international sporting organizations Africa's membership of FIFA through CAF has largely promoted keen sporting relations with the international community. Migrant remittances, multi-national exchange programs, government to government treaties and protocols, scholarships and educational programmes have been mutually beneficial in promoting regional and international integration. Economic aid, trade pacts and international tourism have further put Africa at the centre of international politics in the contemporary world.

The first session had the important aim of stating the story of Africa using an Afrocentric approach so that the past misconceptions about African peoples can be dispelled. The session has consequently done a brief introduction of the African name and concluded with the contributions that the continent of Africa and indigenous Africans have made and continue to make towards world civilization.



Self-Assessment Questions



Exercise 2.1

- 1) Explain the link between the name Africa and the ancient people of Carthage.
- 2) What is Gondwanaland?
- 3) Give two misconceptions associated with the African continent.
- 4) What is the Hamitic hypothesis?
- 5) Distinguish between the *monogenic* and *polygenic* models for the emergence of humans.
- 6) Mention three ways in which Africa has contributed to world civilization.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear
- difficult topics if any.

SESSION 2: CULTURE AREAS OF AFRICA

The continent of Africa is a diversified one with distinct geographical and ecological regions in which the indigenous people have mastered their environment and lived in them in the best way that they can. This topic is important because it will enable students to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the African continent.



Objectives

By the end of this session you will be able to:

- a) define the concept of culture areas;
- b) explain the idea of culture traits;
- c) list the classification of culture areas made by Herskovits;
- d) state the six culture areas identified by Marquet;
- e) mention the importance of the study of culture areas of Africa; and
- f) evaluate the study of culture areas of Africa

Now read on...



2.1 The Concept of Culture Areas

According to Herskovits (1930:59) the origin and development of cultures have long been matters of dispute. However, Onwuejeoguu (1992:3) wrote that three theories about culture and society have been put forward by both scholars of anthropology and sociology namely: evolutionary theory, the diffusionist theory and the sociological theory.

Evolutionist school- This school of thought assumed that complex societies develop out of simple ones and the simple societies we find today are survivals of the past. To them there is unilinear form of culture growth. E. B. Tylor, R. R. Marett, Herbert Spencer, Max Muller and McLennan were among the earliest evolutionists. Classical evolutionism can be sub-divided into British, American and Continental, but the Neo-evolutionists are limited to American and British anthropologists (Jha 2007:27).

Diffusionist school- The diffusionist school believed that evolution alone cannot account for all differences between primitive or small-scale societies. They argued that various culture complexes develop at various times in different parts of the world and later on diffuse over corresponding parts of the world. Culture borrowing is possible because man is an imitative creature, and as Herskovits (1930:59) emphasised ‘human culture is essentially contagious.’ Migrating people where they settle leave their cultural traits with the local inhabitants there. The thrust of the argument of the diffusionist school is that culture has grown historically through mutual contact. There are three

main divisions of the diffusionist school made up of British, German and American scholars. The pioneers include G.E. Smith, William J. Perry, W. H. Rivers, F. Ratzel, F. Graebner, Leo Frobenius, C. Wissler, L. Kroeber and Franz Boas.

Sociological school- Emile Durkheim, Levi-Strauss, Auguste Comte among others were pioneers of the sociological school. They condemned the diffusionist school that they had mainly succeeded in atomizing culture into elements, whereas society was a unit whose different parts were related. In their view anthropologists studying the community observe the total way of life of the people, while investigating also how new ideas come about and how old ones are abandoned. This way society advances as a collective whole.

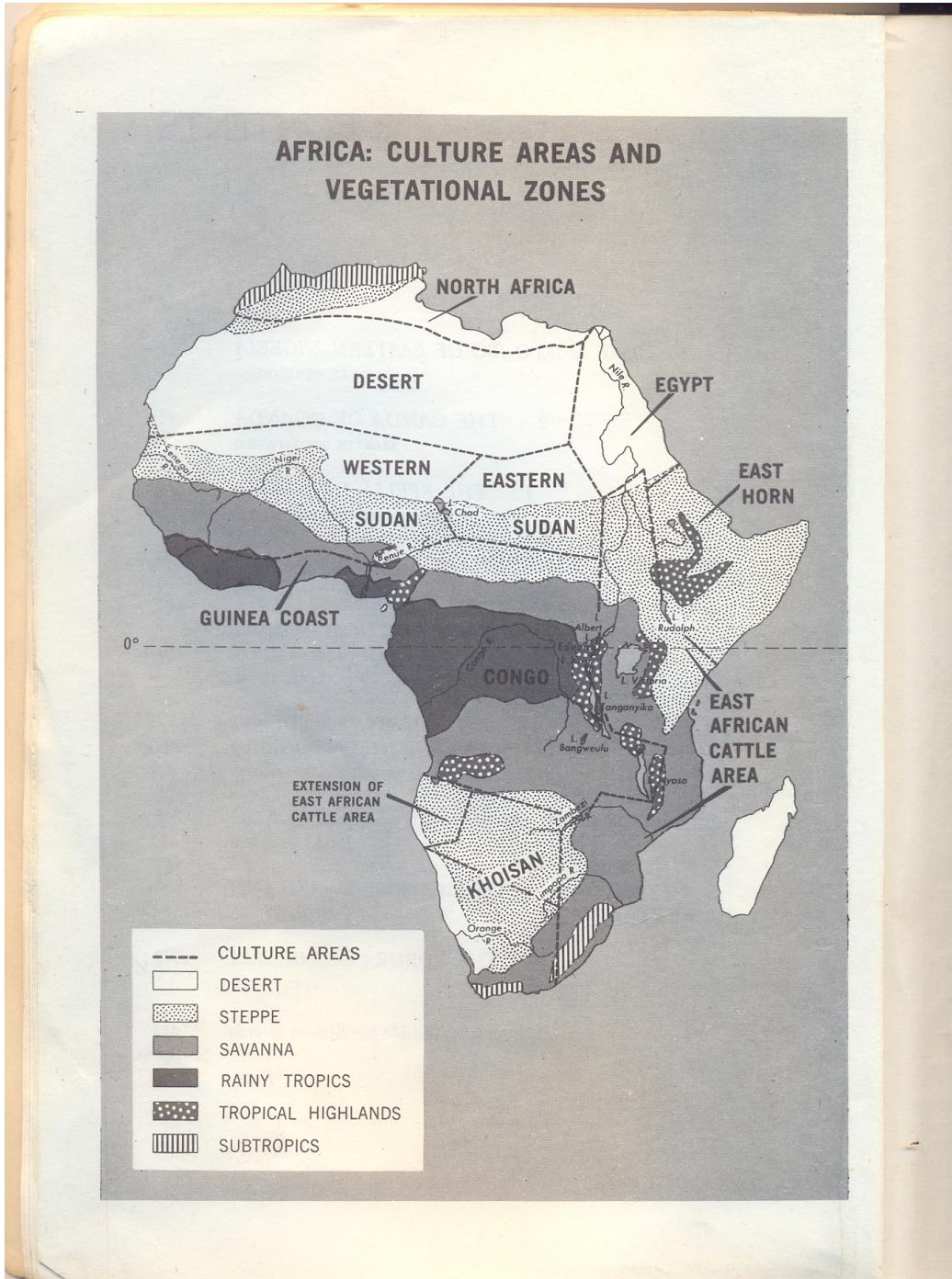
Definition of Culture Areas

According to Newman (1971:8-9), the idea of culture area is old. Indeed, Herodotus, Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta were pioneers who influenced the idea of culture area. However, “it was during the C19th that culture areas as presently conceived began to take definite form.” Clearly, Onwuejeoguu (2007:9) stated that a culture area is also a short hand way of describing the way of life of thousands of peoples in a whole continent bearing in mind their beliefs, rituals, systems and practices. A culture area is therefore, defined as a geographical area occupied by peoples whose cultures exhibit a significant degree of similarity with each other as well as a significant degree of dissimilarity with the cultures of others. Newman (1971:10) added that we see a culture area as a geographic region in which reside a considerable number of relatively interdependent tribes with similar cultures. It must be noted that the similarity lies in a core of important culture complexes held in common which is called cultural traits.

2.2 The Idea of Culture Traits

Wissler and Herskovits identify distinctive characteristics of peoples of the same geographical regions, such as religious, economic, social, political, linguistic and architectural systems. These individual elements are called cultural traits and when all of them are put together, they constitute a cultural pattern. Cultural traits may be divided into material culture and non-material culture. Material culture consists of all the things that are made by members of a society, such as: buildings, jewellery, machines and paintings. These are all physical objects that are tangible, that is, people can feel and touch them and make judgments about their quality etc. The non-material culture is intangible, or difficult to touch, but they can be observed as they occur, such as speech acts and facial expressions, emotions and habitual traits, language, beliefs and norms etc. According to Wissler, the centre of every culture area holds the core of its characteristics yet due to diffusion and innovation within the culture area, culture traits fade out as people move from the centre to the margins of the culture area where mixing from adjacent centres of other cultures occurs. For instance in Ghana, the distinctive traits of neighbouring ethnic groups that share boundaries with each other see

acculturation and culture borrowing. Also along our three borders, a form of ‘market’ French has evolved with our French neighbours, while inherited characteristics are also borrowed that has influence in the outlying regions. Consequently, Herskovits held that culture cannot spread without man, and if one cannot account for human contacts then the postulation of cultural diffusion cannot be justified. Herskovits warned that we should be mindful not to assume that the boundaries of culture areas show a sharp break between culture areas, because cultures bordering each other overlap. It is equally erroneous to assume that the centre of a culture is also its core (see Herskovits 1930:64ff). The map on page 46 gives us the culture areas of Africa largely borrowed from Herskovits.



Source: Gibbs Jr (1978). Peoples of Africa Abridged. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston

2.3 Herskovits' Classification of Culture Areas

Africa has over a thousand ethnic groups each with their own distinctive cultures that can further be divided into sub-culture areas yet Herskovits (1930, 1962) broadly divided Africa into ten culture areas. Standard classifications for delineating culture areas include: production techniques, physical environment, religious beliefs, linguistic differences and closeness of cultural traits among others.

1. The Hottentot

Location- The Hottentot are found at the southern tip of the continent and their territory has been encroached upon by the white Boers. The Hottentot according to Herskovits (1930:68) are distinct from the Bushman.

Material Culture of the Hottentot

- A herding people
- Premium is placed on cattle
- Hottentot drink milk sweet not sour
- They utilise animals as beast of burden and sustenance
- Their huts are better shelters than the Bushman
- They have a complicated social life compared to the Bushman
- Cattle are given as gifts in marriage to furnish the wedding feast
- They have the ‘click’ sound to their language

2. Bushman

Location- The Bushman is believed to be the autochthonous people of the African continent who occupy the central part of Southern Africa between the Hottentot and the Congo.

Material Culture of the Bushman

- Poor material culture
- They have very early stratum of African cultural life
- Agriculture and herding are lacking
- They are hunter-gatherers
- The dog is the only domesticated animal with which they forage for their food

3. East Africa Cattle Area

Location- This culture area covers the Eastern coast to the Great Lakes region and beyond, where the Bantu and Nilotic tongues are widely spoken. The region is so named because of the great emphasis that is placed on cattle in their social and economic lives. Within this culture area anthropologists identify and indeed isolate

what is called *the cattle complex* which is the major component of their material culture.

What is the Cattle Complex?

There are several behavioural traits arranged around ownership of cattle that collectively define the cattle complex. Indeed the existence of cattle, their place in the life of the owners and their part in the culture of the people according to Herskovits (1926; 1930) are significant. For instance the Masai and Nuer live particularly for their cattle and a number of such traits have been listed below:

- Cattle have an important place in the life of the people in the East Africa cattle area as a means of capital accumulation
- Cattle determines a man's social position and prestige
- Cattle are utilised in ceremonies associated with great life changing events of the people such as birth, marriage, puberty and death
- Care of cattle is the privilege of their owner who often knows each member of his herd by name
- Cattle except for their milk, do not furnish food. They afford social positions and as a ceremonial offering, thus it is through the death of the animals that they are eaten
- Women are forbidden in most of the area to care for cattle

Economic Organization

The issues raised above about the cattle complex capture largely the economic activities in this culture area even though some minor forms of economic arrangements allow them to live a high quality of life than the Hottentot and Bushman.

- Economically clans have plots as family possessions but grazing land is free public good which can facilitate free movement of their herds of cattle. On this score feuding parties may relent to enable their livestock to find pasture to graze.
- The right to work tracts of land for agricultural purposes is recognised
- Food is obtained from the produce of the fields but remains the work of women
- Iron-working and wood-working are pursued by men who specialise in the crafts in the East African area
- The use of bows and arrows are important hunting weapons for protecting their herd against cattle rustling and also predatory animals that could attack their cattle
- Farming takes place with hoes as the main working tools to produce food from the field yet they are not deemed as prestigious as cattle herding

Political Organization

Age-classes are widely spread throughout the East African Cattle area particularly among acephalous societies such as the Masai, Nandi and Kikuyu. Session 6.5 gives detailed discussion of the age set as a governance system.

- Gerontocracy is practiced where prominence is given to age and the older generation play key roles in the governance system and ritual practices of the society
- They have a closely organised political life of a cyclical age grade system where each grade performs specific roles in governance
- In some of the northern “tribes” of the area, chiefs are appointed to rule over a given number of cattle rather than over human beings
- The Zulu have a central authority and a standing army with a formidable military organisation

Social Organisation

- Patrilineal descent system is prevalent within the social structure but in the central tribes such as Wayao the matrilineal belt depicts a trend of matrilocality
- Polygyny obtains and the number of a man’s wives is based directly on the number of cattle that he possesses or is able to command to pay *lobola* or bridewealth
- Dowry must take the form of cattle although other animals and objects may also be given as marriage payments in this culture area
- Land is ordinarily held by the head of the “tribe” in trust for the rest of the people
- Absolute ownership of land is not vested in individuals, but the right to work certain tracts of land for agricultural purposes by given persons is clearly recognized
- The general rule throughout the area is that grazing land is free
- The people live in villages that are centred about the cattle kraals
- Both thatched and mud-plastered houses are found in the culture area
- Houses in the south are round shaped and those in the north are rectangular
- Bantu is spoken south of Lake Victoria to the north where the Nilotic tongues are spoken

Religious organization

- Religion is based on importance attached to ancestral spirits
- The ancestors mediate between the people and the Supreme Being

- Belief in ancestor veneration is a demonstration of implicit ideas of life and death and the hereafter
- There are various rituals that are performed on daily and specific days and events
- Use of charms and amulets for protective purposes is very popular
- Religiously, the use of magic and divination are an integral part of their belief systems

3. West Africa Sub-Area

Location- this is a very small area occupied by the Ovaherero, the Ovambo and the Ovimbunda among others in modern day Namibia.

Material Culture

- They have the cattle complex which serves as economic, social and ritual power
- They have circular kraals to house their herd which is their wealth and ensures health and prosperity
- There is taboo on women not to contact and handle cattle since men are praised by the herd of cattle that they control
- They have clothing and housing differences that make them distinct from the Congo ethnic group, the Bushman and the Hottentot.

4. The Congo

Location- the Congo culture area according to Herskovits covers the vast region of modern Central Africa, including the basin of the Congo River which comprises the dominant Bantu speaking ethnic groups found in Gabon, Central African Republic, Angola, Zimbabwe and Democratic Republic of Congo.

Economic Activities

- The tsetse fly infested terrain accounts for the absence of cattle in this area
- Copious rainfall all year round is experienced in the rainforest which supports agriculture
- The slash and burn method is known in this geographic region
- Shifting cultivation is a known agricultural practice that allows the land to regain its fertility
- They have the art of iron smelting that enabled them to fashion out iron tools and knives for their principal occupations

- Hunting is an integral by product of their agricultural activities due to the variety of wildlife found in the rain forests that encourage poaching
- They have access to the major Congo river and its tributaries which aids in fishing as an economic activity
- There were numerous craft-guilds and the important ones specialized in various trades such as: basketry, wood carving, pottery, tannery, bark-cloth and mat weaving and ironmongery etc

Social Organization

The descent category of the Congo could be described as *cognatic* because whereas the northern belt was *agnatic*, the southern region practiced *uterine* descent.

- The majority of the societies in the Congo area belonged to the matrilineal belt where they practiced matrilineal descent
- The marital residential pattern was uxorilocal especially among the matrilineal Yao of Malawi and Mozambique where the men resided with the family of their wives
- The principle of *matrilineal puzzle* as Audrey Richards (1950) identified among the central Bantu meant that the dominant male in the matriclan had control over the children and not their father since he was seen as an outsider within the uterine group
- Polygyny was an acceptable practice in the Congo area
- Even though payment of bridewealth was important, it was a token which did not make marriages stable because a wife's loyalty was to her brother or the alpha male of the matriclan and not her husband
- They live in rectangular houses
- They use bark-cloth which is a speciality of the Kasai people
- Raffia-weaving is known in the Congo area
- Markets are present and are held at stated intervals
- Barter system and exchange spheres promoted inter-ethnic co-existence and mutual respect

Religious Organization

- They utilised masks in their rituals and ceremonies to represent the ancestral spirits
- Cicatrices are made on their bodies including tattooing for religious reasons, ethnic identity and beautification

- They carve human representations as an important artistic form of their titular deities
- Use is made of human cultural artefacts such as ritual music, communal religious life, and sacrifices in religious worship
- The significance of the charms in the religious life of the people was pronounced
- The secret society is important to exercise religious and jural control of their society
- Ancestor veneration was an integral part of the religious orientation in the Congo area

Political Organization

- The area has also proliferation of political organisations
- There is a combination of centralization of political authority and the segmentary principle
- The Suku people of the Congo region are centralized and have a monarchy
- There were several paraphernalia for the political elite
- The person of the *MeniKongo* the Suku king was surrounded by a number of taboos and was not to die a natural death
- The age grade system was fully utilized to form the warrior class as the legendary Zulu warriors are noted for their bravery and fighting formation
- There were courtiers who assisted the monarch at court while in the segmentary societies the elderly grade held powers of adjudication and political authority

4a. The Guinea Coast Sub-area

Location- this area is located on the bend of the West Coast to encompass modern day West Africa.

Material Culture

- There is a more complex political and social organisation than the Congo area
- Distinctive art is characteristic of the area
- There is intrusion of larger domesticated animals
- There is a presence of bi-lateral system of descent
- The principle of exogamy is practised
- There are striking differences in the languages spoken in this area that show strong tonal patterns

5. The East Horn

Location- it is contiguous to the East African area and stretches to the north-east of Africa

Material Culture

- The age-classes of the Masai and the Nandi are found to the north
- Cattle give way in their sociological significance to other beasts such as the horse and the camel
- Language groups found are Danakil, Somali and Galla
- Women care for cattle in the east horn
- Use is made of animal skin for clothing
- The influence of the spread of Islam in this portion of Africa has left its trait on the culture of the east horn
- Social organisation is patrilineal
- Iron working guilds are lowly occupations

6. The Eastern Sudan

Location- the eastern Sudan region is situated at the heart of Africa just above the Equator.

Material Culture

- They are nomadic people who live in a hard desert region
- Their culture is organised around their livestock ensuring that their beasts are properly fed and watered
- Their religion is Mohammedanism
- Strong paternal culture exists
- Milk of the camel is the principle means of sustenance
- Camel is given as the marriage-gift
- There is general use of clothing compared to the neighbouring regions
- The people being mostly nomadic live in tents
- The head of the group is the Sheikh who controls the movement of the group

7. The Western Sudan

Location- This area lies in the present day Sahel overran by Mohammedanism. It is the area of the great kingdoms such as Benin, Bornu, Hausa, Fulbe and Yoruba.

Material Culture

- A flowering of political organisation ruled by powerful dynasties with rich historical development and internal feuds
- Economic life consists of herding, agriculture and trade
- The linguistic situation is chaotic with divergent languages spoken resembling the Guinea sub-area
- Art is famous particularly the use of terra-cotta and wood-carving

8. The Desert

Location- this sub area comprises the present day Sahara desert.

Material Culture

- The major population that reside here are nomadic
- The art of trading is very popular in this sub area
- Camel and horse breeding are major occupations in the region and used for economic purposes
- The Mohammedan religion received its major intrusion from here and remains the dominant religion

9. Egyptian Area

Location- the Egyptian area encompasses the Nile basin of present day Egypt.

- Egypt is distinct from the rest of Africa due to its Hamitic cultural practices
- The sub region is the cradle of African civilization
- Its ancient history, pyramids and architecture remain the proud heritage of the African historians and Egyptologists

2.4 Marquet's Classification of Culture Areas

According to Awedoba (2002:36) the delineation of culture areas is the scholars synthesis based on geography and certain broad similarities in cultures and modes of livelihood. However, Marquet (1972) who attempted a similar exercise to define groups of relatable cultures called them Civilisations. He listed the following:

- i. Civilisation of the Bow
- ii. Civilisation of the Clearings
- iii. Civilisation of the Spear
- iv. Civilisation of the Cities
- v. Civilisation of the Attic
- vi. Civilisation of Industry

i. Civilisation of the Bow

The civilisation is to be found in parts of the Congo, Equatorial Africa, and the Kalahari Desert and in Southern Africa. These were hunter-gatherers who depended on their weapons which were the bow to forage and kill game for their livelihoods. The Khoisan/Bushmen and the Mbuti pygmies of the Congo forest belonged to this culture area.

ii. Civilisation of the Clearings

As the name suggests, this culture area covers the agriculturalists that tilled the land by clearing the forest regions and planted their food. Typical among this cultivation is the technique called slash and burn where trees were cut down and burned to provide ashes for fertilising the soil. The basic tools were hoes and digging sticks to grow their crops. Bigger trees and shrubs are also cut down with axes and machete. Unlike foragers, horticulturalists support large permanent villages. The Ashanti, Yoruba and the ethnic groups that sit astride the equator practice this civilization.

iii. Civilisation of the Spear

Civilisation of the spear evolved among pastoralists who had to move about with their herds and therefore needed a handy weapon for protection against wild animals and also against rustlers. Pastoralists live in North Africa and also in East Africa. These herders such as Masai, Nandi, cattle Fulani, the Tuareg and the nomadic Berbers rear such domesticated animals as cattle, sheep, goats, camels etc.

iv. Civilisation of the Cities

Civilisation of the cities is located in West Africa and stretches into the Republic of Sudan. Associated with this culture area is the pre-colonial African cities that thrived in the enclave namely: ancient Ghana, Mali, Songhai empires and the famed Hausa states. The region boasts of a high concentration of people and a higher level of urban life due to the fixed rectangular, rounded and roofed buildings that they built to serve as headquarters for their centralized leaders as well as outposts and satellite towns for security and protection. In most of the civilization of the city, the centre conquered other states and forced them to integrate their indigenous cultures as vassal states with their overlords. Jakpa Lanta the Gonja king is known to have applied such a policy.

v. Civilisation of the Attic

Marquet (1972) referred to the storage of grains and tubers in attics for preservation and wealth accumulation. This type of civilization was very important for horticulturalists in particular since they needed to store their

harvests for self-preservation. By so doing the stores in their attics could last them all through the year for food supplies and still also have seed grains and tubers for replanting. The Sahel regions known for their grains, cereals and tuber crops included the Wolof, Futa, Mende, Vai and Konkomba horticulturalists.

vi. **Civilisation of Industry**

This type of culture area according to Marquet (1972) is not based on a natural region, but associated with places of densest population as the modest towns and cities of Africa demonstrate. The application of indigenous technology fuels industry that contributes to an improvement in the quality of life. Ironmongery is a known industry for production of digging and cutting tools. Pottery and production of artefacts and statuettes from terra cotta among the Yoruba can be another example. The gold weights of Ashanti attest to the gold production industry and the craftsmanship that made it a rich and proud people.

2.5 Importance of the Study of the Concept of Culture Areas

1. It promotes interest in the study of spatial geography of the distinct cultures of the African continent.
2. It throws light on the dominant themes around which different peoples organise their livelihoods particularly food producing systems and their sustenance modes.
3. It is an organisational framework for reconstructing culture history, pointing out cultural borrowing that takes place among allied people who live in close proximity and share knowledge and technology.
4. The study of culture area is also important since it points us to the principles by which the varied peoples across the continent adapt to their environment.
5. It is a strong basis for embarking on comparative studies of the African region so that specific policy interventions can be fashioned out to meet peculiarities and differences of a diversified continent.
6. Anthropologists, geographers and students of tourism can better appreciate the nuances of people's cultures and thereby promote peaceful co-existence and culture exchange.

2.6 Critique of the Study of the Concept of Culture Areas

1. There is no consensus on what constitutes a culture area since Herskovits who mapped out nine cultural areas in Africa changed his classification several times. As a concept, it suffers from constant re-working and realigning of existing

classifications which were indicative of the problems inherent in this concept. For instance, Murdock (1959) proposed eleven main culture provinces with 48 sub-divisions and all these make the study of the topic tedious.

2. The concept of culture area has been criticised for atomising culture into disjointed elements and traits rather than seeing culture as a composite whole made up of various elements.
3. The third critique of the concept of culture area is that it appears to be static and without historical depth, and consequently, does not represent cultural reality. Critics argue that it is wrong to conceptualise culture as a mere agglomeration of traits and on that basis isolate one region from the other.
4. The concept does not acknowledge and explain the role of migration in culture borrowing and co-existence of coterminous institutions.
5. That creation of culture areas remains very subjective since delineation would vary according to what elements of the total range of culture area employed and how they are ranked in significance. Indeed, it is pointed out that it is too narrow in scope and neglected to take into account world wide differences among peoples even within the same sub area.
6. That culture areas tend to mark important internal variability, and as a result give an impression of homogeneity which is not in accord with reality. For instance Herskovits' East African Cattle Area lumps the Masai, Nuer, Nandi and other pastoral groups with many non-cattle oriented people like the Kikuyu, Yao and Ngindo together.
7. The concept of culture areas lacks dynamism, and therefore, does not cope with contemporary society because a re-classification in the present era will undermine previous analysis.

Since ancient times, explorers have promoted cultural integration because through migration, specific cultural traits have been exchanged and new ones emerged out of them. Herskovits and Marquet have delineated culture areas of Africa and this has aided in the expression of cultural diversity. However, the main critique of the concept is that it atomises cultural traits whereas culture is a composite whole.





Self-Assessment Questions

Exercise 2.2

- 1) Explain the views of the Diffusionists, Evolutionists and the Sociological schools.
- 2) What is your understanding of cultural trait?
- 3) Give two differences between the material cultures of the Hottentot and the Bushman.
- 4) What is the cattle complex?
- 5) Mention two differences between the civilization of the bow and the civilization of the attic.
- 6) State three problems associated with the study of the concept of culture areas.

SESSION 3: MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS IN AFRICA

This session is designed for the student to know the major ethnic groups in Africa, given that there are hundreds of ethnic groups speaking different distinctive and cognate or mutually intelligible tongues. The aim of this session therefore, is to promote linguistic tolerance among students of anthropology and culture.

**Objectives**

By the end of the session students should be able to:

- a) define the concept of an ethnic group;
- b) identify the major ethnic groups of West Africa;
- c) mention the major ethnic groups in East Africa;
- d) compile a list of the major ethnic groups in Southern Africa;
- e) describe the ethnic groups in North Africa; and
- f) explain the relevance of studying the major ethnic groups of Africa



Now read on...

**3.1 Introduction to Ethnic Groups in Africa**

According to Agorsah (2010:69) “the names of ethnic groups in Africa are based on the languages of the groups or the names they have been referred to in the past by neighbours.” It is evident also that the names of two ethnic groups may be spelt the same but may not have any relationship. However, there were misspellings of some of the names depending on whether those who wrote them were Arab, English, French, German, Belgian or Portuguese as the case may be. On their part, Bernard and Spencer (1996:7-21) examined the diversity of the African continent and divided it as East, Nilotc, Southern and West Africa. And across such diversity there were also different ethnic groups which Mbiti estimated at around 3,000 with distinct cultures and practices. Refer to map on page 63 taken from Gibb Jr (1978).

Mbiti (1997:99) identified the following broad classification of races in Africa:

- i. The Bushmanoid peoples who are generally short in stature with light yellowish skins. They can be found scattered in areas of eastern and southern Africa.
- ii. The Caucasoid peoples are medium to tall in stature, with light to medium and pink skin. The Caucasoid can be found around the extreme southern, north-eastern and northern Africa.
- iii. The Mongoloid group were formerly occupiers of Madagascar but over the years, they have intermarried and intermingled with other Negroid peoples.

- iv. The Negroid or the black race can be found in almost every part of the continent which they have occupied for centuries. They range from medium height to very tall stature, have skin colour of the shades of black to dark brown and brown.
- v. The Pygmoid are found in present day central equatorial Africa region, but they are predominantly in D. R. Congo. They have very distinctive features; since they are very short and have light, brown yellowish skin.

Essential Notes about the Ethnic Groups of Africa

- a. Most of the indigenous peoples of Africa have lived for hundreds of years and continue to live in units or clusters within their ethnic group.
- b. Each people have their own distinct language and dialects which can be mutually intelligible across neighbouring international borders.
- c. The ethnic groups tend to occupy geographical regions which they call their homeland.
- d. The members of an ethnic group often claim ownership of a common cultural density which includes history, myths of origin, national leaders and national consciousness of oneness.
- e. Each ethnic group has distinct social and political organization for governing their society.
- f. Members of an ethnic group are bound by a common worldview comprising their religious beliefs, rituals and practices.

3.2 The Major Ethnic Groups of West Africa

West Africa

West Africa is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the south-west and by the Sahara desert to the north including Chad and Cameroon. The sub region consists of eighteen formerly independent states speaking three official languages of European origin, namely English, French and Portuguese. The Francophone countries are Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, La Cote d'Ivoire and Benin. Guinea Bissau and the Cape Verde Islands are the two small Portuguese speaking countries in West Africa which belong to the Lusophone bloc. An interesting phenomenon in West Africa is the religious polarity of the area namely; the pronounced north-south divisions such that southerners are more likely to be Christians, especially those on the coast and northerners likely to be landlocked states practicing the Islamic religion. West Africa is home to a number of major ethnic groups that include but are not limited to the following: Wolof, Serer, Jolof, Agni, Bête, Baule, Mossi, Dogon, Akan, Mole Dagbani, Mende, Temne, Vai, Kru, Kpelle, Ewe/Fon, Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa, Fulani, Nupe, Itsekiri, Bamum and Tiv.

3.3 The East African Ethnic Groups

East

In the narrowest sense, East Africa includes the three modern republics of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda where Kiswahili is predominantly spoken but due to the presence of the British, English is also an official language. The Luo, Gikuyu, Kalenjin, Kipsigis, Nyamwezi, Abaluyia, Chagga, Nyakyusa, Sonjo, Ngoni, Sukuma, Bunyoro, Ankole, Buganda among others live here. Also found in the south east is Rwanda while Burundi is often described as part of central Africa. Again, due to the colonial influence of Belgium, the official language of Burundi is French and that of Rwanda are French and English. The three major ethnic groups in Rwanda and Burundi are the Twa, Hutu and Tutsi. The entire east Africa area is called the African Great Lakes region because lakes Victoria, Albert, Kivu and Tanganyika are located there.

Nilotic

According to Bernard and Spencer (1996:7-21) the term Nilotic is used in various senses

- i. It describes the geographical region of the upper Nile basin where the Nubians and Copts live.
- ii. It refers also to a set of cultural traits shared by some of the peoples of the upper Nile that includes also others in an area extending beyond the Nile basin into Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.
- iii. Nilotic also describes a language family in a classification of languages such as
 - a. Western Nilotic, eg. Dinka, Nuer and Luo who reside around the confluence of the Bahr el Ghazel and the Nile.
 - b. The southern Nilotic speakers are Nandi, Pekot and Marakwet who live south to the present day Tanzania.
 - c. The eastern Nilotic speakers are the Bari, Lotuko and Turkana such as the Masai peoples of Kenya and Tanzania.

However, there are several ethnic groups along the river Nile and to the east and west of the great river that have yet to be included namely: Harari, Oromo, Shilluk, Sara, Serer, Tigre, Tigrinya, Zaghawa, Zala, and Zande etc. Besides, central Africa has a myriad of Bantu speakers who are divided into various ethnic groups such as: Baongo, Lugbara, Ngombe, Bemba, Bira, Budya, Chokwe, Chopi, Dumas, Garwe, Gbanzari, Hera, Iwa, Kgatla, Khasonke, Qwaqwa, Kung, Mbuti, Tsonga and Ndembu among others.

3.4 The Major Ethnic Groups in Southern Africa

Southern Africa

I believe that you are very much aware that South Africa is a country but Southern Africa is a region inhabited by a variety of ethnic groups including the majority Bantu-

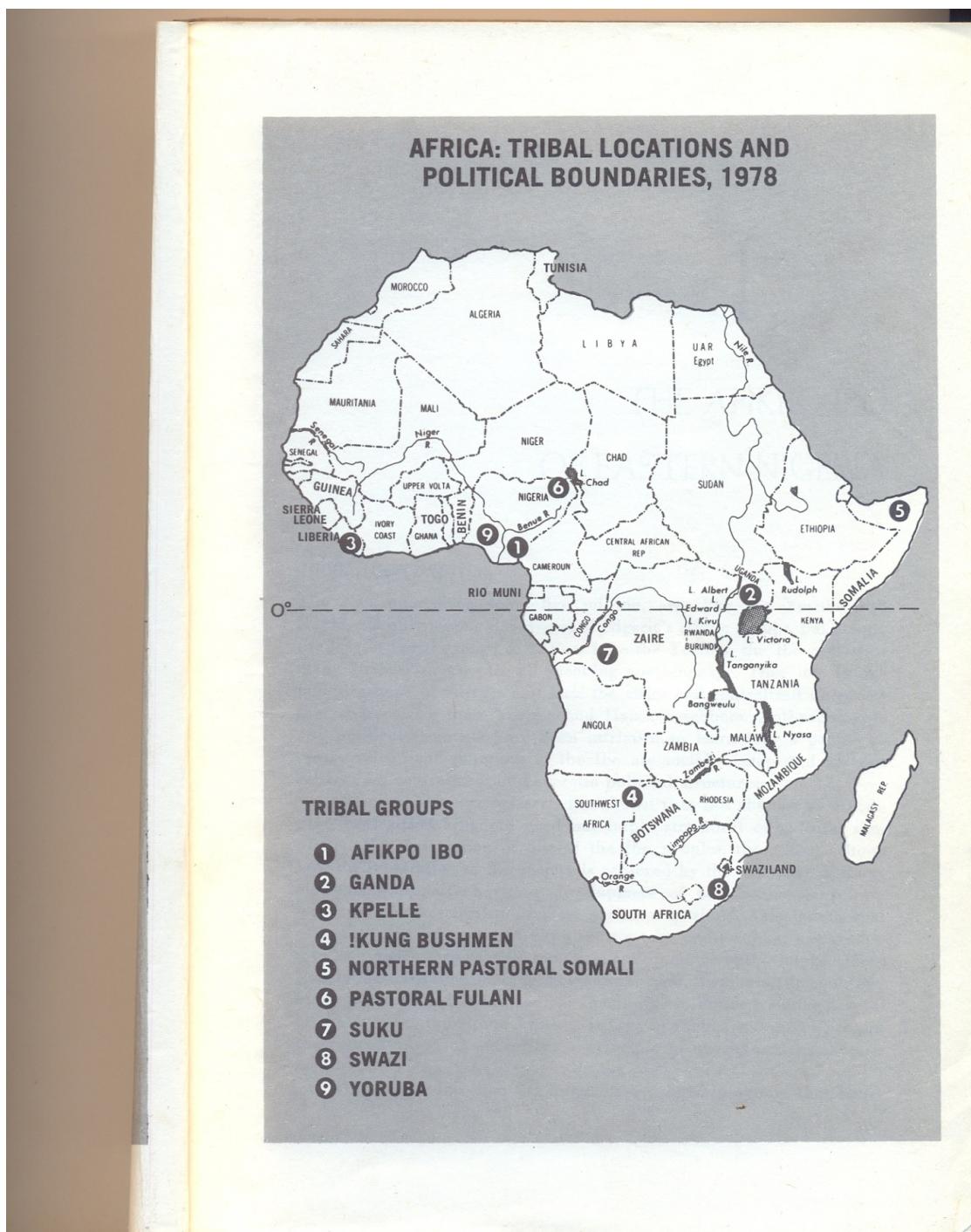
speaking peoples and peoples of European and Asian origins. However, the major ethnic groups in southern Africa comprise: the San (Khoisan) speakers, Zulu, Xhosa, the Sotho-Tswana, Lovedu, Basuto, Swazi, Bemba, Ndebele, Shona, Matabele, Ngwato, and the Yao and Lozi etc.

3.5 The North African Ethnic Groups

In the North Africa region there are a variety of ethnic groups and the majority of the population are of Hamitic origin such as the Berbers, Tuareg and Zanata who can be found in Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. There are also the Saharawi people on the border with Morocco.



Locate ten different ethnic groups on a map of Africa and present it in class for discussion. Refer to Mbiti, J. S. (1997). African Religions and Philosophy. Oxford: Heinemann. pp iv-v; and 98.



Source: Gibbs Jr (1978), Peoples of Africa Abridged. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

3.6 Relevance of Studying the Major Ethnic Groups of Africa

1. It portrays the cultural diversity of the African continent which thereby encourages students of anthropology to promote and at the same time respect individual ethnic differences.
2. It shows the vestiges of colonial rule, particularly the partition of Africa. The study thus enables us to identify the ethnic groups that were homogenous or a single people that have become fragmented and placed under different national boundaries with different nationalities.
3. It allows us to preserve endangered ethnic groups and their languages from possible extinction.
4. An academic study of ethnic group identity devoid of ethnocentrism promotes self pride and cultural nationalism.
5. Another relevance of studying the major ethnic groups of Africa is that it is a major means of preserving the cultural heritage, norms and practices of the named groups and societies for posterity.

SUMMARY

In this session we have taken a look at some of the major ethnic groups found from the four corners of the African continent. After reading this session, students will have the advantage of identifying the major ethnic groups that they read about in the ethnographic literature. Besides that, they can eschew ethnocentrism and learn something about the diversified cultural traits of other ethnic groups.



Self-Assessment Questions

Exercise 2.3

1. Mention the foreign countries that have influenced the ethnic identities of Africa peoples.
2. Draw a map of West Africa and locate ten ethnic groups on it.
3. Explain the various senses in which the adjective Nilotic is used.
4. How will you distinguish Southern Africa from South Africa?
5. What are the major ethnic groups of North Africa?
6. Explain three reasons why the study of the major ethnic groups of Africa is relevant.

SESSION 4: RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, RITUALS AND PRACTICES IN AFRICA

The religious beliefs, rituals and practices of the peoples of Africa have been of profound interest to western anthropologists, missionaries and scholars. In recent times, anthropology of religion has generated academic interest and it is read in modern universities. The Department of Religions and Human Values at University of Cape Coast, for instance, offers such opportunity for students, church leaders and men of faith to explore their religious orientation. This session therefore, introduces students to the indigenous religious experiences of peoples of African descent.

**Objectives**

At the end of this session, you will be able to:

- a) distinguish between beliefs, rituals and practices of African peoples
- b) identify the various supernatural powers in traditional African religion
- c) mention some ritual events and why they are performed
- d) list some of the major traditional practices associated with African religion
- e) state the relevance of beliefs, rituals and practices of African religion
- f) explain some challenges that confront the study of African religious beliefs, rituals and practices

You may now proceed to read on...

**4.1 Introduction to Beliefs Systems, Rituals and Practices of Africa**

Belief systems, rituals and practices remain the focal point of anthropology of religion for two reasons. First, they define the core of the religious aspirations of the people and second, they show the manifest aspects of their religion. People who are steadfast in their religion demonstrate their beliefs by engaging in the rituals and other practices and thereby, become conscious of living the tenets of their faith. Meanwhile, Mbiti (1991:29) wrote that “every African people have a set of beliefs and customs that are essential part of religion”. Some aspects of the belief strands of African people are the Supreme Being, the worldview, lesser gods, ancestor veneration and spiritual powers.

a. The Supreme Being

According to Mbiti, all African peoples believe in God. How this belief in God, originated we do not know even though belief in God is an ancient one. There are possibly three sources for such a belief in God. First, is people's reflection on the universe, second, people's realisation of their own limitations and third, people observing the forces of nature (Mbiti 1991:45-47). However, early writers on the anthropology of religion in Africa created what I call the problem

of God in Africa. What is the problem of God in Africa? Basically, it is the idea that “*Africans did not know God before contact with early Christian missionaries.*” For instance, Emil Ludwig is quoted by Smith (1966) as saying; “How can the untutored African conceive God?” Also, A. B. Ellis asserted that “the Akan idea of god was a loan-god introduced by missionaries.” In my view, four reasons actually account for this problem. First, there was no direct worship of God, second, there were no temples dedicated to the worship of God, third, no priests were devoted to the worship of God, and fourth, traditional religion is non-scriptural to evangelize a monotheistic God. Indeed, Idowu (1973) espoused the view that God is everywhere; therefore, it would be wrong to attempt to confine God to a temple and worship him. However, Okot P’Bitek (1990:41-46) chastised African scholars in the following words: “instead of carrying out systematic studies of the beliefs of their peoples, and presenting them as the African peoples actually know them... the African scholars, smarting under the insults from the west, claimed that African peoples knew the Christian God long before the missionaries told them about it. African deities were selected and robed with awkward Hellenic garments by Jomo Kenyatta, J.B. Danquah, K.A. Busia, W. Abraham, E.B. Idowu and others.”

The Supreme Being in Africa

The concept of the Supreme Being is known among African peoples and this idea reflects in various names and attributes given to him. Indeed Smith (1966:4) wrote that “in Africa, names are not mere labels, but often express qualities for which the owners are conspicuous.” Idowu (1973:150) added that, “the names by which Deity is called in Africa are descriptive of his character and emphatic of the fact that he is a reality and that he is not an abstract concept.” Clearly, this view by Idowu defeats the statement attributed to Emil Ludwig that “Deity is a philosophical concept which savages are incapable of framing” (Smith 1966:1).

If so, how do we know about God in Africa?

- a. **Names of God in Africa**-Across the African continent, the name of the Supreme Being is known even though some of the primary meaning has been lost, due to contact with foreign religions. For instance, Idowu believes that the Yoruba God name *Olorun* owes its popularity to the early Christian missionaries and thus prefers the old *Olodumare*. The Ibo name of God is *Chuku*, the Akan of Ghana call him *Nyame*, and the Konkomba God name is *Uumbwar*. Also, the Gonja call God *Eboone-Nyame*. The Mende God name is *Ngewo* or *Leve*, and the Ewe/Fon call God *Mawu*. The Bemba God name is *Leza*, and while the Zulu call God *Nkulunkulu*, the Acholi know him as *Rubenga*, and the Nuer and Luo God name is *Jok*.

- b. **Attributes of God**-the Supreme Being has several attributes- (i) Creator and controller of the universe who caused into being all the other spirits who serve him as sons, intermediaries or executioners, (ii) Spirit-associated with wind, air, transcendent, immanent and ageless, (iii) The Supreme Being is one and universal and does not share his unique position, (iv) God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, invisible and immortal (v) God is real and identified with the sky and sun, rain and thunder, He is described as an elder and merciful and (vi) God is male and female in some societies example *Mawu-Lisa* (Ewe/Fon) and *Ataa-Naa* (Ga).
- c. **God and worship**- God is ultimate recipient of prayers and cultic attention.
- d. **God and morality**- the Supreme Being is judge and a pure king the ultimate judge who abhors evil and punishes the wicked or evil person.
- e. **God and sacrifice**- the spirit powers are half-way houses through whom sacrifices pass to God the ultimate recipient.
- f. **Proverbs**-another proof of the existence of God in African thought is the use of proverbs in which his name is mentioned repeatedly.
- g. **Theophorous names**- these are names that have God as the root that demonstrate the reality of God for example the common Ewe/Fon name *Mawuli* meaning God is there. The Urhobo name *Oghenedjakpokohwo* means God directs the person, Igbo, *Ebere-Chukwu*, God's mercy, the Nuer name *Gatkwoth* means Son of God (see Idowu 1973:150).
- h. **Everyday speech**- in the normal everyday speech of Africans even as they respond to greetings and questions about health and physical condition they make references to God.

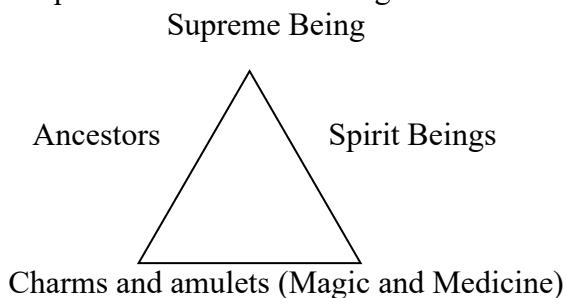
4.2 Belief in Divinities

The belief in the supernatural powers demonstrates an understanding of the worldview of African peoples that propel their religious faith. The divinities find home in West Africa and in Yoruba religion alone, Idowu (1973:165) identified 1,700 lesser gods or nature gods. They reside in natural objects such as the earth, sea, trees, mountains and other natural habitats including animals. The divinities have generic names across the continent: *abosom* (Akan), *vodu* (Ewe/Fon), *orisha* (Yoruba) and *chi* (Igbo). Awolalu and Popamu (1979:73) categorized West African divinities into three: (a) the primordial divinities-they were with the Supreme Being since creation, (b) deified ancestors-humans who lived extraordinary lives and became deified as gods and (c) those that were personification of natural forces and phenomena. The divinities have several attributes that define their nature. First, they were brought into being by God, second they derive their power from God and therefore dependent on him, and third the lesser

gods have their own local names, example *Jakuta* (Yoruba), *Sokogba* (Nupe), *Ala* (Igbo), *Ta Kofi* (Akan), *Sagbata* (Ewe/Fon), *Dugbo* (Mende) etc. The divinities have personal taboos and priests dedicated to their worship. Also, they may be male or female with distinct powers which they exercise on behalf of the Supreme Being either as messengers/sons, intermediaries/lieutenants or executioners.

Belief in Spirits

Parrinder (1969) wrote that Edwin Smith suggested that a pyramid or triangle was an apt illustration of the order of the spiritual forces as in the figure below.



Meanwhile, Idowu (1973:173) referred to the spirits as “apparitional entities which form separate category of beings other than the divinities.” The spirits have personal attributes and they may choose to make themselves manifest to humans, even though, they cannot be touched in the physical sense. Spirits are ubiquitous for example, ghost spirits, dwarfs, forest monsters and witches.

Belief in Ancestors

Mbiti (1991:70) classified human spirits into two viz: the long dead (ghosts) and the recently dead or living dead. These represent the ancestors who are believed to have had direct physical kinship with kinsfolk even when they have left the physical realm to reside in the invisible spirit world. The point is that even though they are dead and gone they still live in the memory of their families, relatives and friends for up to four or five generations (Mbiti: op. cit. 77). The belief in ancestors reflects in their different names for instance: *Baba-nla* (Yoruba), *Ndichie* (Igbo), *Tovodu* or *Nesuhwe* (Ewe/Fon), *Madzimu* (Ndebele) and *Nsamanfoz* (Akan). The living-dead are close to their homes (some are buried in the homestead) and above all show interest in the daily activities of their surviving families. In some respects, the ancestral spirits are believed to come back to be reborn, and receive cultic attention and veneration through the pouring of libation. They are believed to visit surviving relatives in dreams to warn, heal or disclose the sources of family heirloom to them. Their capacity to punish evil also makes the ancestors the guardians of morality. In African life and thought, ancestor hood is contested because it is not everyone who dies that is qualified to be designated as an ancestor. The basic qualifications include but not limited to the following: (a) lived an exemplary life on earth, (b) lived to a ripe old age (c) married and had children (d) died of a good death or while fighting in battle. This means that violent deaths

through accident or suicide, lunacy, dropsy, leprosy and epilepsy disqualified an individual from becoming an ancestor (see Opoku 1978:36).

Charms and Amulets

There is belief in the inherent powers of charms and amulets as the various names for this art abound: *Suman* (Akan), *Gbo* (Ewe/Fon), *Ogun* (Yoruba) and *Ogwu* (Igbo). The charms and amulets are man-made protective pieces which early writers described as *juju* or *fetish*. According to Parrinder (1969:160-164), they can be divided into: personal protections, public protections and offensive charms.

Personal protections- This form is made from plants, animal horns or human parts and sown together into a pouch. The belief is that the charms can generate supernatural forces to protect the individual. These charms are deemed to be powerful depending on the objects used to prepare them for example: lion's teeth, crocodile claws, snake skin etc. There are variants of these charms which come as bangles to be worn around the wrist or upper arm, and as talismans to be worn around the neck or waist. The rings worn on the fingers are believed to warn the person of impending danger. Some of these protective charms may be eaten in a ritual meal, while cicatrices are also made on the body and black powder rubbed into them. The rest is eaten to give the individual protection from harm for which the charm has been prepared. Invariably, these charms and amulets have multiple purposes as they are believed to protect against gunshot wounds, attacks with cutlasses, evil magic and also to make a person invincible etc. There is evidence that some of these talismans have Qur'anic verses written and sown together (Parrinder op. cit.:161).

Public protections- In most African societies, charms are found at entrances and forecourts of the palace which are meant to protect the chief from evil magic. Indeed, Busia (1968) mentioned that as soon as a chief was enstooled, his person became sacred and became immune from evil magic. Individual households also keep some charms in their rafters and on their doorposts. These charms are prepared by ritual specialists who have various names. The medicine man in Yoruba society is *Onishegun*, meaning owner of medicine and the Igbo call the medicine man *Dibia*, which also means the doctor of medicine. *Amawato* the medicine man or plant observer is the Ewe/Fon name, while the Akan call the one who prepares the charm *Sumankwafo*. Crossroads, fields and public places are often protected so that calamity of any form may not befall the community. At state durbars these medicine men are expected to conduct thorough search of the event grounds for hidden destructive charms, while scanning the faces for potential evil doers to neutralize their powers.

Offensive charms- The use of offensive charms or black magic is often the work of evil magicians or sorcerers who either undertake personal vendetta or prepare them for their clients for a fee. Also known to abound is love potion, which can be used by a man to win the love and attentions of a woman who does not desire him. A common one is

to write the name of the woman in red ink and tie it up with black thread. As the sorcerer ties the piece of paper, he mentions the woman's name and recants the wish of the client who has sought his assistance. Often, offensive charms require that body parts of the victim is provided and this explains why shaven hair, cut nails, umbilical cords of new born babies, urine, spittle etc are carefully disposed of in traditional society. The fear is that if it ever fell into the hands of an evil person, they could be used to cause the person harm.

4.3 Ritual Events and Performances

According to Ray (1976:78) in Africa, ritual behaviour is a way of communicating with the divine for the purpose of changing the human situation. It is for this reason that Agorsah (2010:33) asserted that, "ritual is religion made effective; it is the practical relationship with supernatural power." Mbiti (1991:131) described ritual as a set form of carrying out a religious action or ceremony. Ritual is a means of communicating something of religious significance, through word, symbol and action spoken in seriousness and solemnity repeatedly every time that ritual is done. Ray emphasized that, ritual has two dimensions (a) what ritual says and (b) what ritual does. The two dimensions however, work hand in hand because what is said within the context of the ritual is what is practically done to achieve the results of the ritual performance.

Kinds of Rituals

There are different kinds of rituals that are performed in African religion from cradle to the grave. I have adopted the typology of Mbiti (1991:134-143) because of its clarity.

- i. **Personal rituals**-these ritual events can be captured under the life cycle rituals or rites of passage that mark the various life transitions namely birth, puberty, marriage and death.
- ii. **Agricultural rituals**-these include all the rituals performed in connection with the various stages of the agricultural activity. A paramount event under this section is rain-making rituals that ritual experts and religious personalities employ to boost agriculture in areas with scanty rainfall. Other important rituals include those performed during planting and harvesting.
- iii. **Health rituals**-rituals that are performed to cure illness happen to be most important in societies that have challenges of access to health care. Beyond performing rituals to heal the person who is ill, there are also preventive rituals that ultimately protect the individual from falling ill.
- iv. **Professional rituals**-the level of economic activities engaged in by Africans are many and it is important that steps are taken to ensure that not only are the endeavours successful, but accidents may be avoided. These rituals also help to minimize tensions and conflicts, while also taking control of the terrain within which the professional endeavour takes place.

- v. **Festivals-** the basic aim of traditional festivals is to relive the rituals of the past to promote social cohesion and continuity. In African societies that have traditional festivals, there are series of preparatory rituals to commence the events, concurrent rituals as the celebrations are on going and end of celebration rituals to climax the entire festivities.
- vi. **Coronation rituals-**these basically concern all the ritual performances that are performed specifically when a traditional ruler dies and appropriate steps are taken to find a worthy replacement. During this period, there are secretive rituals and public rituals all of which serve the purpose of ensuring calm in the interregnum, and also continuity, so that law and order could be promoted in the society.

Rituals have their social importance in any given society even though there are also gender restrictions associated with ritual performances and obligations. For instance, menstrual blood is believed to be so powerful as to render the most efficacious charms less potent. Therefore, apart from post-menopausal women, a number of ritual specialists who are men will not admit women to enter places deemed to be sacred. Further, ritual specialists are also expected to abstain from sexual intercourse the night before the performance of very important rituals. The view is that, after the sexual act, one must wash the body with soap to regain their state of purity before appearing in the presence of the spirit beings to perform such rites. Some authorities believe that, some ritual events involve human sacrifice and women may not have the capacity to witness the immolation, let alone keep the entire ceremony secret, consequently, they are not admitted to the rituals. We can conclude with what Ray (1976:100) wrote that, “the primary function of African ritual is to “control” the world according to symbolic archetypes and thereby bring about renewal in the way that men desire”.

4.4 Traditional Cultural Practices in Africa

The practice of magic and medicine-According to Agorsah (2010:54) “the practice of magic seems to have been in Africa since prehistoric times, and several centuries before the earliest known civilizations.” He maintained that it may be the need for protection to keep away lightning and thunder, to prevent injury and death, to enable a successful hunt, or to enable a person to conjure an object from nowhere that brought about magic. Idowu (1973:190) defined magic as an attempt on the part of man to tap and control the supernatural resources of the universe for his own benefit. Magic operates on the principle “my will be done” thus through the use of certain gestures, words, or acts, separately or together, people got control over the secret powers of nature. Religion on the other hand operates on the principle “thy will be done.”

4.5 Types of Magic

Sympathetic/Imitative magic- this type of magic operates on the principle of similarity or sympathy, that there is a hidden affinity or relationship between the sick person and the remedy. Consequently, if an act is performed on some object based on the principle of the attachment, it will yield the same results on the person who is under the spell of the magician. Thus porcupine quills or eagles talons may be used as an imitative weapon to fight evil forces on behalf of the magician's client.

Contagious magic- the principle of this type of magic is that 'things once in contact with each other would continue to interact even when the contact is broken.' Consequently, the footprints of individuals, money handled by a person etc can be used to cast a magical spell. Have you noticed that radio and television evangelists ask their listeners to touch the TV set or radio as point of contact for their deliverance?

Homeopathic magic- the underlying principle of this type of magic is that 'like produces like', consequently, a magical spell cast on an image of a person will have the same effect as if it were the same person. It remains the stock in trade of evil magicians who can mould an effigy of a victim and by pricking parts of the body of the object; the impact is felt personally by the person.

Medicine

According to Idowu (1973:199), in Africa, the basis of medicine is religion which comes directly from the Supreme Deity. Also, the indigenous word for medicine, magic and medicinal herbs were applied mutually. Awolalu and Dopamu (1979:240) stated that medicine is the art of using the available forces of nature to prevent diseases and to restore and preserve health. Medicine comes in two forms: (a) prophylactic which is the preventive aspects of medicine and (b) therapeutic is also that aspect of medicine that is curative. Medicinal practice in Africa also operates on the principle of similarity and a cure may be provided by the use of a remedy resembling the disease itself. Taboos govern medical practice while the art also makes adequate use of articles of material value based on the ingredients prescribed for a cure. Also, medicine as an art form can be learnt and traditional practitioners have trainees who go through a regime of training and later pass out to practice their art.

Relationship between Magic and Medicine

I have adopted the basic distinction between magic and religion put forward by Awolalu and Dopamu (1979:240) because they are concise and exhaustive.

- (a) Medicine and magic both arose out of man's urgent need to control his/her basic limitations in the limited environment that they found themselves
- (b) Ritual performances such as sacrifices, abstinence from eating certain foods are common elements in the practice of magic and medicine

- (c) Both magic and religion are dependent on spiritual beliefs since they are connected with the supernatural forces that control the mundane and spiritual world
- (d) Incantations are used to subjugate the prevailing forces or diseased condition and bring them under the control of the magician or traditional medical practitioner. These two elements of magic and medicine make them useful in dealing with the daily concerns of the African.
- (e) The practice of magic and medicine seem inseparable in some societies because they have the same name and are controlled by the same divinity.

4.6 Relevance of Beliefs, Rituals and Practices of Africa

1. It describes the religious diversity of African peoples and thereby gives meaning to the African's quest for meaning in their daily life events and activities.
2. It shows that the nomenclature, African Traditional religion is a misnomer since there can be no such uniform basis for such a description.
3. The plurality of religious beliefs, rituals and practices do not only deepen the religious space of African societies but contributes immensely to religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence. This comes about through the show of mutual respect for the religious preferences of each other.
4. Again, it enables us to understand religious syncretism that uses traditional religious beliefs as scaffolds to build their foreign religious doctrines.
5. It allows us to preserve some religious beliefs, rituals and practices that Africans used daily in their vocation, medicinal practices and moral training and socialization of children. This helped to instil in the growing youth abiding African values.
6. Identification with traditional religious beliefs, rituals and practices promotes academic research into the efficacy of these systems for replication and incorporation into alternative medicinal practice.
7. Knowledge of the rituals, beliefs systems and practices of the great forebears of Africa promotes self-pride and religious nationalism.
8. It is a major means of preserving the African religious practices, heritage and worldview for posterity.

4.7 Challenges Confronting African Beliefs, Rituals and Practices

1. The impinging religions that have the mode of evangelization such as Christianity and Islam have converted large swathes of the African population and cut them off from their traditional religious practices.

2. Educated Africans see the performance of African religious beliefs, rituals and practices as idol worship and have consequently spent time and energy to condemn them.
3. There are some aspects of the religious beliefs and practices that are immersed in deep superstition, ritual sacrifices and irrational logic that compel non adherents to distance themselves from them.
4. The belief systems, rituals and practices of African origin cannot face the competition from the evangelizing faiths bequeathed to us from our colonial past and that in itself is a major challenge for its internal propagation. In contemporary Ghana, the numerous tele-evangelization and missionary zeal of so-called men of God have made the propagation of indigenous beliefs, rituals and practices of African religions unattractive.
5. Fifth, due to lack of interest from family members and in some instances outright refusal to pass on their knowledge, many ritual experts have died with their knowledge and the exploits of a few charlatans have cumulatively compounded the fear and suspicions associated with the religious beliefs, rituals and practices of traditional African religion.
6. The place of science and indeed the germ theory to explain away situations that in the past would have been attributed to supernatural phenomena remains the most critical challenge to the survival of the religious beliefs, rituals and practices of traditional Africans.

SUMMARY

This session has examined some of the beliefs, rituals and practices found among the varied peoples of Africa. Besides the session has taken into consideration the relevance of these beliefs, rituals and practices not only because they deepen the religious space of African societies but they help also to preserve African heritage. The session ends on the note that science and the germ theory in particular that explain away life situations has affected the belief systems of African peoples.

Self-Assessment Questions**Exercise 2.4**

- 1) What do you understand by the problem of God in Africa and what reasons will you assign to explain that problem?
- 2) Why are the divinities described as nature gods?
- 3) Explain the different kinds of ritual performances stated by Mbiti.
- 4) State three common elements of magic and medicine as they are practiced in African societies.
- 5) Give and explain any three reasons why the study of African beliefs, rituals and practices is a worthwhile endeavour.
- 6) Mention and explain any three challenges that confront the researcher who wishes to study the beliefs, rituals and practices in Africa.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear
- difficult topics if any.

SESSION 5: AFRICAN TRADITIONAL POPULAR CULTURE

As we have noted up to this point, Africa has a huge population and a myriad of cultural elements that may defy classification due to the commonalities as well as differences that exists between and within the various societies. Despite these initial observations, it should be possible to allude to African traditional popular culture as session five seeks to do. Different forms of African traditional popular culture exist and this session will focus on only three viz: dance, drama and festivals. African music will be studied in Unit five.

**Objectives**

At the end of session five you will be able to

- a) define African traditional popular culture
- b) list the types of African traditional dance forms
- c) identify the various forms of drama in Africa
- d) enumerate the characteristics of the major African festivals
- e) state the relevance of the study of African traditional popular culture
- f) show the effects of social change on African traditional popular culture

Please read on now...

**5.1 Definition of African Traditional Popular Culture**

E. B. Tylor (1871) defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Also, Sarpong (1974) said that “culture is the integrated sum-total of behaviours that have been learned and have been passed on from one generation to another in an uninterrupted succession.” Thirdly, Ember and Ember (1982) described culture as “a set of learned beliefs, values and behaviours generally shared by the members of society or population.” Culture can be defined as *the sum total of the way of life of a people including learned and acquired behaviours and traits that enable them to master and live in their society in a more meaningful way*. Meanwhile, social scientists believe that only humans have cultural learning, which depends on symbols that have particular meaning and value for the people who share the same culture. The process through which cultural traits pass on from one generation to the next is called *enculturation* by anthropologists or *socialisation* by sociologists. The four modes of transmission of culture are: observing, listening, talking and interacting with people.

Write out the various ways in which the four modes of transmission of culture manifest themselves in your society. Write out this exercise to be discussed in class.



Culture has distinctive features and the views of Kottak (2004), Sarpong (1974) and Levinson and Ember (1996) indicate that: It is learned because we are not born with it, culture is shared by members of the society that created it and culture is symbolic because it has verbal or non-verbal forms. Also, culture is distinctive in nature as individuals master their environment to make their livelihoods; and also culture is mutually constructed through social interactions created by that society. Again, culture is dynamic and according to Sarpong (1974: viii); without a radical revolution it is impossible for society to change its culture or an important trait of its culture overnight. It is for this reason that we say that culture is stable. Finally, culture is utilitarian in function because it satisfies human needs.



What then is African traditional popular culture? Write out your own ideas about African traditional popular culture for discussion in class.

African traditional popular culture

According to Bame (1991:1) the concept of African popular culture is used “to cover African cultural activities in which relatively large numbers of people in African communities are involved in one way or another.” The emphasis lies in the omnibus participatory nature of the activities viz dance, drama, festivals, music, funerals etc. as opposed to magic and divination which are esoteric and remain the preserve of ritual specialists. By the same token the ritual ceremonies performed during the installation of a king in traditional African societies have restricted esoteric aspects that are kept by a few trusted chieftains and ritual experts; however, the public ceremonies and celebrations connected with the coronation are popular traditional cultural activities.

In your view why do a lot of people participate in African traditional popular cultural events?

Bame (1991:2) offered two reasons viz:

- a. The activities are by custom and practice not restricted but open to any number of the people who wish to participate in them. It means that such public events are owed by the whole community and anyone who is in good standing can participate in them by simply complying with the requisites for taking part.
- b. Participation does not impose severe demands on the participants apparently because there may be no cost at all to the individual, otherwise whatever cost may be deemed very bearable and user friendly to the rest of the society.

5.2 African Dance

Dance is central in the life of Africans and as Bame (1991:7) stated “it permeates all their social and cultural activities; apparently because dance is life, a way of thinking, living and communicating.” Dance is an important accompaniment of the *rites de passage* or life cycle rituals involving birth, puberty, marriage and death. African

peoples also dance for recreation as well as other emotive life experiences of joy or sorrow, love and hatred, wartime and peace, sowing and harvesting and more importantly during ritual invocation and divination among others. In African societies dance is gendered as indeed we have female dance forms which were quite distinct from male movements; whereas there are instances that both men and women may also dance together. Also, African dance may often be accompanied with singing, clapping, drumming, and stamping; yet the dance movements and gestures either choreographed or not express thought and practice that may be corporeal or spiritual. Bame (op. cit) goes to great lengths to demonstrate that dance in African societies is learned so that children are taught to achieve proficiency. Finally, traditional African dance is a public good and owned by the society yet adepts can add to the dance forms and make it an economic activity through public performances.

5.2.1 Types of African Dance

- a. **Recreational dance:** these dance forms may be performed for entertainment and relaxation. Some examples of recreational dance are: *Adakam* (Akan of Ghana), *Adoa* (Akan Ghana), *Gobi* (Banda of Ghana) and *Lalba* (Acholi of Uganda).
- b. **War dance:** these were dances noted for war formation and often took the form of phalanxes so that by standing compactly together, they could not be penetrated by the opposing forces. This form of dancing is imitative of battlefield activities such as carrying weapons of war, advance and retreat, crouching, slaughtering and surrender among others. The *Atsiagbekor* dance of the Anlo/Ewe of Ghana, *Fontomfrom* (Akan), *Asafo* dance (Fante of Ghana), the Tutsi war dance are known examples.
- c. **Ritual dance:** According to Mbiti (1991:67-68) “Africans enjoy celebrating life therefore when people meet together for public worship they...dance...which may last a whole day or even several days.” These may be engaged in by the devotees/mediums/dancing dervishes or the individual supplicant. Some examples of ritual dance are: *Damba* (Mole Dagbani Ghana), *Kundum* (Nzema Ghana), *San* trance dance (Bushman of Western Botswana), *Akɔm* dance (Akan of Ghana), *Abosoo* dance (Akan Ghana), *Zande* beer dance (Sudan), *M'Deup* of (Senegal), *Bakweri* Elephant dance (Cameroon), *Turu* harvest dance (Tanzania). Also, secret societies across West Africa such as *Zangbeto* (Porto Novo), *Egungun* and *Oro* (Yoruba Nigeria), *Mmo* and *Ekpo* (Ibo Nigeria), *Poro* and *Sande* (Sierra Leone) are ritual dances that also had entertainment value.

5.2.2 Social value of African Dance

Bame (1991:32ff) discussed the social functions of African dance under general and specific:

a. General functions

- opportunity of individuals to demonstrate their expertise in the creative art of dancing
- builds self esteem since an adept dancer is admired by onlookers
- dance gestures communicate thoughts of love, geniality, goodwill, group solidarity and security
- dance serves as a mechanism of public speech and social control because some dance gestures may be deemed to connote insult, insinuation, impertinence, lasciviousness, or provocation which may meet with social disapproval

b. Specific functions: These can be manifest or intended and easily recognizable (overt) and latent concealed, unintended (covert).**Manifest functions**

- entertainment value
- dance and supplication in ritual dance brings blessings from the spirit beings
- ritual specialists and devotees are able to communicate with the gods when they are possessed for instance in the Akɔm dance of the Akan of Ghana
- dance as an integral aspect of worship in syncretic churches in sub-Saharan Africa
- dances associated with killing wild animals are intended to protect the soul of the hunters from being harmed by the spirit of the animal

Latent functions

- Love dance gestures allow for the expression of sexual intent and public flirtation among the youth in socially approved ways.
- Traditional dance forms promote harmony and discord within the same context of a performance which is always latent.
- Ritual dances have curative as well as cathartic effect on the supplicant and other participants who are revitalized through the divination processes.
- The war dances latently recall the traditional history and war efforts of that society.
- Africa traditional dances that are recreational in nature also heighten group identity and social cohesiveness in the entire community.
- The rigorous nature of most traditional African dance forms promote personal aerobic movements that culminate in healthy living.

5.3 African Drama

The origin of the word drama is Greek and means “a thing done” or an enactment which people enjoy after seeing it. The etymology of theatre which is also a Greek word means “a seeing place.” According to Beckerman (1970:20) “drama occurs when one or more human beings isolated in time and/or space present themselves in imagined acts

to another or others" (cited in Bame 1991:47). A formed definition of drama therefore must embody the following elements: ideas of enactment, one or more actors, imagined that is constructed or imitative representation or stories, with or without music and dance purposefully to entertain audiences. From the discussions so far, it is apparent that dramatic elements abound in Africa festivals, funeral celebrations, ritual ceremonies, dancing, storytelling, and other daily activities of life.

Is there an African drama?

A typical example of African drama is the comic Concert Party epic that originates from Ghana even though other genres have been developed in other African societies. Examples are: *Okumkpa* play (Eastern Nigeria), Yoruba Folk Operas/Theatre Parties (Nigeria), *Kote Koma Nyaga* (Sierra Leone) and *Gemsbok* play (Khomani Bushman) among others. Bame (1991:56) asserted that four stages are discernible in the performance of comic plays.

1. The musical prelude that precedes the main event is not lengthy, rather it is supposed to entertain the audience and complement the play.
2. The 'comedies,' or 'stagings' or 'joking' is the second stage where a series of skits, playlets and 'one man stand up comedies' and jokes are performed on life events to whet the appetite of the audience for the actual play.
3. The third stage is the actual play which is often introduced with a prologue by the narrator who announces the title of the play. He also calls on the audience to follow the narrative and draw their own conclusions. It must be added that these comic plays are didactic because they often end up with moral lessons for the audience. The themes are sometimes adaptation of biblical stories, historical events, everyday domestic struggles, polygynous relationships and the step-mother syndrome. Other important themes are the plight of orphaned children, greed and social evils that plague the society. It is known that some members of the audience see their own life story on stage and moved by their emotions express themselves by giving money to the actors on stage.
4. The fourth element in comic plays is the concluding music which overall prolongs these concert party events for close to six hours.

There is characterization in the comic plays to depict the characters in the play. Costumes play an important role in the comic plays, and whereas the jesters induce laughter with their dressing, the actors also assume costumes commensurate with their roles. Life style events are vividly depicted to show reality of the situation they enact. At this stage of our discussions; we can support the place of traditional African drama with the following statement from Bame (op. cit:59) that "the ingredients of the enactments and representations are "linguistic content, plot, several interacting characteristics, specialized scenery, costumes and less importantly music and dance."

Social Functions of Comic Plays

Manifest functions

- The first is the entertainment value of comic plays performed for the community or paid up audience.
- Audience participation in the African dramatic pieces is total and this heightens expectations while providing feedback to the performers through applause and shouts of disapproval for poor presentation.
- It is a medium of public information as some of the themes address social disharmonies and how to correct them holistically.
- The African dramatic performances portrayed aspects of the cultures of the societies in which they were set therefore they presented the audience and participants with a cultural reality.
- The use of satire in comic plays to mock members of the community allows the audience to do introspection by engaging in self correction of their own anti-social behaviour.

Latent functions

- The comic plays and dramatic performances fulfil basic psychological needs because they enable people to live with their personal worries thus by associating with the plot of the drama they succeed in releasing their pent up emotions and stress.
- The audience learn life experiences from the dramatic forms and use the lessons to solve real life situations that they might encounter.
- The dramatic forms help to reinforce African culture and its values.

5.4 African Festivals

According to Mbiti (1991:141), there are many occasions when festivals add to the grandeur of both personal and communal rituals in Africa. We all know and have participated in traditional festivals in our respective towns and villages and can therefore mention as many of them as possible. *Fetu Afahye* of the chiefs and people of Oguua traditional area is known for its international acclaim on the global tourist map.

What is a festival?- Busia (1962) wrote that “there are seasonal occasions when in addition to offerings and prayers to ancestors, there are elaborate ceremonies involving rites of purification, drumming, dancing, singing, of the recital of tribal history and the reaffirmation of the values, the tribes shares and cherishes.” Bame (1991:72) stated that these seasonal and elaborate ceremonies involving entire African communities constitute African traditional festival. From the foregoing, traditional festival can be defined as “the periodic ritual re-enactment of the past as a guide to the future.”

Types of Traditional Festivals

- a. Harvest festivals
- b. Commemorative festivals
- c. Festival for the gods

Bame (1991) also identified religious and recreational aspects as the two main components of festivals. Notwithstanding this, we examine some of the main features of major traditional festivals in Africa as discussed below.

Features of major traditional festivals

- There is a historical core of all the major traditional festivals
- There is a mode of reckoning the time for the commencement of the major traditional festival
- There is a ban on noise making or eating of the new crop at least a month to the commencement of the major festival.
- There is ritual cleansing and purification of the entire community during the preparations for the major festival
- There is mourning of the dead and firing of musketry during the celebration of major festivals
- There is drumming and dancing and general conviviality during major festivals
- There is a durbar of chiefs, renewal of allegiance and payment of tribute to the overlord
- There is fund-raising in aid of development projects
- There is divination to find out the prospects for the coming year
- There is thanksgiving to crown the celebrations

Students should endeavour to describe any major festival that they have witnessed bearing in mind the above features. Even though all of them may not be applicable to one major festival, the majority of them apply and should inform any significant discussion.

**Social Function of Traditional Festivals**

- i. Thanksgiving for successful end of year and for bumper harvest
- ii. Stock taking and making plans and projections for the ensuing year
- iii. Renewal of allegiance to overlord and payment of rent
- iv. Family reunion and giving in marriage, settling family disputes
- v. Re-enactment of tribal history and passage of ethnic heritage
- vi. Conviviality and participation of tourists
- vii. Income generation during the entire festival period and beyond as business deals are made during the period

Manifest Function

- The physical celebration of the traditional festival enables people to see the material culture of the people being made manifest.
- It is a show of unity and group solidarity to see the retinue of chiefs and sub-chiefs paying homage to their overlord during the celebration of the traditional festival.
- Settlement of clan and family disputes further promotes peace and mutual co-existence among its members.

Latent functions

- Indigenes who live in urban centres look up to the festival period as an opportunity to visit home and possibly get married, manage their investments or supervise the build of their houses.
- Imposition of different levies on residents and non-residents ensure that there is enough money mobilized to embark on development projects at home.
- Ethnic pride in the traditions and cultures of the traditional area is the reason why friends are invited during this period to celebrate the festival with the indigenes.

5.5 Relevance of African Traditional Popular Culture

1. It describes the diversity of African traditional popular cultural events from the perspective of the people who own those activities.
2. It is a means of providing the indigenous people of the society the opportunity to participate and make meaning out of their daily life events.
3. It shows the varied traditional recreational activities available to people of African descent that allows members of a community to share group solidarity.
4. The plurality of traditional popular cultural events deepen our understanding of the indigenous knowledge systems of the African societies that own them.
5. The latent and manifest functions of the African traditional popular cultural events enable the participants/audience to overcome their fears, control their psychological and emotional problems and thereby get relief from the stress of daily living.
6. It is an opportunity to make economic gains through training of interested people and also the public performances to a paying audience.
7. It affords opportunity to social and cultural anthropologists to do primary research in African traditional culture so that they can track the effects of social change on these cultural practices.

5.6 African Popular Culture and Social Change

- a) The aspects of these traditional art forms that are not written down have been lost through the process of oral transmission.
- b) There is discontinuity of these live traditional drama and comic plays and their place has been taken by recorded versions of the same genre under the new titles Ghanaian Movie and Nigerian Movie videos that are very popular on all the television stations in the country today.
- c) The preservation of traditional drama is largely attributed to the efforts of the School of Performing Arts University of Ghana, Legon, the Department of Theatre and Film Studies and the Department of Music and Dance, University of Cape Coast, all of who train students in cultural art forms and dance of African origin.
- d) The epic celluloid film ‘I Told You So’ by Lord Bob Cole, the book ‘Dilemma of a Ghost’ by Ama Ata Aidoo and the works of Kwabena Nketia, John Collins, Ephraim Amu etc have all gone a long way to define African traditional popular culture.
- e) The youth of today have devised an amalgamation of indigenous Ghanaian music into a new genre called Hiplife and contemporary popular dance movements Azonto and Al Qaeda (Ghana) and Alinco in Nigeria.

This session has opened us to traditional art forms that require mass participation of the people in cultural events at the level of the community either as actors or participants. Three traditional popular culture discussed in session five are dance, drama and festival. It is known however, that these artistic performances have both manifest and latent functions that the audience/participants understand from their own cultural context.

**Self-Assessment Questions****Exercise 2.5**

- 1) What do you understand by the concept African traditional popular culture?
- 2) Write the three types of traditional African dance forms and give examples of each.
- 3) Why are traditional African dramatic forms described as didactic?
- 4) Give three features of a major festival known to you.
- 5) Write three reasons why we should study African traditional popular culture in tertiary institutions?

- 6) In which three ways has social change affected African traditional popular culture?

SESSION 6: AFRICAN GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

Up to this point we have had a clearer understanding of the African continent and the various culture areas into which it has been divided by scholars. Clearly, such diversity will also show in the ethnic groups and their beliefs, rituals and practices and more importantly, other cultural events that receive mass participation by the people. In session six, we shall learn about the traditional governance systems found on the African continent prior to colonial rule.



Objectives

By the end of the session you will be able to:

- a) explain the nature of African political systems;
- b) identify the political systems found in Africa;
- c) mention the features of acephalous societies;
- d) describe the features of a theocratic society;
- e) discuss the age grade system and their functions in Africa; and
- f) state the features of a centralized state



Now read on...



6.1 Introduction to African Political Systems

The term governance applies to the exercise of power in a variety of institutional contexts, and according to Kuper and Kuper (1996:347) governance refers to the process of political management which embraces the normative basis of political authority, the style in which public affairs are conducted, and the arrangement of public resources. Kuper and Kuper (1996) maintained that three terms that were central to most definitions of governance are: accountability, legitimacy and transparency. Olaniyan (1982:33) wrote that the range and variety of political systems found in traditional African societies defy attempts at definitive classification into types of political organization. Also, Onwuejeogwu (1992:115) said that the traditional political systems in Africa are different from other societies because the systems have developed in areas with different cultural and historical settings. Further, Arhin (1985:1) wrote that political organization describes the various degrees of power and the levels at which it is exercised within an autonomous political area. In my view, a political organization defines the nature and functions to be performed by the political society over a definite territory to generate internal peace.

6.2 Classification of African Political Systems

In Evans-Pritchard and Fortes (1940:xiv), Radcliffe-Brown wrote that a political system is ‘that part of the total organization which is concerned with the maintenance or the establishment of social order, within a territorial framework, by the organized exercise of coercive authority through the use, or the possibility of the use of physical force’.

Political systems therefore allow us to deal with law on one hand and wars on the other. The three classifications of political organizations made by Evans-Pritchard and Fortes (1940) are as follows: (a) those societies that had states or specialized political authority, (b) those societies that did not have states and also called “stateless societies” or acephalous or uncentralized political authority and (c) those with fused kinship and political organization. Bohannan (1963:272) asserted that the threefold classification made by Evans-Pritchard and Fortes (1940) missed one step in the analysis and he went ahead to give a wider description of some types of political organization as follows: (i) those societies that had states, (ii) those without states or stateless societies-acephalous, (iii) societies with political functions taken over by the extended family, (iv) those whose political functions were based on the clan or lineage, (v) the societies whose political organization was controlled by means of kinship groups and (vi) finally those that control their society by means of non kinship groups. There were also theocratic political systems which operated on the basis of a religious authority and not secular order.

6.3 Acephalous Societies

The Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus of the English Language (1993) defined acephalous as “having no head”. Radcliffe-Brown (1940: xxi) called them “stateless societies.” Acephalous societies are societies without a head or political centralization or authority therefore, the relations of local groups to one another are seen as a balance of power maintained by competition between them. These societies all had segmentary lineage systems which served as political units. According to Barnouw (1971:145) segmentary lineage systems were patrilineal tribes lacking centralized political organization. Consequently, the segments which make up the society were not ranked in a hierarchy but were roughly equivalent duplicates of one another. In these ‘tribes without rulers’, the lineage was a political unit, having collective responsibility in blood vengeance where a good deal of feuding goes on between lineage groups. Meanwhile, Beattie (1964:145-149) distinguished four types of uncentralized societies in Africa: (1). Hunter-gatherers of co-operating groups of families example South African bushmen and pygmy peoples of central Africa. (2). Societies headed by formally appointed village councils, for instance the Ibo and Yako. (3). Societies that are politically controlled by an age set system, for example the Masai and Nandi of East Africa. (4). Societies where political functions are effected through groups organized in terms of unilineal groups, example the Tallensi of northern Ghana, Baluhya of Kenya and the Lugbara of Uganda. Other examples of uncentralized societies are the Nuer and Dinka of Nilotic Sudan, Konkomba of northern Ghana, Tiv and Mandari of Nigeria, Amba of Congo etc. Middleton and Tait (1958) give detailed discussion of acephalous societies or tribes without rulers in specific African states.

Features of Acephalous Societies

1. Lack centralized authority; therefore, political relations between local groups were controlled by holders of statuses in age-set and age-grade systems in which political authority was vested. Among the Turkana and the Nuer who were organized into age-sets, every man knew whom he ought to behave and treat with respect as his senior due to the system of gerontocracy that operated in the society. Also, among the Igbo and Yako, village councils and associations held political power within their various segments.
2. There were no codified laws yet a code of justice existed that may be direct or indirect penal sanctions to ensure and provide just satisfaction for injuries. For instance, as Lucy Mair (1963:19) noted in some Kenyan ethnic groups the code of ethics justified 'lynching' of a heinous offender by the whole community as punishment.
3. They had institutions for settling disputes and quarrels between individuals but these may not be in the form of courts. For instance, among the Tiv of northern Nigeria, market judges were instituted to settle conflicts in the market whereas, among the Nuer and Mandari, elders were invited to arbitrate. The Nuer in particular had a ritual head called the leopard skin chief who used threat of curses to ensure compliance to his intervention to sue for peace in the matter of disputes.
4. These societies also lacked administrative machinery and their political organization comprised a few lineages and their heads. Thus Onwuejeogwu (1992:116) wrote about the Tiv that each lineage was organized from top to bottom in a single, embracing genealogical scheme. Accordingly, Barnouw (1971:198) wrote that in a segmentary lineage system the segments were also the political unit banding together to protect their collective interest and survival as a group.
5. The master-subject relationship was down played; indeed these societies were described as egalitarian and men of prestige had to earn their statuses. In Igbo society, everybody strived to attain status, and wealth was the index for such status acquisition. Among the Tiv, witchcraft accusation was used to bring successful men to equal footing as their counterparts. The egalitarian basis of Nuer society implied that the man of the earth or leopard skin chief had no powers of coercion neither was he a chief in the exact sense but a ritual specialist with wider influence on the people.
6. Agnates came together to fight to seek revenge or right a wrong within the polity. Consequently, Mair (1963:17) wrote that if a man was wronged, his lineage supported him in seeking redress by force and when they got tired of fighting they invited an influential man to mediate between the two sides. The waging of the feud or 'regulated vengeance' in acephalous societies allowed a section of the community with the approval of the rest to fight another section

because its member had injured one of their members. The feud or self help supported the law against culpable homicide or killing in acephalous societies.

7. In acephalous societies they did not have a standing army but the age group system existed and particular age grades were organized as the warrior group and they had the role of defending the society. The youth after their initiation were conscripted into the fighting force and given the responsibility to perform various roles to defend the social integrity, economic interests, livelihoods and survival of the entire group.
8. Acephalous societies by their segmentary nature covered very small areas comprising very few villages. This feature meant that units in acephalous societies were small in nature and so they did not act in common. The Nuer, for instance, were divided into sections each with its own territory which acted independently. Consequently, the rights to land, livestock, women and other resources were vested in unilinear descent groups and each lineage head or chiefdom controlled family lands.

6.4 Theocratic Society

One of the political systems identified in pre colonial Africa was the theocratic society. Theocratic political systems are social and political systems which operate on the basis of a religious order. This means that public office holders are from the priestly class who maintain that their power and influence is from their priestly functions rather than from secular ones (Gadzekpo 1997:64). The known examples of theocratic political systems were such societies as the Tallensi, Guan, and the Ga Adangbe people. In such societies under consideration, political officers derived their legitimacy from the religious beliefs and practices of the people. The priestly Wulomo class in Ga society and Tindaana, or land priest in Tale society were the interpreters and intermediaries between the community and the gods. In theocratic societies the priest-ruler exercised extensive powers and influence in various aspects of state. They settled all land disputes and misunderstandings in the community by recourse to their moral authority as priests. These priests performed acts of pacification, purification and supplication on behalf of the people and for the prosperity of the community. The offerings that were made also ensured the fertility of the soil and the crops thereby promoting the well-being of the people. It is noted by Gadzekpo (1991:65) that it was as a result of British influence that the chief of Ga Mashie was elevated to the position of a paramount chief such that since colonial times, all the various divisions of Ga namely Ga Mashie, Osu, La, Teshie, Nungua and Tema now have chiefs, otherwise they had been politically organized around the priestly class represented by the position of the ‘Wulomo.’ The position and authority of the land priest in northern Ghana were adversely influenced by the British colonial powers.

6.5 Age Grade System

The age grade system occur in their most highly developed form in Africa, and according to the World Ethnographic sample three-fourths of all societies containing age classes are African. Laughlin and Laughlin (1974) maintained that as with many other East African peoples; political authority and the control of wealth...are linked inextricably with age as a determining factor. Evans-Pritchard (1940:288) on his part wrote that the age-set system is socially more significant among the Nuer than among other Nilotic peoples of the Sudan. Beattie (1964:145) added that where an age-set organization exists, it is combined with the allocation of authority on the basis of seniority.

What are age sets?

Age-sets are named corporate groups with leaders and fixed membership recruited between defined times and for a specific period and purpose (Middleton and Kershaw 1972:35). The basic rule is that men born within a certain number of consecutive years are admitted into one set to be closed after a determined number of years. After the closure, recruitment to a new set begins which Beattie (1964:146) added included circumcision and other bodily mutilation. These sets are named and members remain in the same set all their life bound by a network of reciprocal rights and obligations, maintaining close and friendly contact throughout their lives. Bohannan (1963:149) also wrote that age grades are categories of people in the same general position in the life cycle, but they do not form a system because they release their members into the different age-grades or status-grades individually independent of the age-set as a whole. Consequently, age grades are not to be confused with age sets which may also be called age classes; the latter being composed of a number of subsets of circumcision years. According to Kottak (2002:255; 2004:468); to understand the difference between an age set and an age grade one has to think of a college class, the Class of 2007 and its progress through the university. The age set would be the group of people constituting the class of 2007, while the freshman, sophomore, junior and senior years (in the Ghanaian context Levels 100, 200, 300 and 400) would represent the age grades. In each circumcision year, the age set is given a name, the names chosen referring to some outstanding event of the year. The initiated group received also emblems and colours. All the youths who have been initiated in a successive number of years belong to one age-set. At any given time age-mates occupy clearly distinguished grades en masse such as junior warriorhood, senior warriorhood, junior elderhood and senior elderhood, with specific rules associated with each grade (Beattie 1964:146). Age-sets are not blood-pacts or covenants yet men circumcised together stand in very close relationship and injury to one another is a serious magico-religious offence (Middleton and Kershaw 1972:36). A visiting age-mate is given access to one of a man's wives for the night, the choice being made by the wives concerned. Hoebel (1972:476) writing about the Nandi of Kenya said that a married age grade man was expected to extend the hospitality to his home to any visiting classmate. Hospitality to a Nandi meant wife lending, a gratuity

he would deny to all who were not members of his own age set. Beidelman (1963:334) attempts to explain the practice by saying that the main purpose of such an agreement was to establish a close relation between two persons not related through kinship or membership in one neighbourhood or village.

The literature is replete with features of the age-set system

- It was a well regulated school with a period for opening and for closing
- Groups of youth circumcised together acquire their own name which makes them distinct
- Age-mates help each other in corporate work; payment of fines and avenging of insults
- The age-sets are identified by particular colours
- Training involves ordeals and a series of rites and rituals
- Their training involved seclusion for long periods
- Most societies used the period of initiation to circumcise and socialize the youth
- There is well coordinated order of hierarchy from senior to junior in a timeless order

Organization of the Age Grade System

In several societies, the organization of age set system is cyclical because there are distinct generation-sets which ideally are genealogical and thus succeed each other. Thus when the last of the grades has been phased out, a new one begins with their name. It is known that only one generation set is politically active at any time giving rise to the practice of gerontocracy. This means that the age interval between the age grades is respected such that a particular generation-set could occupy the position of elder or senior for between 25-30 years after which the reins of leadership will be passed down to the junior generation. The oldest age-set with living members within the senior generation-set holds the greatest authority in the ethnic group. The common colours and decorations associated with each generation of set members are also worn by their wives. Likewise, the junior generation is one to wage warfare and defend the lives and property. In age-set organization, seniority is stressed and the senior age-set always take precedence over the junior.

Functions of the Age Grade System

- i. It serves a military function because opening of the initiation school serves as a period of mobilization and recruitment into the fighting force as well as defensive roles of fighting against cattle rustling. As Beattie (1964:147) wrote the quick mustering of armed warriors for pastoralists enabled the Nilo-Hamitic peoples of eastern Africa to protect their livestock.
- ii. The youth who had been initiated and conscripted into the warrior class defend their society against external aggression.

- iii. Socially, the initiated youth went through transformation that prepared them for adult life, as they were taught to cultivate bravery and to bear hardships with equanimity. In time of peace the warrior age-class took part in herding cattle and keeping order in markets.
- iv. The age-sets fought for social justice on behalf of their members.
- v. They ensured speedy delivery of justice by compelling the elders to adjudicate and find out the truth or otherwise of a man's crime.
- vi. Religiously, the retired elders became ritual specialists who performed rites to remove misfortunes in the society
- vii. Economically, there was mutual support of age-classes which helped their members in their economic activities through the performance of joint communal work that derived from very strong loyalties among age-groups.
- viii. Hospitality, solidarity and brotherhood was a hallmark of age-sets which built very strong bonds of identity, especially between individuals who bore the same initiation scars that culminated in wife lending as a form of sacrifice and loyalty.
- ix. Morality was promoted because the warriors had rights in secular matter and they ensured that the uncircumcised youth do not have sexual intercourse at all. Indeed the warrior class upheld sexual morality.
- x. Educationally, the youth during the period of seclusion were given lessons in livelihoods and sustainable living such as farming techniques, craft and tool making, reproductive health education, and history and traditions of the people among others.
- xi. Politically, the oldest age grade performed political functions by holding their magico-religious influence over the society, making decisions and ensuring that these decisions were adhered to according to the norms of their society. Further, they were involved in the arbitration of disputes through persuasion and provision of commensurate sanctions and all these promoted peace and unity in the political space.

6.6 Centralized States

Examples of centralized states are: Ashanti, Buganda, Dahomey, Oyo, Dagomba, Mossi, Swazi, and Lesotho, among others. Unlike acephalous societies that were small dispersed units, some centralized states were large states numbering hundreds of thousands of people with a political head who ruled over his subjects. According to Barnouw (1971:197) the sovereign lived in ritual isolation, held court surrounded by attendants, officials and symbols of office and maintained a harem. He also dispensed justice and was the court of last appeal. The king was often believed to be divine and had the power of life and death over his subjects. Under the king, there was a bureaucracy which collected taxes and supervised corvee labour. The leading ministers formed a council to advise the king. Clan exogamy is practiced in this society, but the king may marry closely related women that keep the ruling line restricted in numbers,

while sisters and daughters of the king are sent as wives to important chiefs, to spread the influence of the royal family. In the case of Ashanti, the rallying point of their unity was the ‘Golden Stool’ which was believed to bear the soul of the nation-state. The Ashanti political system is made up of a hierarchy of heads, from the family at the bottom to the Asanteman Council at the top headed by the Asantehene. The members of Asanteman Council were paramount chiefs in their own right who have pledged their loyalty to and accepted the leadership of the Asantehene as king and overlord. A number of villages were grouped together to form divisions headed by a divisional chief called Ohene. The hierarchy of the Ashanti provided that the various divisions also come together to form the ‘Oman’. Oman translates state and there is an Ohene at the state level called Omanhene which was translated as paramount chief. The political structure of Ashanti is a network of centres of authority that begin from the level of the lineage through the village to the state and ultimately to the confederacy council. The states forming the confederacy constitute the Asanteman Council which was headed by their overlord the Asantehene, who doubles as the Omanhene of Kumasi and king of Ashanti. Beattie (1964:152) mentions also politically centralized statelets or chiefdoms which Edo (2005:78ff) called polycephalous, examples, being the Kpelle of Liberia and Sukuma and Nyamwezi peoples of Tanzania.

Characteristics of Centralized States

1. There is a powerful centralized authority at the centre from where some of his powers were delegated such that there were a series of super-ordinate and subordinate statuses and chiefdoms within the state.
2. There were properly structured judicial institutions with established court systems at the various levels of power within the political structure. Indeed, there were courts at village, division and state with differing levels of jurisdiction such that people could appeal to higher courts to seek justice or enforce a right, duty or privilege.
3. Centralized states had codified system of laws which were enacted and enforceable within the realm by appointed officials and chieftains. In centralized societies, the laws were also accompanied by corresponding sanctions and breaches of these laws were punished with the appropriate fines and penalties. Furthermore, these laws were circumscribed in oaths which made them enforceable in the chief’s court.
4. Administrative machinery exists in a centralized state where officials who exercise delegated authority have defined functions, powers and limitations within the state.
5. The sovereign, be it the king or paramount chief at the centre is vested with economic and legal control over all the lands within his boundaries.
6. The subjects in a centralized state accept and obey the commands of the sovereign.

7. A standing army or fighting force exists that is used in the public interest to bring about stability, example Ashanti, the Zulu and Dahomey.
8. Covered large tracts of land which necessitated the need to have subordinate rulers to ensure efficiency in governance.

This session which is the last in Unit 2 has addressed the traditional governance systems on the African continent, bearing in mind acephalous societies, theocratic societies, age grade system and centralized states. The advent of colonial rule affected some of these traditional political institutions. Despite the effects of colonial rule on the traditional governance institutions and the introduction of modern government, both structures have complemented each other in the modern states of Africa.



Self-Assessment Questions



Exercise 2.6

- 1) Explain the concept of governance.
- 2) List the various political systems found in traditional Africa prior to the advent of colonial rule.
- 3) Give three characteristics of acephalous societies.
- 4) What is a theocratic society?
- 5) Distinguish between age sets and age grades as they are practiced in some African societies.
- 6) With the aid of suitable examples explain three features of a centralized state.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear
- difficult topics if any.

UNIT 3: THE AFRICAN FAMILY

Unit Outline

- Session 1: Introduction to African Family Systems
- Session 2: Kinship and Descent
- Session 3: Inheritance and Succession
- Session 4: Marriage and Divorce
- Session 5: Social Change and the African Family Systems
- Session 6: National and International Laws and the Family

Many social scientists believe that the family is one of the most valued social institutions, considering the role it plays in responding to some fundamental needs of human beings. The fulfillment of the functions of the family however, differs from one society to another. Besides, within a society, time and the dynamics of social change have eroded the importance of family ties and weakened the functions of the family. For indigenous Africans, the family is the most valued social, political and religious institution because it offers a number of opportunities for individuals to participate in community activities and assert themselves as humans. However, it is also the institution that has gone through a number of changes as a result of colonialism, Christianity, Islam, post-colonialism and many more. Many social, political and economic policies are first reflected in the family systems. Therefore, a unit on the African Family is worth studying for understanding many of the dynamics of African societies so that the effects of a policy framework can be analyzed within the family context.

Session one deals with an introduction to the African family systems and the functions the family performs within the social structure. The second session examines kinship and descent. It addresses the basis of relatedness among a group of people. In session three, we take a look at inheritance and succession in African societies. Session four is about marriage and divorce and their effects on family relationships. The fifth session is about social change in the context of the African family systems while session six, which is the last, is devoted to national and international laws and the family.



Unit Objectives

This unit introduces the basic concepts and major issues in family studies. We will examine the family as an institution within the African perspective, including the roles assigned to members of the family, the rights and obligations of the family and its members, and the levels of relatedness among families in a community. By the end of the unit you should be able to:

1. explain some basic terms in family studies such as kinship, descent and marriage

2. explain how social change has affected family systems in African societies
3. analyze the implications of emerging laws on indigenous African family systems.

SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION TO AFRICAN FAMILY SYSTEMS

Join me as we go through session 1 of Unit 3. This unit is titled the African Family; and it is appropriate that we start with an introduction to African family systems. I hope that you can relate many of the issues to be discussed to your own life since they may be familiar to you.



Objectives

By the end of the session, students should be able to:



- a) define the family;
- b) explain the basic terms in family studies;
- c) discuss the types of family;
- d) describe the functions of the African family; and
- e) deconstruct the conceptualization of the African family by Europeans.

Now read on...



1.1 What is Family?

As a typical African you are involved in family matters. How do family matters affect you? You have often heard or seen that other families organize their members differently from the way you organize yours. What are some of the things that you do differently in your own family? Today we are going to learn about the family and some of the terms that are necessary for studying it. Before you start reading, what in your own view, is a family? What roles do families play in societies?



Pause and ponder over the questions above.

On many occasions Anthropologist and Sociologists view family as a social group whose members are related by ancestry, marriage, or adoption and live together, cooperate economically and care for their young members (Murdock, 1949; Zanden, 1993). Others are of the view that family is all about psychological bonds. To them, a family is made up of those who are closely knit together as well as care and respect one another. Assimeng (2006) defined it as “A group of sexually interacting adults and their children who occupy statuses, perform roles and are responsible for the economic, social and religious welfare of one another, especially the children” (p. 31). Crapo (2002) defines family as a group made up of married persons, their children and other relatives who live together or closer to one another, and has responsibilities towards one another. Odetola and Ademola (1985) defined family as a group of people who are bound together by sharing certain beliefs. It maintains its cohesion and solidarity by upholding these beliefs.

- i. What is common about these definitions?
- ii. What are the differences between the definitions?



- iii. How will you reconcile these definitions in your own ways?
- iv. Do your personal views about the family show something similar to those outlined above?

Many Anthropologists and Sociologists are of the view that because society is changing, the notions about family have to change in order to reflect the present situations.



Do you agree? What are the motivations for your stance?

Anthropologists and Sociologists are asking for change in orientation because they have noticed that the benefits associated with marriage are reducing. Many people separate marriage from sexual behaviours so there are many cohabiting male and female households in African societies today. In other words, the couple live together but have not gone through any rituals or legalities that define them as a married couple. In contemporary Africa, marriage is gradually losing its religious significance. Like the situations in other continents, families in Africa, are also breaking apart in the midst of collapse of the support systems that African societies offer to family units.

By the way, are you also involved in a relationship that has not gone through the necessary ceremonies to regularize it?

If so, why have you not performed the necessary rites to regularize the relationship?

Do you know of other friends and relatives involved in such relationships?

Have you thought about the implications of the future on such relationships?

1.2 An Approach to Family Studies

The questions at the end of the previous page and at the beginning of this particular one have social implications that affect many families in Africa. Pause and deliberate on the effects of such relationships on the society. Ensure that your thoughts are not one sided. You may use what is referred to in social studies as the **concentric approach**. The diagram on the next page provides the framework for concentric approach.

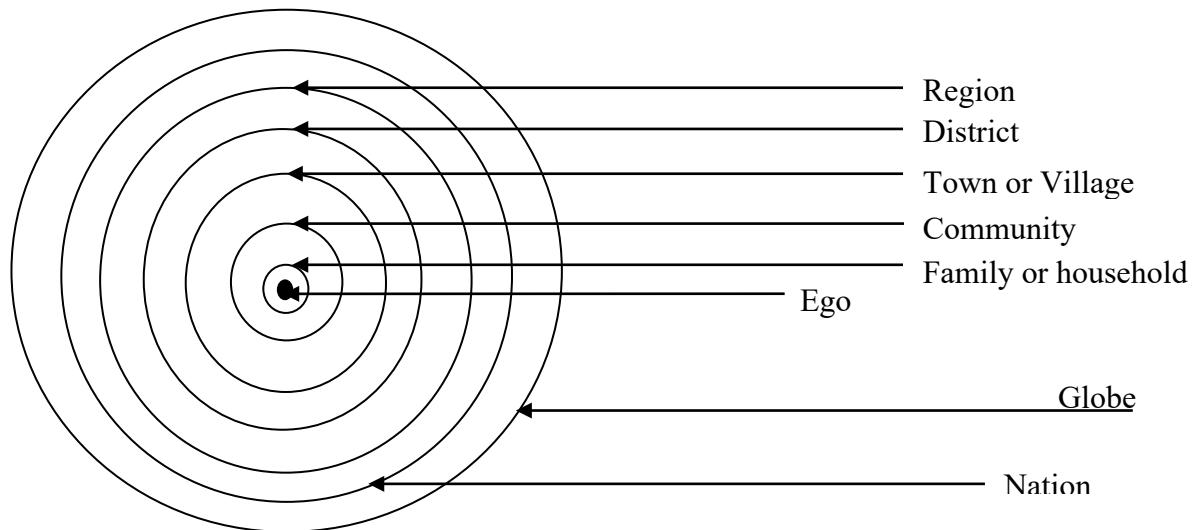


Fig 1. Illustration of concentric approach

With this approach, the individual (Ego) lives within a family or a household. The household is within the community and the community is within the town or village. The town or village exists in a district and the district in a region. Beyond the region is the nation state. All the entities mentioned above are part of the larger society or the world. This approach is very important for analysing a problem from the way it affects an individual to the wider community. It removes the gaps in your analyses. Therefore, the analyses become coherent. You may use this approach for your class discussions and, consequently, apply it in writing your assignments and examinations.

Let us examine many more developments about contemporary families. Many marriages are breaking apart, leading to single-parent households and stepparent households. In recent times, people have advocated gay and lesbian rights and hence such households exist. Many of the recent developments do not include the traditional views of family. Furthermore, many families are shirking their responsibilities such as socialization and care for their members, especially the young and aged ones.

1.3 Types of Families

Nuclear Family

This type of family is made of a husband, wife and their children (usually unmarried ones) who exist separately, are in contact with other relatives but not interdependent on them (Odetola and Ademola, 1985). It begins with a man and a woman coming together to contract marriage. It expands when the couple has children. However, when the children of the couple begin to marry, the nuclear family diminishes. The nuclear family

is also referred to as the ‘elementary’ family. Due to the expansion and diminishing nature of the family, anthropologists and sociologists identify two forms: **family of orientation** and **family of procreation**.



- Which one is the family of orientation?
What about family of procreation?

I will not be too quick to provide an explanation for these forms. Many students do rote learning. They memorise their notes without making the efforts to understand an issue. This is known as “chew and pour” in students’ circles. It is not a good way of learning, so try to avoid this way of learning. Therefore, I will provide the necessary scenarios to help you understand them so that you can determine which is which. Meanwhile, examine the terms and think about which of them will appropriately fit any of these forms.

One is made up of a person (Ego), his/her spouse and children. The other is made up of Ego, his/her parents and siblings.

With the scenarios provided, given that Ego is the principal member of the family, where does Ego have a major role in the formation of a particular form of family? Where is Ego an ordinary member of the group?

For the clues to which of the families is ‘family of orientation’ and which is ‘family of procreation’ let us examine the meaning of orientation and procreation from the situations when each of them is used.

When does a person go through orientation?

You will recall that when you were first admitted into the College of Distance Education (CoDE) you went through orientation. Was the orientation helpful? Why did you go through orientation?

I am sure that you would answer that because you were a new member of CoDE and new to the university system you had to go through orientation. Similarly, a child is a new member of the family and new to the society at large so he/she has to go through orientation. In this case Ego is the new member therefore, the family of orientation is the one in which Ego is admitted as a member.

What is the meaning of procreation?

Procreation means to reproduce young ones. What then is Ego’s position in the family of procreation? He/she is part of its formation. He/she is the one who admits the young ones. In other words, he/she procreates.



You can cross check the answers you wrote down.

In simple terms *family of orientation* is one in which Ego is a new member and is socialized into, while *family of procreation* is the one in which Ego forms in order to produce children.

Do you think that the term procreation is still relevant in describing a type of family, considering that in contemporary times, childbirth has ceased to be the main consideration for marriage in some societies? With this development, another name for the *family of procreation* has developed. It is known as the **conjugal family**.

What is the meaning of the word conjugal?

You may find this out from the dictionary if you have no idea.

With this term, the family centres more on marital relations than childbirth.

Extended Family

Do the descriptions and the terminologies offered under the nuclear family appropriately describe your own idea of a family? If no, what other ideas do you have about the concept, ‘family’? I am pretty sure that you will be thinking about a family that has more membership than what has been described as the nuclear family. Many authors and policy-makers describe this type of family as the **extended family**. The extended Family is made up of a number of nuclear families whose members are bound together, do many things in common and share certain beliefs. They are also related by blood, marriage, adoption or fosterage.

Composite Family

Nuclear family organisation is widespread but not universal (Kottak, 2004). In certain societies it is nonexistent or rare. In others they do not have any special role to play in social organization. In African societies, nuclear families exist but they do not constitute the ideal families. Whereas European families depict more of nuclear ones the African families depict more of what Radcliffe-Brown (1962) called the composite family. This is because whereas European families are potentially monogamous, those of Africans are potentially polygynous. The composite family is therefore made up of a man, his wives and all his children including those whose mothers are no longer in a marital relationship with the man. In a typical nuclear family, there is the likelihood of step children because of the recurrence of marriage in a person’s life. Hence composite families are common in African societies.

Fostering is very common among Africans (Awedoba, 2003; Oppong, 1972) but with the description offered for nuclear families, foster children cannot be part of it. In reality, these are members of other nuclear families because they have not been totally

decoupled from their natal families. Furthermore, when African children get to adolescence they go through rituals relevant for the new statuses that they have attained. In some indigenous societies the change in status results in change of residence; thereby making fostering a major component of the socialization process in Africa. Among the Dagomba, children may leave their parent's house to live with a mother's sister or a father's brother (Oppong, 1972). These relatives regard and treat such children as their own children. Among the Fantse and Ga there are 'male household' and 'female household' (Hagan, 1992; Wilson, 2000, 2011). The socialization of male children often takes place in male households. Though these household units may be designated as 'male' females reside in them. Such families may be described within the concept of composite families.

1.4 Functions of the Family

The functions of the family have been grouped into two based on the pioneering work of Kingsley David (1949). They are essential (primary) functions and non-essential (secondary) functions (Assimeng, 2006:33).

Primary functions

- The reproduction and socialization of children (Assimeng, 2006). The family teaches elements of the culture to its new members (Calhoun, et al, 1997)
- Regulation of sex needs through the provision of stable relationships governed by social norms (Assimeng, 2006). These norms set the limits with regard to who can have sexual relationships with whom (Calhoun et al, 1997).
- The provision of a home, including place of abode, and emotional security for family members (Assimeng, 2006). This also includes the need to protect the young and disabled, especially the provision of basic needs of food, shelter and clothing (Calhoun et al, 1997).

Non-essential functions

- Political aspect such as providing avenue for self-governing units (Assimeng, 2006)
- Performs religious function (Assimeng, 2006, Fortes, 1997)
- Providing education for its members, especially the young ones (Assimeng, 2006)
- Provision of healthcare, recreation, etc (Assimeng, 2006)
- Provides economic base (factors of production, especially land) (Assimeng, 2006; Fortes, 1997; Nukunya, 2003)
- Places its members in social order (Calhoun et al, 1997)

How effectively do these functions apply to the African family?



1.5 Deconstruction of the African Family

In the introductory lesson to African Studies, you learnt about the distortions that have occurred in documenting African history and culture. This calls for deconstructing what has been written and presented and reconstructing ideas that apply to Africa. Today, we will examine some of the ways in which knowledge about African families has suffered distortions. Unfortunately, many of us who have gone through Western education, especially those who have lost touch with the African culture, and those who do not connect what they have learnt in Western education to the indigenous knowledge systems, still describe the African family in inappropriate terms that are also derogatory. I hope that by the end of this lesson, you will appreciate the unique nature of the African family and begin to use appropriate terms to describe it. You will also be able to project the African culture by educating those who have almost lost touch with their roots.

The African family systems have often been described as extended. This was seen in European writings as well as those of Africans. The system is seen to be so because the family unit or household comprises a number of kinsmen and women including relatives of the husband and wife. For this reason a typical African will describe a family to include cousins, uncles, aunties, etc. Wilson (2011) disagreed with the description of the African family as extended. He saw the American or European families to be more extended than those of Africans because at times they describe their families to include pets such as dogs, cats, snakes, etc. In some states in the United States of America, these pets enjoy many rights including inheritance, which among indigenous Africans; will be the preserve of only members of the lineage to determine. Wilson concluded that the description of the African family as extended brings about exclusion. Furthermore, it results in a postcolonial situation of ‘othering’ where the nuclear family is seen as the ideal for which all others must follow. Therefore, laws made based on its tenets while the others such as the lineage system and the kin system become secondary.

It is worthwhile noting that the nuclear family of Africa is woven into the lineage/clan. In some societies, upon marriage, a wife is absorbed into the husband’s lineage and clan. However, in many situations the woman remains a member of her own lineage. Therefore, the nuclear family, when woven into the lineage, excludes one of the married couple from a unilineal descent group.

Who is excluded?

This depends on whether the society is matrilineal or patrilineal. Consider that the father and the mother belong to different clans. If the society is matrilineal, then all the children belong to their mother’s lineage. In that case, the father is considered a stranger because he is the only member of the nuclear family who belongs to a different clan. Try to analyze the situation in a patrilineal society. Let us examine the situations of step

families, single-parent families and single-member families. Can you classify them under nuclear families? What about classifying them as extended families? None of these satisfies the description offered. You will realise that the composite family in the African situation stands out.

SUMMARY

In session one, we have defined the concept of the family and the types that are available in African societies. The section began with explanation of terms associated with family and ended with how to deconstruct the colonial conceptualization of African family systems. We will understand the situation in Africa better by examining other terms in family studies such as kinship and descent in session two of this unit.



Self-Assessment Questions

Exercise 3.1

- 1) How will you define the family?
- 2) What is the concentric approach to the study of family systems?
- 3) List the types of family that you have studied.
- 4) Differentiate between the essential and non-essential functions of the family.
- 5) Give an important reason why deconstruction of the conceptualization of Africa family is important.

SESSION 2: KINSHIP AND DESCENT

As you join me to go through Session 2 of Unit 3, you will learn about kinship and descent. This unit introduces students to the degrees to which they can define their relatedness with other kinsfolk and their relevance in the African family systems which we discussed in Session 1.



Objectives

By the end of the session, the student should be able to:

- a) Explain the terms ‘descent’ and ‘kinship’;
- b) Differentiate between descent and kinship; and
- c) Discuss the importance of descent and kin groups



Please read on...



2.1 Kinship and Descent

From the previous session you learnt that the nuclear family is universal but not ideal. You also learnt about the composite family, which in a way describes African family organization more appropriately. In this session we will move a step further to examine another area which aptly describes the African family systems namely Kinship and Descent. It will interest you to know that the indigenous African family is often organized along kinship and decent groups.

What is Kinship?

Kinship is a group of people who are related by blood (consanguinity) or marriage (affinity). The consanguine are members who descend directly from an ancestor. The affine are those who belong to the group through marital bonds. Consanguine and affine knit societies together as they establish a network of social relations within a community.

Definition of Descent

Descent is made up of people who have a common progenitor (direct ancestry). This brings about the concepts lineage and clan. A lineage is made up of people who trace their descent to a known ancestor while a clan may trace it to an unknown ancestor. A lineage is a subset of the clan and lineage members are more close to one another than clan members. This is emphasized by the Akan maxim that, *abusua tese kwaye. Wo ben ho na wo hunu se dua koro biara si ne sibre*. This aphorism literally means that the clan is like a forest. It is only at a close glance that you will get to know that each of the trees grows in its territory. Nukunya (1969) defined the Anlo clan as “A group of people, male and female, who are believed to have descended in the male line from a common putative ancestor and who share the totemic and other observances” (p. 21). He noted that membership is obtained by birth but strangers and slaves are sometimes

incorporated into it and accorded almost equal status (the only problem being where a stranger's foreign origin is remembered. On his part, Hollman (1969) defined a clan among the Shona of Zimbabwe as people who live together and come together for rituals; though they do not have to necessarily live in the same area. To the Shona people, unity of lineages is important for rituals and social organization of the clan. In simple terms therefore, a clan is a number of lineages whose members collectively trace their ancestry to a progenitor.

2.2 Types of Descent

Unilineal Descent

A descent system is classified as unilineal when descent is traced through a known single line. For instance, it is matrilineal where a group of the people trace their origins through their mothers to a female progenitor. In a patrilineal descent, again people trace their origins through their fathers to a male progenitor. Clan membership is made up of the living the dead and those yet to be born. These three entities are connected through rituals. The members of a descent group are obliged to recognize the authority of the head and other office holders and also adhere to the rules that everyone else subscribes to.

Unilineal descent groups are widespread in Africa and they are the basis of social organizations. However, within the unilineal systems some rights and obligations are accorded to the other parent based on the concepts of filiation and descent. To begin, filiation is the fact of being the child of one's parents. Consequently, when children are related to one parent by unilineal descent, they are related to the other parent by filiation only and not descent. For instance, in a matrilineage like the Akan of Ghana, a child's relationship with the mother is by descent. Consequently, that child is only related to the father by filiation. The opposite also holds true in a patrilineal society. Fortes (1949) called this idea *complementary filiation*. Indeed, the importance of this social arrangement certainly is to bring about social cohesion in the society.

Non unilineal or Ambilineal Descent

It is a descent rule that does not automatically exclude either the children of sons or those of daughters as occurs in unilineal descent groups. People can choose the descent group they join and can also change their descent-group membership (Kottak 2004). The main difference between unilineal and non unilineal descent is that: the former is ascribed because membership is automatic and no choice is permitted, because they are members of either matrilineal or patrilineal for life. On the other hand, the latter is an achieved status, because there is more flexibility in the choice of membership in descent group affiliation.

2.3 Functions of Descent Groups

- Members of the lineage/clan operate as a corporate entity. It is a decision-making body (Schneider, 1968). As a corporate group it has organizational structures; of which the head of the lineage is the key administrator. Schneider noted that for the descent group to carry out its decision-making functions effectively, it must have resources with the power and capacity to mobilize its members. To do this, it must have a social structure so that its decisions can be taken and enforced. Authority must be differentially distributed among its members.
- They have rights and responsibilities. Also, they have charters which sanction the behaviour of their members. Again, they have attributes and symbols: for example names, appellations and praise songs, totems, myths, rituals, etc. that only the members can lay claims to. Some of these also make the clan a religious entity and bring about family cohesion.
- The lineage has legal rights and obligations to perform (Fortes, 1997; Radcliffe-Brown, 1952; Wilson, 2011). It has rights in *rem* and rights in *personam*. The rights in *rem* are the situations where the lineage/clan acts on behalf of its members. For instance when a member of the clan dies, the family head can call on spouses of clan members to contribute their quota to the performance of the funeral. The rights in *personam* are the situations where the clan exacts certain obligations from its members for the welfare of the clan. The rights make it an obligation for members to contribute to the cost of performing funerals for its members. Another example is the situation where members of the clan who are better off take care of those in need. As a result, orphanages and homes for the aged which are very common in Europe and North America do not exist among the indigenous African people. Their development is recent. Furthermore, the rights govern rules of inheritance and succession within the descent group. Under this only members of a clan have the right to determine who inherits a deceased member of the lineage/clan. This often leads to a situation where spouses do not have inheritance rights from each other (Wilson, 2011).
- The lineage is a political entity. For instance among the Akan and Yoruba every clan serves as a political unit within the political system. The leaders in these units constitute the government of the community. They are members of the council of elders who collectively advise the traditional ruler.
- It is a religious entity with rights and obligations. For example, members perform rites of passage, such as birth rites, adolescence rites, marriage rites, funeral rites, etc. Rites of passage are the rituals that a person or a group of people go through in order to move from one stage of life or transition to another. They are also known as life-cycle rituals which van Gennep (1960) referred to collectively as *rites de passage*. The clan has definite rituals that it performs so that its living members will be in communion with the dead ones, especially those who have led valuable lives and are therefore considered as

ancestors. Clans/lineages have major roles to play during the annual festivals of a community. Each clan has a totem, which members are under obligation to revere.



Do you know the totem of your own clan? What is the symbolism associated with the totem? What are some of the taboos that people who associate themselves with that totem have to observe?

In recent times, the religious functions of the descent group, especially the performance of funerals, hold the members together.

- Clans also operate as economic entities with economic rights and obligations.

2.4 Importance of the Kinship System

- **The kinship system socializes its young members:** Parents, older children and other members of the kin group help in the upkeep and upbringing of younger children. In many communities members of the kin group are expected to foster other members of the family. Some ethnic groups believe that children should go through fostering, instead of living with their parents throughout their childhood so that they will be taught the realities of life and become disciplined. In reality, fostering helps to make disciplining of young ones a shared responsibility of the kin group. A child may not know which of the members of the kin group he/she will live with one day so he/she must respect everybody who is older than he/she is (Awedoba 2005). Fostering is a social norm. For instance, among the Dagomba who are patrilineal, chiefs send their children to their maternal relatives to be brought up. Fiddlers, drummers etc often foster one of their sister's children and train them in their professions (Oppong, 1972).
- **The kinship system gives its members identity:** This identity includes names and ethnic marks. For example, in most of the ethnic groups in Africa, each clan has a particular mark that its members have to acquire. Besides, naming system follows an order, which can be linked, to the clans in a community. For instance, among the Anlo, every clan has a pair of names; one for males, and the other for females (Nukunya, 1969). Clans are also associated with totems which give the members the right to claim allegiance to the totem.
- **The kinship system directs people's behaviour by prescribing status and roles:** With the kin group people who are in particular relationships are assigned roles that are either gender-based or age-based. At times both gender and age are combined. For example a father has to provide the resources needed for the upkeep of the family and ensure that there is social order within the family unit. A mother's role is to manage the resources available for the upkeep of the house. She admonishes the children and sees to the cleanliness of the house. Children carry out household chores and also perform duties, which have been delegated to them by their parents (Lenkeit 2002).

- **The Kinship system provides security for members of the kin group:** The nature of the security depends on the culture of the people. In many African societies, if one falls ill, the kin group provides financial as well as moral support. At times the group helps the person who is ill to take prescriptions that medicine men and women give. If a spouse dies, relatives provide support for the surviving spouse and children. Among the Akan of Ghana for instance, the filial piety is expressed in this adage which goes that *nea w'ahwe wo ma wo se afifiri no wo nso hwe no na ne se ntutu*. Literally, one maintains one's children in childhood so that they grow teeth in the expectation that one's children will in turn maintain one until one loses one's teeth. This reciprocity is a religious and moral obligation. The general belief is that it is through the collective luck of the kin group that a kinsman becomes successful in life so what the successful kinsman gets must be redistributed. As a result of the breakdown of the *mega* family system, homes and hostels for the aged and/or orphanages are becoming necessary in many parts of Africa (Agorsah, 2012).
- **The kin group encourages joint participation of its members in the production of the means of sustenance:** In as much as the kinship system and family norms favour sharing, they also encourage joint participation of the kin group in the production of the means of sustenance. Members of the kin group pool their resources together in the form of labour for farming, fishing herding etc. At times they help one another to construct homes (Awedoba 2005; Busia, 1968). Both the rich and the poor have to pool their resources together. The Tiv of Nigeria believe that a kinsman chalks successes through the collective luck of the kin group so members of the group must share the fruits of each other's success.
- **The kin group provides the platform for satisfaction of spiritual needs of its members:** Members of the kin group ensure that they perform the necessary rituals to maintain the spiritual bonds between the living and the dead. Members assign religious roles to its members. They determine who should preside over the performance of the clan and kin group rituals. For example, many clans have their own priests who lead in the performance of specific ritual for naming ceremonies, marriage and burial etc. The members select other officials like the linguist to assist in those performances.
- **The kinship system trains people for jobs and ushers them into the economy:** African societies maintain that some professions are the preserve of certain families within the community. Apart from that, members of the kin group foster the young ones and train them in certain professions so that the younger generation can take over from older one. Furthermore, members of the group pool their resources together for productive ventures for the common good of all. This may result in situations where almost every member of the kin group is engaged in a particular job e.g. production and distribution of kenkey and fish among the Ga, fishing and fish mongering among the Ga, Fanti etc.

- **The kin group helps to provide capital for production:** Members of the kin group provide the initial capital for someone who has undergone apprenticeship to take off in business production. Indeed, because of the communal ownership of land in African communities, the kin group apportions parcels of land which cannot be sold but reserved for its members to help them cultivate their food crops (Thakur 1997).



The second session has covered four broad themes namely kinship and descent, types of descent, functions of descent and groups and the importance of kinship system. We have learnt therefore, that kinship which is a broad concept helps in the social organization of African peoples in child socialization and productive work that ensures occupational transfer and gainful living among others.



Self-Assessment Questions

Exercise 3.2

1. How will you differentiate between kinship and a descent group?
2. Explain the basic difference between unilineal and non unilineal descent.
3. Discuss any three functions of the descent group in a named African society.
4. State any three importance of the kinship system as it is practiced in any African society known to you.

SESSION 3: INHERITANCE, SUCCESSION AND PROPERTY RIGHTS

You have often read about situations where family members of a deceased have thrown out the surviving spouse and children. In Ghana, this practice has been outlawed but people still do it. As you join me in discussing inheritance and succession in Africa, try to imagine what motivates some people to forcefully eject wives and children who have lived peacefully with their late husbands and fathers. I hope that you can relate some of your experiences and those of others to many of the issues we are about to discuss.

**Objectives**

By the end of the session you will be able to...

- a) define inheritance and succession,
- b) differentiate between inheritance and succession,
- c) define at least three key terms associated with inheritance and succession
- d) explain matrilineal, patrilineal and double unilineal inheritance and succession.

Now read on...



Many people view inheritance and succession as the same phenomenon. For instance, the online Encyclopaedia Britannica indicates that inheritance is also known as succession. However, it is worthwhile noting that they are similar but not the same. You will notice that both are about devolution of something from a deceased person to a living one.

3.1 Definition of Inheritance and Succession

Inheritance is the devolution of property to an heir or heiress while succession is the devolution of position to a person. In both situations, there are socio-cultural dimensions because society determines the rules of inheritance and succession. However, apart from the socio-cultural dimensions associated with both, inheritance is more economic and succession is more political.

3.2 Practice of Inheritance and Succession

In many African societies, property devolves first in the political sense because the property devolves to the person who has legitimate claim and not the one in need of the property. For instance, the Akan say that *nea adee wo no na odie na ennye nea ekɔm de noɔ* (the one who has a better claim to a position takes it and not the one who is hungry (in context, this means that one who has a better claim to occupy the position of the deceased is the one who eventually takes over). In effect, succession is about transfer of power and authority (in terms of politics) while inheritance is about transfer of property (economic power). To the Akan, one occupies the position first and then becomes entitled to all other things associated with it (the position). Therefore a person succeeds

a bereaved person's position because he/she has rights, according to the culture of his/her group, to occupy it and after occupying, he/she performs all the roles associated with it.

In African societies, the two go together. One succeeds and inherits; hence the erroneous impression that they are the same. For instance, the explanation of secondary marriages shows that the successor takes over the spouse of the deceased because probably, the deceased occupied that position (husband) before his death. Thus when the successor occupies the deceased's position, he/she performs all the roles associated. The society spells out the rules for succession. For instance siblings come first before sibling's children. This is explained in the maxim *nna mba nnsae a wofa ase nndzi adze*. This means that the last, surviving sibling has the legitimate right to succeed a deceased brother before the deceased's sister's children can be considered.

In many African cultures, the rules are very rigid and tend to exclude people who are physically very close to the deceased. For instance, many people are likely to say that spouses are the closest, probably because they share a room, a bed and even bodies. However, the communal way of life makes lineage members closer with regard to inheritance. In simple terms consanguine are closer than affine. Because of the rules associated with inheritance and succession in African societies, spouses do not have rights over each other's property. However, this notwithstanding, the various cultures spell out situations by which property can devolve to a spouse.

Rules of inheritance and succession follow the lineage systems. Hence, the basic types of inheritance and succession are matrilineal and patrilineal. With matrilineal inheritance, the property devolves to only members of the matrilineage. This means that a father's property cannot devolve to his children because the offspring in matrilineal societies belong to their mothers' lineages/clans. Instead, the property devolves to the man's siblings and his sister's children. Note that he and his sisters' children belong to the same lineage/clan. Similarly, in patrilineal societies, property devolves to only members of the patrilineage. In effect, when a man dies his property may devolve to his children and/or his siblings. Two terms are worth knowing for our studies – primogenitor (where the property devolves to the first-born male) and ultimogenitor (where the property devolves to the last-born male). In both cases, the other siblings have inheritance rights but those mentioned above have the prime rights.

In double unilineal societies (ie where both the matrilineage and the patrilineage have almost equal share of rights and responsibilities towards a person), some specified properties devolve to the patrilineage while others devolve to the matrilineage. Among the Yako of south east Nigeria immovable properties devolve to the patrilineage while moveable assets devolve to the matrilineage. Just as spouses do not have inheritance and succession rights to each other in both matrilineal and patrilineal societies, so is the

rule for double unilineal descent systems. Property may devolve only when the deceased person's lineage members give their consent. To sum up, in indigenous African societies, hardly do spouses inherit each others properties.

Members of the class may discuss how inheritance and succession work in their communities. Those who have lost a parent may serve as resource persons for the others. Let us now consider some basic features of inheritance, succession and property rights of spouses.

3.3 Property Rights and Obligations in Indigenous African Societies

- Individual members of the family are allocated rights and obligations with respect to ownership, control, exploitation, and consumption of resources, according to their status.
- Land is not for sale. It is not owned in any outright sense, but is held in trust for the ancestors, and should be passed onto the future generations. It is allocated to the present generation for use upon request. Members use the land as a matter of rights. Two basic rights can be considered here – allodia rights and usufruct rights. The one with the allodia rights has absolute control over the land. The one with the usufruct right does not have total control. He/she pays rent and/or tributes. In indigenous societies, only members of the clan that owes the piece of land have allodia rights. The head of the domestic group administers the lineage/clan's lands and other property on behalf of the group.
- The distinction between individual and lineage property is not always easy to make. Individuals have legitimate claims to use group property. Members of the kin group also exercise claims on other members' properties. One uses self-acquired property without any hindrance. He/she may pass it on to another person as a gift or for sale but once he/she dies it devolves to his/her lineage, unless he/she made a will.
- Husbands and wives have separate property rights. One spouse does not have rights to inherit the other's property. In many cases, a spouse may pass on his/her property to the other spouse in the former's life time as a gift. In many African cultures, the recipient will have to present a gift to the family of the giver. Among the Akan of Ghana, a bottle of schnapps may be presented. This is known as *Aseda nsa*. (gift drink).
- Women have property rights. For instance, in West African societies where women take little part in cultivation but engage extensively in trade, it is very easy for a woman to acquire property on her own.
- A man's property is transmitted at death only to the males of his own lineage or clan, and a woman's property is passed onto her sisters and daughters.
- Indeed, the whole descent group holds rights in the land in perpetuity. It is only the position of the family head that is passed on at death. The property of a kin

group cannot be given out to an adopted child or a spouse. Also, it cannot be offered for sale unless other leaders of the clan agree to do so.



In this session, we have examined concepts such as inheritance and succession. We have been able to draw the differences and similarities between inheritance and succession. We will soon examine factors that have influenced the African family. As you participate in the next discussion try to connect how each of the factors of social change influence inheritance and succession.



Self-Assessment Questions

Exercise 3.3

1. Discuss the differences between inheritance and succession in unilineal societies and double unilineal societies.
2. Discuss the basic principles for which spouses do not have inheritance rights to each other's property in indigenous African societies.
3. Examine the view that the Intestate Succession Law of Ghana (PNDCL 111) is more on inheritance than succession.

SESSION 4: MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

This session on marriage and divorce is the fourth. It deals with very familiar family situations. You are welcome.



Objectives

By the end of the session, the student should be able to:

- a) define marriage;
- b) explain the basic terms in marriage; and
- c) discuss the types of marriage



Now read on...



4.1 What is Marriage?

In many of my anthropology classes, students have defined marriage as a union between two adults who have consented to live together and share their lives. I am sure that most of you are likely to share this view. Some of you may even add that the union is supposed to last until “death do us part” (i.e. when one of the couple dies). This definition is ideal. It applies to Africa in certain situations but on the whole it does not apply to many indigenous African subcultures. Before we move on to the situation in Africa, let us examine some definitions by some renowned scholars.

A common definition for marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that any children born within the union are seen as legitimate offspring of the union (Notes and Queries, 1951). Assimeng (2006) defines marriage as a socially recognized arrangement whereby consenting adults of the opposite sex are brought together into a relationship where the offspring are socially recognized. The phrase “consenting adults” should be used with caution because in some societies arranged marriages, including child betrothal, etc have endured. The partners eventually consent to legitimize the marriage.

4.2 Types of Marriage

Monogamy – this is a situation where a man or a woman is married to one person at a time. A person may have a number of spouses in his life time but if at any point in time the person had one spouse, this is referred to as serial monogamy.

Polygamy – this is a situation where a man or woman has more than one spouse. As an umbrella term, it comprises: polygyny and polyandry.

- i. **Polygyny** – this is a situation where a man has more than one wife at a time. Indigenous African marriages are potentially polygynous but it is not ideal. Every society sets a number of requirements for a man who chooses to be polygynous.

- ii. **Polyandry** – is a system of marriage in which a woman is married to more than one man at any particular time for example the Hereros of Southern Africa (Assimeng, 2006), the Lele of Kasai in Central Africa (Odetola & Ademola, 1985). The authors noted that in determining the paternity of a child born out of such relationships, the first man to present a flower to the woman is considered to be the father of the child.

Child Marriage (Betrothal) - this is a type of marriage between two children or between a girl and an older man. This type of marriage is practiced in a number of traditional African societies but the practice is dying out for a number of reasons.

What do you think might have reduced the practice?

Many people are of the view that it subjugates the young girl. Do you agree? Let's examine how it is practiced among some groups in Africa.

Among the Igbo of south east Nigeria, when a girl is about nine or ten years old, a prospective husband may ask the girl's parents to allow her to come and live with him in his house. He takes care of her and performs certain services and other obligations to the prospective in-laws until she is of age to bear children. At this stage, the prospective husband will be allowed to pay the bride wealth to legitimize the marriage.

Among the Yako, also of south eastern Nigeria, young girls are betrothed and allowed into a relationship that can lead to premarital sex; however, when such relationships lead to pregnancy, some rituals have to be performed (Agorsah, 2012). This serves as a control mechanism for premarital sex. The prospective husband renders some services to the girl's parents. On the other hand, the girl also gives gifts such as vegetables from her mother's farm to her prospective in-laws. Courtship at this stage is part of the indigenous system of education which aims at preparing the prospective couples for marriage and family life.

Among the Akan, the practice is known as *esiwaa*. A young man or his father can negotiate a marriage with a young girl's father. The child lives with her own parents until she is of age to bear children. At this stage, the man pays the presentations to finalize the marriage. In Akyem Abuakwa in the Eastern Region of Ghana, the practice was banned by the Okyeman Council (traditional Council of Elders) during the colonial period (Danquah, 1928).

Among the Lele of the Congo Basin, a girl is betrothed immediately after she is born (Agorsah, 2012). The prospective husband is supposed to render odd jobs to his prospective parents-in-law while waiting for the girl to grow up.

What do you learn from these scenarios?



One thing that cannot be established is the situation where the young woman refuses to marry the prospective husband or where the father of the woman decides to betroth the woman to another person. This calls for more investigations.

The practice of child betrothal in many ethnic groups in Africa has died out or is gradually doing so. What factors have caused this?



Secondary Marriages

There are other types of marriages which are very common in African societies. Most of them are presumed to be marriage of a person after he/she has gone through marriage once in his/her lifetime. The first instance is the primary marriage. What we are about to discuss is in many cases taking on additional spouses; so they are referred to as secondary marriages. They may also involve marriages by ‘proxy’. Secondary marriages are best described with the terms associated with status of the children. It is easy to know the biological mother of a child but in the absence of a DNA test, only women can best determine the biological fathers of their children. The terms *pater* (explained in simple terms as the social father) and *genitor* (explained in simple terms as the biological father) are used in explaining and drawing differences in these types of marriage. The *pater* has legitimacy to the children and not the *genitor*. Secondary marriages include the following:

Woman-to-woman marriage – the term gives the impression that the women involved may be lesbians. But this is far from that. In this case a woman who does not have the reproductive capacity to bring forth children may pick a wife so that the latter begets children for her. In most cases, women marry women either because they are barren or they (or their parents) have given birth to only females. In societies where male children continue the family line or give women inheritance rights and/or other privileges, having females alone serves as a disadvantage to a family. The one who pays the bridewealth is the husband and the recipient of the bridewealth is the wife. The female husband selects a male who can have sex with her ‘wife’ to produce children for her (the female husband) (Amadiume 1987). The female husband is the *pater* in such a secondary marriage. However, in situations where the bridewealth was paid for a father, the father becomes the *pater*, even if he is dead. Examples can be found among the Igbo of Nigeria, Lovedu and Kuria of East Africa and the Dinka and Nuer of South Sudan.

Widow Inheritance – it is where members of a deceased man’s family take over the latter’s widow and continue to assert his uxorial and genetrical rights. In other words, the widow remarries a relative of her deceased husband and the children born to them belong to the new husband. Indeed, the term is derogatory as it classifies the widow as

a commodity to be acquired. However, those who practise it do not see it as ‘inheritance.’ For instance, the Fantse of Ghana call it *ayetsew*; from the word ‘aye’- meaning wife and ‘*tsew*’ meaning transplanting. The etymology of the word as explained in Fantse means transplanting of the marriage (Wilson, 2011). As a matter of fact, the woman is bound by marriage to her husband’s family. Among the Fantse, the ‘transplanting’ is not automatic; the widow has to give her consent. In some societies, all the siblings of the deceased who satisfy the requirements according to tradition may contest for the love of the widow. However, Luo widows are encouraged to get a surrogate husband within the family of the deceased husband through what is referred to as *ter* (“culturally-sanctioned” remarry). Among the Shona, Halloway (1969) states that upon the death of one’s father, one can take the father’s younger wife as one’s own wife and have children with her on the proviso that she is not his biological mother.

Levirate or Leviratic Marriage – in this marriage type, a relative of the deceased called the *levir* or brother-in-law continues with the marital duties of the deceased for and on behalf of the deceased. The leviratic marriage is similar to widow inheritance; the difference between them is that, in the case of leviratic marriage the offspring belong to the deceased husband. Hence, the deceased is the *pater*. In the case of widow inheritance, the children belong to the living husband who is both the *pater* and *genitor*. One known advantage of leviratic marriage is that it provides support for widows and their children. All children of the co-wives are raised together by the new husband and so have a wide family identity. However, the situation where the widow is forced into such marriage impacts negatively on her dignity. Besides, Leviratic marriages may help to spread HIV/AIDS.

**What is the major difference between Leviratic marriage and Widow Inheritance?
Do you remember the caution about rote learning?**

As a guide for drawing the differences between leviratic marriage and widow inheritance, take it that whoever inherits something has legitimate right over it, so the heir (in the case of leviratic marriage) has legitimate right over the widow and the offspring that emerge through the re-marriage. However, in both cases, he must take good care of the surviving children of the deceased as well as the widow.

Ghost Marriage – In some African societies (eg the Nuer), when a young man dies before getting married, his surviving kin will marry for him. The father of the deceased will approach another family with the intent to marry their daughter for his late son. The bride wealth, in the form of cattle, is paid and the girl is married to the family. A man from the male descent of the deceased will be invited to fulfil the *uxorem* duties and obligations of the husband. It must be noted that, the children born from this union will be called the sons or daughters of the deceased.

What are the differences and similarities between Ghost Marriage and Leviratic Marriage and widow inheritance on one side?



4.3 Marriage Payments and Exchange

Marriage establishes the composite family as we have noted in session one of this unit. There are various ways by which marriage is contracted. However, the common denominator is the exchange that takes place. The exchange is *direct* or *indirect*. Direct exchange is where a family presents a female member in exchange for a female member in the other lineage. Indirect exchange is made of payment of prestations in the form of bridewealth (in most cases), and dowry. Prestation is the collective name for all the gifts that are presented for the purposes of marriage. They are in different forms including bridewealth, dowry and bride service.

Bridewealth – these are the series of gifts that a man or his family presents to the family of a woman in the course of contracting a marriage.

Dowry- these are gifts that a woman or her family presents to the family of a man in the course of contracting a marriage. Among Muslims, it is a portion of a father's estate that is given to her daughter who is about to marry.

Bride Service – this refers to the services that a prospective husband renders to his prospective wife's parents.

Sister Exchange – in some societies, a man who intends to marry a woman presents his female relative (normally a sister) in exchange for the prospective wife. In the absence of a relative, the family of the man undertakes to present one in the future. Examples can be found among the Bimoba and Kokomba of Ghana and the Tiv of Nigeria (Agorsah, 2012).

Let us examine some features of marriage payments

- Bridewealth and dowry are similar because both invoke transmission of property for the purpose of marriage; however, the direction of exchange makes them differ. Whereas bridewealth is from a male's lineage to that of the woman, the reverse is the situation for a dowry.
- Some societies combine the use of bridewealth and bride service. In some cases bridewealth is paid from time to time at significant stages of the marriage. Examples are the Nuer and the Yako where a woman resides in her parents' home at the initial stages of the marriage and moves to the husband's home at a certain point in time. In many societies including the Akan, after the initial outright payment, the husband will have to present a bottle of rum annually to his father in law (Wilson, 2011).

- All the terms used above are associated with value judgments (Awedoba, 2005). Some connote market transaction and create the impression that it is a sell-out. The colonialists and missionaries used the term ‘bride price’ but to avoid the situation that looks like a sell-out, many authors used ‘bridewealth.’ This also created the impression that the receiving family will become wealthy after the contract. Thus the use of prestations removes any misconception about the exchange of gifts.

Do you agree that the payment of bridewealth is a sell-out? You can discuss this thoroughly in class. I entreat the ladies in your class to participate actively in this discussion.

Remember that purchase goes with alienation of rights, and in many African societies a woman maintains her membership in her natal family (Wilson, 2011). For Africanists, the bridewealth is not a sell-out because the indigenous people do not see it as such. It has many functions but key among them are that; it serves as a bond for assurance that the husband and wife and their respective lineages will uphold each other’s rights by performing their respective conjugal obligations (Bohannan, 1963; Wilson, 2011). More importantly, it legitimizes the offspring of the wife to her husband. In some societies, the payment of bridewealth is not a requirement for contracting marriage, for example the Kung of the Karahari Desert (Namibia) (Agorsah, 2012); the Mossi of Burkina Faso, the Bimoba of Ghana and the Tiv of Nigeria (Awedoba, 2005).

4.4 Importance of Bride Wealth

- It determines the ownership of children on the part of the man. In many African societies, the payment of bride wealth determines the one who is the father of the children. As we noted earlier, two terms develop out of this – *pater* and *genitor*. The *pater* is the social father while *genitor* is the biological father.
- Childbirth fulfils African marriages. The point is that if an Akan woman does not have a child after marriage she may seek divorce and try her luck with another man (Wilson, 2011). Among the Fulani, a woman sleeps on a mat in her husband’s room and only sleeps on her husband’s bed after she has given birth to her first child (Kayongo-Diane, 1987). Among the Yako, the wife lives in her natal home after marriage until she delivers her first baby, after which she leaves for her husband’s home (Forde, 1951).
- African marriages have often been described as potentially polygynous but many societies have rules and conditions that guide the arrangements of additional marriages. The payment of bridewealth gives social status to a man who pays bridewealth on many women and manages to keep them together without conflicts.
- People misinterpret potentiality of polygyny as a way of giving men the license to have multiple sex partners and hence power to indulge in illicit sexual

relationships whenever they choose to. The crux of the matter is that in many African societies, there are rules about sex and sexuality which often translate into taboos. In many cases sexual relationship with an unmarried person is abhorred. In many societies, fathers hold their daughters sexual rights in *uxorem*, until marriage when he transfers the rights to the husband. Consequently, the father has the right to charge any man who engages in sexual relationship with his daughter when such rights have not been properly transferred to him. In effect, in as much as a man wants to have sexual relationship with a woman, he should arrange for the proper transfer of those rights to him or such sexual relationship is considered illicit and illegal. Therefore, it behoves on a man who wants to have multiple partners to marry the women properly and have all rights and recognitions bestowed upon him.

- Genitricial right is that right that a man has to claim the offspring of a woman as his offspring is distinct from *uxorial* right. The exercise of the second right warrants a man to expect the performance of domestic services from his wife. The two rights can be conferred only upon the payment of bridewealth in societies where its payment is the norm.
- Societies have different ways of treating situations where a couple gives birth outside wedlock. In some societies, the man can never have legitimate claim to the offspring because he has not paid bridewealth and performed the necessary rituals to obtain *uxorial* rights. Once he does not have *uxorial* rights he does not also have *genetrical* rights. Among the Igbo, when an unmarried woman gives birth, the child is integrated into the woman's father's lineage and clan. Among the Akan, the man responsible for the pregnancy will be charged for having illicit sexual affair and made to take care of the mother and the pregnancy until the child is weaned. After that he can compensate the mother and take his child to his home. However, the child will remain a member of his/her mother's matrilineage because the Akan are matrilineal.
- Many people are of the view that in African societies the practice of polygyny gives economic powers to men who engage in it. A man with several wives commands more land, can produce more food and achieve higher status in the society due to the wealth that he commands. In a situation where people depend on manpower for cultivation, an additional wife and more children for the man become assets. Boserup (1997) indicated that in a situation where most of the specified aspects of agricultural production such as planting and harvesting are carried out by women and the felling of trees are done by young men, an old man who marries more wives will be able to increase his productivity because his wives and children will take over the production on his behalf. Furthermore, they are likely to bring in more hands through the cooperative systems known among the Akan as *nnoboa*. At times, the economic role of the additional wife makes the man enjoy more leisure (Boserup, 1997). For instance in some places in the Gambia where women produce rice and men produce millet, a man who

picks additional wife will have more rice. He will produce less millet but that will also enable him have more leisure. Other men go in for more wives when they consider the numerous progeny that they will have.

4.5 Marriage Preference

Exogamy -this is a situation where a person marries outside a social group that he or she belongs. Thus when one marries outside one's clan, the marriage may be referred to as clan exogamy.

Endogamy - when people marry within their social groups it creates a situation of endogamy. For example on university campuses when people choose to marry fellow undergraduates, the situation may be described as endogamy.

Cross Cousin Marriages - these are marriages involving cousins whose main connection to each other are their parents who of the opposite sex. For example if a Fanste man marries his mother's brother's daughter that can be seen as cross cousin marriage. Note that the parents of the cousins are siblings of the opposite sex, and hence the term 'cross'. The Wolof (Agorsah, 2012) and Akan (Wilson, 2011) practise this. In the past it was one of the preferred marriages that ensured that daughters had access to their father's estate after the death of the latter.

Do you see cross cousin marriages as endogamy?

This has a razor-edge answer. Yes, they may be described as endogamy because the parents are siblings who belong to the same clan. However, it can also be described as exogamy because cross cousins do not belong to the same clan. In the case of the Fantse, each of them belongs to the matrilineage and hence they belong to different lineages/clans.

4.6 Rule of residence after marriage

Matrilocal – where the couple resides in the woman's house or her family house after marriage. Example is found among the Bemba of Zambia

Patrilocal – a situation where the couple resides in the man's house or his family house after marriage. Patrilocal residence are common in many African societies especially those that are patrilineal

Duolocal – each of the couple lives apart. The man may live in his father's house or one constructed by his age set while the woman lives with her mother. Examples can be found among the Fantse and Ga of Ghana and the Mende of Sierra Leone

Avunculocal – the couple may live in the man's mother's brother's house.

Neolocal – the couple lives in a residence that is neutral to both the man and the woman. In this situation the residence is seen as a ‘new’ residence and hence the term neolocal.

4.7 Features of Indigenous African marriages

- Marriage has a religious function – it is the focus of human existence; it is the point where members of a given community (the departed, the living and those yet to be born) meet. It is the means by which an individual contributes to the seeds of life so that the human race does not become extinct. It reduces sexual and hence religious immorality. Sacrifices are made in the course of arranging marriage. Naming the offspring after the dead is believed to bring about a spiritual connection between the living and the dead. Prayers offered at the ceremony link the living and the dead. There are also rituals that connect humans to deities, eg rituals of *ekuaba* among the Asante and that of *afa* among the Igbo (Wilson, 2012).
- For African societies marriage is a union between families. Many authors indicate that it is a union between two families. This looks simple when considering family within the context of the nuclear system. However, considering that the African family system goes beyond the nuclear and the reality that each of the married partners has either lineal or filial connections with his mothers lineage or father’s lineal, each couple brings on board his/her matrilineage as well as the patrilineage. Furthermore, considering that in many cases in the African system a person’s matrilineage and patrilineage have different roles to play, marriage goes beyond two families/lineages to four lineages. In effect, it is primarily an alliance between two sets of families or four kin groups and only in a secondary aspect as a union between the two individuals.
- Marriage goes beyond the death of the individuals in the marriage contract. The bridewealth finds expression in leviratic and sorroral marriages. It also determines the rights and responsibilities of children and their parents in their life time. For instance children who lose a parent have right to support from that parent’s siblings or lineage.
- Every marriage requires the consent of some senior person. In many cases the couple seek the consent of their parents before they can get married.
- Marriage is often legitimized through the payment of prestations (bridewealth and/or bride service) by the groom to the bride’s kin. This is in the form of livestock or chattels (eg, hoes, brass rods pieces of cloth, money, etc). The payment is made at a go or by instalments. Prestations are in two forms – prime (or critical) presentations and contingent (or ancillary) prestation (Fortes, 1962;1997). It is often required that a wife’s family returns the prime prestations

upon the dissolution of the marriage. The bridewealth is not a sell out because the indigenous people do not consider it as such. In many societies, it is shared by the man's family as well as members of family of his wife. In many societies the woman's consent must be sort before the marriage is celebrated. Payment of bridewealth is not to compensate for the loss of a member of the family as stated by Colonial anthropologists such as Radcliffe-Brown (1962) and Mair (1961) in the sense that in many cultures a woman does not lose membership of her natal clan when she marries (Wilson, 2011). Besides, a husband is under obligation to 'release' her in cases where she has to join her kin. However there are situations where the woman becomes a member of the husband's clan after marriage and others where the husband determines where the wife will be buried if she dies before him.

- Customary marriage in Africa is potentially polygamous. There is no legal impediment for a husband to contract additional marriages. However, there are moral impediments. For instance, a man should be capable of caring for all the wives otherwise he cannot marry additional wives. Besides, in many cases, the man has to compensate his wife or wives before he can contract an additional marriage.
- Marriage is obligatory. It confers rights, obligations and privileges on people. Among the rights are uxorical and genitrical. Uxorical rights are the rights to sexual intercourse and sexual satisfaction. The genitrical rights to the man allow the man to claim the offspring of the woman as his. It makes the woman demand and insist that the man takes good care of her offspring. This makes childcare a shared responsibility in African societies. In many societies, marriage confers the status of adulthood, not age (Wilson, 2011).
- A woman does not occupy an inferior status in marriage as alleged by Mair (1960) and some colonial authors and officials. In some cases the woman continued to live with her kin just as the man lives with his kin. Besides, a woman does not take on a man's surname (Wilson, 2011). Both the husband and the wife may be addressed by a title that links them to their first child's name. For instance Akwasi Papa (Akwasi's father) or Akwasi Maame (Akwasi's mother) among the Akan.
- Procreation is the main consideration for marriage. For example among the Yako, a woman leaves for the husband's family house after she has delivered her first child (Forde, 1940). Among the Fulani, the woman sleeps on a mat until she delivers (Kayongo-Dian & Malie, 1984).
- Dissolution of marriage is uncommon. Family members who are present at the marriage ceremony and all those who may be connected by the marriage are under obligation to see to it that the marriage thrives.
- One of the major features of marriage among some groups that has been attacked is "wife capture." Though the term aptly describes the occurrence, the rationale does not depict a capture. In most cases it is a symbolic mock exercise.

Will any family or society allow any ‘idiot’ to just capture a woman and keep her for marriage?

Let us examine the situation among the Chiga and Ewe. Among the Chiga the brothers of the girl hands her over to her husband (Agorsah, 2012). On the day of the handing over, the girl retreats and takes refuge behind her mother's hut. The prospective husband appears on the scene, arranges and makes the necessary payments for the eventual transfer of the young woman to him. Among the Ewe, friends of the groom and friends of the bride arrange for the latter to lure the prospective bride to a place where a short ceremony takes place. This includes a forceful capture followed by jubilation among the youth (Agorsah, 2012). The bride and the groom are taken into separate rooms prepared for the occasion. They remain in their respective rooms for a period of seven days while members of the community offer the couple pieces of advice.

In session four, we have defined the concept of marriage. We have also examined the types of marriage that are practiced in various African societies. The session on secondary marriages is important because it has examined some aspects of marriage that are not universal. Furthermore, secondary marriages have come under serious attack by gender and human rights activists in contemporary times.

SUMMARY

Self-Assessment Questions



Exercise 3.4

1. Discuss the differences and similarities between Ghost Marriage, Leviratic Marriage and Widow Inheritance?
2. Discuss the importance of bridewealth.
3. Examine the view that in African societies, marriage defines the rights and obligations of kin groups to each other.
4. Discuss the features of African marriages.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear
- difficult topics if any.

SESSION 5: SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE AFRICAN FAMILY

Join me as we go through Session 5 of Unit 3. This unit deals with the changes that have affected the African family systems. In this session you will learn about external factors that have influenced the African family systems. I hope that you can connect the ideas that we discuss in this section with your own life experiences or those of others.

**Objectives**

By the end of the session, the student should be able to:

- a) define the term “social change”; and
- b) explain the factors that have brought about tremendous changes to African family systems.

Now read on...



Social change refers to the fundamental alterations in the patterns of culture, structure and social behaviour over a period of time. In most cases, the introduction of an external factor or force can lead to a social change. It is worthy to note that not all changes can be referred to as social change. The type of socialisation that influences the individual’s life but does not alter basic organisation of the larger society cannot be referred to as social change. Social change confronts people with new situations and compels them to fashion out new forms of action. A close examination of traditional cultural values gives the impression that they have been adulterated by a modern culture. All these changes have been made in the name of development. The factors that have led to social change include the following:

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. the slave trade | 5. Islam |
| 2. colonialism | 6. Western education |
| 3. integration into the global economy | 7. Post-independence |
| 4. Christianity | |

The factors identified above give the impression that Europeans brought about social change in Africa and hence African societies were static. One cannot agree with this statement because before the Europeans arrived in Africa many powerful kingdoms conquered weaker states and in some cases changed their political systems. In effect, this brought about social change in some societies. However, such situations were not on large scale as compared to the above mentioned factors. Moreover the type of social change that was brought about by the ethnic wars did not affect a larger society as compared to the above mentioned ones.

Slave Trade

During the slave trade many able-bodied men and women were captured. More men were taken away than women so in order to avoid the extinction of people in those societies, women had to reproduce more to fill the vacuum created in many families. Besides the strenuous effect of childbearing, women had to work extra hard to fend for themselves and their children because there were not enough men to support them and complement their roles. Some women, therefore, became single parents thereby exercising control over their children. Women were compelled to share husbands because in African societies, marriage is held in high esteem. Moreover, African societies do not abhor polygyny. However, these developments made women more independent since they could not enjoy the attention needed from a husband.

Colonialism

It is not very easy to distinguish colonialism from other factors because colonialism brought in its wake the other factors such as introduction of cash economy and strengthened the introduction of western education. Colonialism here applies strictly to political and cultural phenomena. As a result of the influence of the patriarchal tendencies that existed in European countries in the 1800s the colonial administrators wanted to deal with men and not women. Therefore, men were employed and trained as clerks to help in colonial administration. As a result women could not take up formal employment, especially, in the civil service. Working in the civil service was prestigious. Since more men than women enjoyed that privilege women's status in that respect diminished. Besides, wives of senior civil servants and other public officials, most of whom were educated, behaved like Victorian ladies. The social order at that time made them housewives and prevented them from taking up formal employment. This made the women more dependent on their husbands as they did not have any regular income. Most of the people in this category stayed in government bungalows so they did not even get the opportunity to do petty trading as other women did.

Integration into the Global Economy (Imperialism)

Trade with Europeans integrated Africans into the expanding global capitalist economy. Africans were involved in the extraction of minerals and forest products and the production of cash crops. In all these, the Europeans recruited males because in many European countries it was against their norms for a man to enter into such 'contracts' with a woman. Men were taught better ways of producing cash crops. They were the only ones who worked on plantations, mines etc. This made many men migrate to seek greener pastures. With the migration of men, women became less dependent and managed domestic affairs; so in a way their status improved. Women were concerned with the production of food crops to feed their families so women became cash-strapped. Because of the growing cash economy men had easy access to land. With the expansion in the production of cash crops men engaged their wives and children to help them on farms. This brought in its wake a high rate of polygyny because this was a way

of accumulating more wealth for the men. Women's status diminished because women (as a group) became another form of property to be controlled by men (Gordon, 2013). Since the Europeans would not transact business with women, women became more dependent on men for their livelihood.

On the other hand, the cash economy enabled women to accumulate some wealth on their own. The significant improvement in women's economy came through retailing. According to Smock (1977), the greater law and order enabled women to increase their wares. But even in retail trade, men controlled women's cash because in most cases, the women obtained their capital from the men. Besides, there were not enough commercial banks so banking was not a common practice. In some cases where women could not get jobs easily, they supported themselves through prostitution, food vending, offering domestic services in some households, etc. (the latter was not easy to come by since Europeans would prefer to employ men).

Christianity

Christianity introduced a new form of marriage which was monogamous. In the colonial days, Christian missionaries collaborated with the colonial authorities to enact laws on family. For instance, in the Gold Coast missionaries petitioned the British government to introduce a pattern of binding monogamous marriage with inheritance rights to wives (Smock, 1977). This was rejected but the Christian missionaries were allowed to propagate monogamy to their faithful. Missionaries also tried to abolish the institution of bridewealth, puberty rites and secondary marriages. However, all these were opposed by Africans. Therefore, the Roman Catholic Mission made the payment of bridewealth a precondition for the celebration of church marriages.

Some of the colonial tendencies have been entrenched in contemporary periods and thus modified aspects of the indigenous cultures. For instance, nowadays church weddings have become part of marriages such that the traditional marriages are now considered as engagement. Women now use the names of their husbands and the emphasis on family is now that of the conjugal family, though many find it very difficult to totally extricate themselves from the indigenous family systems which place the nuclear family within the framework of the lineage and kinship systems (Wilson, 2011).

In contemporary times, the virtuous woman portrayed in the Bible and Judeo-Christian culture has been incorporated into indigenous family systems. This is more reflected in the lives of the Pentecostal and the Charismatic churches. In I Corinthians Chapter 11 and Ephesians 5:22-25, the Bible describes the social structure in such a way that women should play subservient roles to men. Whereas Christ is the head of man, man is the head of a woman (verse 3), man is the image and glory of God but woman is the glory of man, woman was made for man but man was not made for woman. Some people argue that if man is the head then woman is the body. Furthermore, they argue

that the head cannot function without the body. These are just assumptions since the Bible does not state any of these. The Bible also teaches women to learn in silence and be submissive to men. They are not to teach men or have authority over them. They are supposed to remain silent while in public and seek information from their husbands. (1Timothy 2:11-15; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35). However, women can teach one another (Titus 2:3-4).

Islam

Many authors are of the view that the Quran favours the equality of men and women. But as a result of social change women have been subjugated. In Ammah's (1992) view historical developments and cultural influence have blurred the image of the Muslim woman. Engineer (1992) views the Quran as being in favour of equal status for men and women in the normative sense but contextually giving slight edge to men over women. She also asserts that Islamic jurists ignored the context of the Quran and tried to give a superior status to men in the normative sense. These arguments put up by Engineer show how the interpretation of the Quran has been skewed in favour of men, especially, in patriarchal societies. In her view, the Quran considers both sexes as having originated from one Allah and should, therefore, enjoy the equal status. One may not totally agree with her in the sense that the Quran states categorically that, 'Men have authority over women because Allah has made one superior to the other'. It continues that, 'Good women are obedient.' In effect, these are some of the quotations from the Quran that can be used to entrench the patriarchal tendencies in the society.

According to Osman (1985), Islam improved the status of Muslim women tremendously. It accepted women as worthy human beings and recognized their civil and religious responsibilities. Women were given an identity with a soul accountable to God. Women were rewarded according to their deeds. For example, Quran 4:124 states that if anyone does deeds of righteousness, that person will enter heaven and not the least injustice will be done to him/her. Islam prohibited the burial of infant girls, a practice that used to exist among some ethnic groups at that time (Ammah, 1992). It also gave women the right to inheritance, even if the estate is small (Quran 4:7). It is also unlawful for a man to deprive a wife of what she has inherited from her relatives (Quran 4:19). Islam's view on inheritance is that men and women should have a portion of what their parents and kindred leave behind. However, men are to inherit twice as much as what the women inherit (Quran 4:11). Women have the right to own property independently. They have rights to education. They are also entitled to the rewards of Paradise.

One area which diminishes women's status in Islam is marriage. Muslim women who fulfil their conjugal obligations are entitled to a number of rights including fair treatment and maintenance from their husbands. Such obligations include serving their husbands, obeying them (except in committing sin) and staying in the matrimonial

home. A male Muslim can marry a Jew, a Christian or Muslim, but a female Muslim cannot. According to Osman (1985), "There is no clear-cut text in the Quran or Sunna for this prohibition but it is rationalized by reference to women's weakness and the possibility of religious coercion by a non-Muslim husband" (p. 128). But how come that something which has no Quranic base has been enforced to such an extent that many Muslim women accept it in principle. Perhaps, this may be based on the history of Islamic traditions. For example, in a patriarchal society, a Moslem woman may be compelled to join her husband's religion and teach her children to practice Islam.

In spite of the fact that some of the interpretations are skewed in favour of men, it is clear from the Quran that where men are accorded some privileges over women, the men are supposed to fulfil certain obligations to them. For example, a Muslim man may marry up to four women but the man is obliged to give equal treatment to all his wives. The Quran cautions that such justice is difficult to attain. Therefore, in their own interest, Muslim men should keep to one wife in order to enjoy the grace of God. The Quran states that dowry should be paid to the wife and not her father or relatives of her father (see Quran 4:4). Besides the Quran emphasizes that women should be educated very well so that they can fulfil the major obligation of nurturing children into the society.

Western Education

Formal education went hand in hand with colonialism to such an extent that people felt there were no differences between the missionaries and the colonialists. The spread of Western education affected the relative position of women. Equal opportunities were given for the enrolment of both boys and girls in the formal education system. However, both colonialists and missionaries felt that men should be recruited to help them in their work. For example, men were needed to serve as catechists and clerks. The education of men was, therefore, accorded much priority than that of women. Even though female educational institutions were established, the curricula for females were different from those of males. Those of females were more oriented towards acquisition of domestic skills. For example females did subjects like home science while males did technical skills, etc.

It is worthy of note that traditional practices also enforced the attitudes of Europeans to the education of females. In traditional societies the social system demanded that women should marry and reproduce so that the domestic group would not become extinct. Women were, therefore, given off into marriages at an early age. Girls who were schooling were often withdrawn from school to get married. People thought that after all, they would not be employed in the formal sector and that was their main aim for going through formal education. Besides, many people felt that Western education had made those who had gone through it feel that marriage was a matter of individual choice. Many girls were, therefore, not prepared to yield to the social demands that they

should get married. At times they resisted early marriages and hence advocates of traditional culture felt that it was an affront to the social system, since the domestic group could become extinct if women refused to reproduce.

The influence of the elite in the society also changed women's roles. Senior civil servants wanted their wives to dress and behave like Victorian Ladies. This meant that the women would not work. They would be housewives and enjoy maintenance from their husbands. This changed the economic roles and statuses of women and they became more dependent on men. It is worthy of note that the elite were few but their lives had a lot of influence on many people. Nowadays, both men and women are in paid employment. This affects the upbringing of children, especially in a situation where house helps are employed to take care of children. Men are now being called upon to help in the performance of household activities.

The Post-Independence Era

Independence itself did not change women's roles and statuses to any appreciable level. However, a lot of conferences, seminars, etc., have been held to make members of the society conscious of the roles, rights and statuses of women. The revival of feminism in the 1960s was also experienced in Africa. Perhaps the issue of affirmative action, which also kicked against racial discrimination, influenced the fight for independence. Many countries in Africa gained independence in 1960. The issue of uniting African women to fight a common course for the emancipation of women was not isolated from Pan-Africanism. For example in 1962 the All African Women's Conference was held at Dar es-Salam. It was decided to perpetuate the conference so the conference was turned into a permanent organization. With the conferences on women, women began to insist on participating in decision-making. However, no tremendous gains have been made in this direction.

The ripple effect of the UN Decade for women (1975-1985), the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies (FLS) of 1986, and other conferences which carried out the advancement of women's emancipation throughout the world brought governments and various women's groups in Africa, to the frontline. They adopted strategies to fight for the empowerment of women. A breakthrough was made when many African countries signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979. One conference that sent clear messages to the whole world on affirmative action was the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women, dubbed the Beijing 1995 Conference. The representatives initiated an agenda for the empowerment of women and gender equality. The conference identified twelve (12) critical areas for concern, considered to be the main obstacles to women's advancement. This was known as **the Beijing Platform of Action**. The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna declared that the human rights of women and the girl child were integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. Five

years after the Beijing conference another conference dubbed Beijing Plus Five was held to review the Beijing Platform of Action and receive reports from various countries in their bid to ensure that women are treated fairly. The conference also sought to identify and recognize the roles played by civil society and women's organizations in the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action. All these were aimed at enabling women to forge ahead in the search of emancipation of women.

Changing Patterns of Marriage

- There is diminishing importance of the collective group (lineage). Families do not often support their members to pay bridewealth. Marriageable men pay it when they can afford.
- Courtship has become more common and often takes more time than it used to be in the past
- Bridewealth is becoming exorbitant and seems to suggest that the woman is being sold. Besides symbolic items for the payment of prestations has lost their significance as they are now offered in cash. In many societies people are calling for the abolishing of the institution.
- Polygyny is giving off to monogamy. However, concubinage has become common.
- Secondary marriages are becoming less common. Many societies discourage it.
- Indigenous marriage is now influenced by national laws, and in many cases religions such as Christianity and Islam.

In session one, we defined social change. We also examined the factors of social change that have influenced the African family systems. I hope that by now you appreciate some of the challenges that the African family systems have gone through. Yet the systems have been able to maintain some of the indigenous African values associated with them. We will soon examine another aspect of social change in African family systems. Specifically, we will examine the laws that have affected African families in the next session.

SUMMARY

Self-Assessment Questions



Exercise 3.5

1. Discuss the view that social change occurs over a long period of time.
2. Critically examine how colonialism has affected the African family systems.
3. Discuss the view that Christianity and colonialism were bedfellows in their civilization mission towards the African family systems.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear
- difficult topics if any.

SESSION 6: FAMILY LAWS IN AFRICA

In the previous session we examined the social change that influenced family systems in Africa. Under this we learnt how the changes brought about by colonialism, Christianity, Islam and the participation of Africans in the global capitalist markets have influenced the systems. In this section we will examine how international laws have affected the formulation of national laws on the family.

**Objectives**

By the end of the session you will be able to:

- a) identify at least three common features of indigenous African laws;
- b) identify at least three ways by which international laws have influenced national laws on African families; and
- c) explain the influence of emerging national laws on African family systems.



Now read on...

**6.1 Family Laws in the Precolonial Period**

The common features under the customary laws of African societies examine the rights and obligations of members of the family within the context of kinship. It spells out the rights and responsibilities of consanguine and affine. For instance, it spells out the rights and obligations of spouses to each other and those of each of the couple to his/her spouse's relatives and vice versa. For children, indigenous laws spell out their relations with each of the parents and that between them and their parents' lineages/clans.

The rights and obligations of spouses include *genetrical* and *uxorial* rights which we discussed in one of the previous sessions. Apart from that, in many indigenous African societies, women have a right to economic support from their husbands. For instance, men have to support their wives to run the affairs of the home in neolocal and patrilocal situations. They provide food and other resources, while the women see to it that the resources are put to good use. In return women provide food on the table and see to the upbringing of the young ones in the household. Many gender activists have argued that the conjugal and domestic duties of women keep them outside the public domain.

Do you agree with them? If so, how can this problem be solved?



You may discuss this in the class using the concentric approach to identifying problems and solving them.

In African societies, spouses have responsibilities towards the other spouse's relatives. You remember that African marriages connect two sets of families (or in many cases four families). The connection brings about the rights and obligations.

Do you remember rights in *rem* and rights in *personam*?

These rights are very important because they are the underlying principles in marriage that call for the payment of prestations. They define the roles of consanguine and affine. Every lineage is a corporate body with rights in *rem* and rights in *personam*. The rights in *personam* are those that the clans exact from their own members while the rights in *rem* are those that the clans exact from others who are not members of the lineage/clan. In some societies, especially those that do not have centralized systems of government (called acephalous societies), when a person offends a member of the clan, all the members of the clan are under obligation to ensure that justice prevails. So they may mass up support for the member who has suffered injustice. The leader of the clan will call on individual members to support the member in question. They may mobilize themselves to attack any member of the family that has attacked its member. A call by the head of the clan for such an action is a demand on each member; so that is seen as the clan's right in *personam*. It is therefore obligatory for each clan member to support the action. Those who fail to respond can be sanctioned by the clan. One common right in *personam* is demanded by the clan in matters of religion; for example, the demand on members of the clan to come together and/or make contributions for the performance of rituals such as funerals. The clan head calls on each member to contribute his/her quota to support the funeral of deceased members.

In performing funeral rites, rights in *rem* are also exacted from spouses. Spouses are called upon to partake in the funeral. This is a right to the bereaved clan but a responsibility to the spouse. The responsibilities lead to the performance of widowhood rites. Thus, through widowhood rites the deceased clan exacts a right while offering the privilege to the widow/widower to mourn his/her deceased spouse. It is worthwhile noting that in many African societies, a lineage/clan has the legitimate right to perform funerals for its members and not the spouse (Ollenu, 1962, Wilson, 2011). As a result, every culture has certain demands on widows and widowers of their clan members.

In the case of exacting rights in *rem* from offspring, the situation depends on whether the society is matrilineal or patrilineal. If it is a matrilineal society, the offspring belongs to the woman's lineage/clan. Therefore, the exactions that come from the mother's clan will fulfil the clan's rights in *personam*. However, any exaction from the offspring's father's clan in fulfilment of the clan's rights is a right in *rem*. For instance, among the Akan, a father's clan will call on the father's children to contribute to the provision of items such as a coffin and shrouds for a father's funeral. For the children, it is an obligation to the deceased father and his clan. However, because the marriage is a contract between clans, the head of their father's clan will call upon the offspring's matrilineage to exact that right. The offspring's clan head will see to it that the offspring performs those obligations. Each clan applied its rules and where inter-clan marriages

took place, the parties involved negotiated for amicable solution to any conflict that arose.

6.2 Family Laws in the Colonial Period

Christianity and colonialism worked hand in hand to affect family laws in many African communities. In many cases, Christian missionaries and colonial government officials maintained that the practices in the indigenous family systems, especially those on marriage were archaic because they did not conform to the cultural practices of Europe. They tried to make a number of changes in the indigenous practices. However, when the indigenous people did not yield to the pressure, the missionaries tried to impress upon the colonial authorities to enact laws that privileged Christianity. It is also worthy of note that European culture by itself often followed aspects of Judeo-Christian religion.

The Christian definition of marriage (which had also influenced European culture) made traditional African customary law on marriage inapplicable. Advocates of the civilizing mission of the colonialist and missionaries criticized African marriages on the following grounds:

1. African marriages were not voluntary, as far as brides were concerned.
2. The union was not for life since it could be easily dissolved without the intervention of a court.
3. The marriages were not so much of a union between a man and a woman, but rather an alliance between two sets of families
4. All customary marriages were potentially polygamous.

Do you agree with the above statements? To what extent can they be justified? Is there the need to deconstruct them?



Discuss the statements above in your study groups. Once again, try to be as objective as you can by examining both sides of the coin. Contribute your quota to the debate and try to take down notes.

The Europeans recognized African customary laws but added the provision that they should not offend justice and morality and should not contravene written laws. These provisions made the indigenous laws void and relegated its practice in the law courts more in tune with European laws. Furthermore, it gave colonial courts broader discretion to interpret the laws with Eurocentric background. Therefore, the European form of marriage was superior to the indigenous African ones. This offered incentives for converting customary marriages to Christian or ordinance marriage. Christian marriages were factored into ordinance marriage; hence the two went hand-in-hand. European missionaries tried to make the European marriage and family system the ideal, but they existed together with those of the indigenous people. The formal

recognition of both customary marriage and ordinance/Christian marriage ushered in an era of competitive and disharmonious coexistence (Kang'ara, undated).

6.3 Family Laws in the Postcolonial Period

In the 1960s the new African nations developed their legal systems out of the heritage of the past (Schiller, 1965, Wilson, 2011). Legal pluralism continued to exist. The new independent nations adopted legislative enactment, semi-legislative declaration, codification, restatement of customary laws, developments by court decisions, and reliance of legal and paralegal books to ensure that indigenous laws are applied within the framework of modern legal systems.

In the course of ascertaining African laws the following were added to the earlier assertions about African marriages:

1. There were long and complex formalities and ceremonies which made it difficult to know the point at which marriage took effect in a couple's life.
2. The groom's family pays bridewealth to the bride's family;
3. African marriages emphasized procreation as the ultimate justification for continuing the marriage.
4. The union made the wife inferior to the man.

However, Allott (a European colonial legal expert) rejected the assertions about African family systems on the grounds that the system could be understood by looking at the similarities between African social functions and those of Europeans. Furthermore, Allott alluded to the strengths of the lineage systems in providing avenues for amicable resolution of conflicts in African families.

I am pretty sure that you are conversant with national laws of Ghana on marriage. For the sake of time constraint, let us examine the situation in Cote d'Ivoire. Unlike many African states, La Cote d'Ivoire has family laws that are Eurocentric. State laws and regulations of Cote d'Ivoire trampled upon traditions and customary laws. Many of such laws were inherited from the colonial French policy of assimilation. These laws have existed up till now. Matters pertaining to marriage and the family are covered by sections of the Civil Code. The state only recognizes marriages that are performed by a registrar. This means that the law acknowledges only marriages that are registered and no bridewealth has been paid to the bride's family to legitimize the marriage. The legal age for marriage is 18 for women and 21 for men. Polygamy is outlawed under Article Two of the Civil Code. This law has been in place since 1964.

Under Article Five of the Civil Code, parental authority is legally the right of fathers, who are regarded as the heads of households and have sole paternal rights over their children. This also means that the father is seen as the head of the household and he alone has the exclusive right to claim the children as his after registering the marriage

according to the law. Mothers have an equal responsibility to ensure the moral and material wellbeing of the family. Women have the right to divorce under the Civil Code. In case of divorce, custody of the children is generally awarded to the spouse who obtained the divorce.

International Laws and the Family in Africa

After independence African countries continued to be part of the global legal systems. A number of international documents were ratified to ensure the existence of individuals especially those who belong to vulnerable groups including women and children. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) state that children should be given the necessary care because of their vulnerability. Whereas the UN Charter does not place any responsibility on the child, the African Charter makes children responsible, noting that children should use their minds for the benefit of their families and communities (Article 31). Socialization within the African social systems prepares children for adulthood. A child is responsible to himself/herself, the community, and the state but contemporary societies challenge the state to be responsive to children's needs. The state, therefore, makes laws to ensure that the family and other state institutions play their roles effectively.

Among the concerns raised about legal pluralism, are the differences in the application of customary regimes and contemporary regimes. People have raised concerns about the way national laws follow international conventions without concerns for the social systems of indigenous people. To forestall this, the African Union has synchronized universal documents to common cultural practices of Africans. A typical example is the situation where the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child demands that children should render some obligations to the family and community in order to enjoy their rights. Such changes to international documents become easy because every country needs the enabling acts (local laws to support international laws and documents) after it has ratified the international laws.

It is worthwhile noting that many of these international documents were drawn at a time when African states were not independent, and, even when they were, the laws were framed in the dominant group's (Eurocentric) culture. Attempting to steer our laws to the western concepts when, in the wisdom of the framers of the constitution, the nations should continue to abide by legal pluralism based on national statutory laws and, customary laws create double standards in our societies. We may not even understand the concepts underlying the laws. Therefore, the laws exist only in the books because they are seldom applied.

6.5 Rights of Children in African Countries

International human right laws treat childhood as a stage in human development that is special and precarious, and makes the child weak. Therefore, the laws state that children need special attention. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is one that is very sensitive to customary laws. For example, it entreats State parties to abolish customs and traditions that are detrimental to the welfare of the child, especially its health, and those laws that are discriminatory. They challenge societies to ensure that “children grow in a secure, safe and caring environment in which the children can develop to be independent, autonomous and responsible adults who are sensitive to the rights and duties towards both the family and society.” (Ncube, 1998; p. 8). Similarly, the CRC also recognizes the rights of the family to bring up the child and socialize it in the manner consistent with local values, customs and traditions; and that the child should grow up in a family environment characterized by happiness, love and understanding. Thus the international laws identify the family as the natural unit of the society which serves as the custodian of moral and traditional values, and subsequently, charges State parties to ensure that they protect the child from cultural practices that are inimical to the welfare of the child (Article 18).

In summary, the African Charter is loaded with a number of unique ideas about indigenous cultures, including statements that the child:

1. Owes a duty to the family
2. Owes a duty to their parents in the form of support and respect in their old age.
3. In African context, childhood is not perceived and contextualized in age but in terms of intergenerational obligations and reciprocity. A child is always a child in relations to his or her parents
4. The idea of an autonomous and fully independent person outside the framework of the kin group or family appears alien to traditional conceptions of rights.
5. The family system ensures the discharge of parental obligations towards children and creates reciprocal obligations on the children to support their parents and families.



We have been examining how national and international laws have influenced the African family systems. We examined the extent through which the colonial policy of assimilation affected the marriage and family laws in contemporary times. We noticed that colonial authorities influenced national laws, especially in marriage affairs.



Self-Assessment Questions

Exercise 3.6

1. Examine the view that the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is sensitive to indigenous African cultures.

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2. Laws in African countries are still under the influence of colonial tendencies. Discuss.
 3. For la Cote d'Ivoire to assert her independence, her laws on marriage and family should be totally overhauled. Discuss.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear
- difficult topics if any.

UNIT 4: MUSIC IN AFRICAN CULTURES**Unit Outline**

- Session 1: The Concept of African Music: Definition, Nature and Scope
Session 2: Focal Groupings of Indigenous African Musical Types
Session 3: Specific African Traditional and Contemporary Music
Session 4: The Organization and Performance of African Music
Session 5: Classes of African Musical Instruments
Session 6: Social Functions of Music in African Cultures

You are welcome to Unit 4 of this module which attempts to give you an insight into what music in African cultures is all about. Unlike the uncomfortable experiences which some of you had in the study of ‘Music’ as a subject during your basic and 2nd cycle education, this area of study differs quite significantly from what you studied during those times. The study of music as a product of human culture in Africa, which we can refer to as Ethnomusicology, is a big relief and a rediscovery of music as a cultural tool that shapes and satisfies the socio-cultural needs of not only people in African societies, but also, people located in all cultures of the world. This Unit therefore focuses on ethnographic studies of music in the diverse cultures of African societies and further examines its impact on the practitioners. The unit has six sessions.

OVERVIEW

Session one deals with the definition, scope and nature of African Music. While session two, looks at the various umbrellas under which African musical types are grouped, session three covers specific types of traditional and contemporary music performed in Africa. The organization and performance of musical types in Africa are discussed in session four. Session five deals with the classes of African musical instruments and finally, Session six examines the social functions of music in the cultures of African societies.

Unit Objectives

By the end of this unit, you would be able to:



1. discuss the concept of African Music;
2. identify the broad groupings and characteristics of African Music;
3. describe how some African musical types are organized and performed;
4. identify societies and occasions on which they perform their musical types; and
5. state the social functions of music in African societies.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- difficult topics if any; and
- issues that are not clear

SESSION 1: AFRICAN MUSIC: DEFINITION, NATURE AND SCOPE

Welcome to Session 1 of this unit. We shall look at the definition, scope and nature of African Music in this session.

**Objectives**

By the end of this session, you should be able to:



- a) define the term 'African Music'.
- b) discuss the components and characteristics of African music.
- c) identify some music genres/composers that belong to this two musical eras.

Now read on ...

**1.1 What is African Music?**

A good definition and a meaningful understanding of African music cannot be easily established if we do not examine it thoroughly from two main perspectives: that is traditional and contemporary musical types that constitute the bedrock of its studies. Describing it as 'traditional' does not imply that the music belongs to the past and for this reason, has outlived its age and importance. The word has rather been used to draw a distinction between musical types created by Africans themselves (as their cultural legacy) and those that emerged as a result of a blend of musical elements from both African and Western cultures.

1.2 Traditional African Music

It can be defined as music composed or created by indigenous African musicians who generally, do not have any form of western education or musical training. Their indigenous musical compositions which are closely linked with indigenous African social and political institutions, are most often performed on communal basis, and accompanied with locally constructed instruments which we will examine in detail in Session 5.

This folk music is performed to mark certain events at their various stages of life; right from the cradle to the grave. Since this musical type is associated with traditional political, religious and economic institutions, it has been able to withstand the onslaught of the forces of Western civilization (Nketia, 1966). To date, it is still performed in the cultural contexts of the people. Examples of traditional musical types that are performed by some societies in the following countries in Africa are:

1. **Cameroun:** Bikutsi (Beti-Pahuin) and *Subi* (Oku)
2. **Ghana:** *Adowa* (Akans), *Agbadza* (Southern Ewes) and *Bewaa* (Lobi/Dagaaba).
3. **Guinea:** *Moribayasa* (Malinke), *Kakilambe* (Baga), and *Wali* (Malinke).
4. **Kenya:** *Isukuti* (Luhya), *Mshago* (Giriama and Digo), and *Adumu*, (Maasai)

5. **Nigeria:** *Bata* (Yoruba), *Roko* (Hausa) and *Egwu mgbu* (Igbo)
6. **Senegal:** *Dibon* (Malinke), *Sabar* (Wolof), and *Gombey* (Wolof).
7. **South Africa:** *Mohobelo* (Sotho), *Umtredo* (Xhosa), *Ndlamu* (Zulu).
8. **Uganda:** *Owero* (Samia-Bugwe), *Agwara* (Alur) and *Akogo* (Iteso).
9. **Zimbabwe:** *Jerusarema* (Shona) and *Muchongoyo* (Ndebele)

1.3 Contemporary African Music

It can be explained as music based on African melodic and rhythmic structures, makes use of western harmony, employs a blend of both African and Western musical instruments as its rhythmic foundation. This new African music is performed in the church, dance/concert halls and at local and national functions. The musical instruments are a blend of both African drums, bells, rattles, xylophones, castanets etc. and Western guitars, organs, trumpets, jazz sets, amplifiers etc. Examples of contemporary musical types in Africa are:

1.4 Dance/Guitar Band Music

- Highlife Music (performed in Ghana and other West African countries)
- Soukous and Rumba Music of the D.R. Congo
- Juju Music of the Yoruba of Southern Nigeria
- Gospel Music (performed in Christian churches/communities all over Africa)

Some renowned composers of guitar band music from Ghana include highlife musicians like E.K Nyame, Nana Ampadu, Amakye Dede, Kojo Antwi, Charles K. Fosu (Daddy Lumba), C.K. Mann and Gyedu Blay Ambolley. Nigerian highlife musicians include Aruna Ishola, Victor Waifo, Eddy Okonta, Prince Nico Mbarga. Noted as icons and pioneer performers of Juju music in Nigeria are Sunny Ade and I.K. Dairo.

1.4.1 Compositions in African art idiom by Western trained African musicians

- i. *Onipa beye bi* (Man has come to do part and not all) - Prof. J.H Nketia
- ii. *Chineke no N'ulo nso ya* (God is in His Holy Temple) - Prof. L. Ekwueme
- iii. *Alegbegbe Mawu ls Xexeame* (For God so loved the world) - Dr. Ephraim Amu
- iv. *Yen ara asaase ni* (This is our land) - Dr. Ephraim Amu
- v. *Nakls qiwlo le yunye key* (Cleanse me oh Lord) - Dr. M.Q. Amlor

1.4.2 Church Music

It comprises hymns, songs and anthems (with Biblical themes) that are performed during worship in orthodox and syncretic Christian churches. Some notable Western-trained African music scholars from Ghana and Nigeria who have contributed so much to the development church music are:

Ghana

- a) Dr. Ephraim Amu, described as the father of African Art Music, he wrote several songs and hymns which include, *Yehowa nye sitsofe* (The Lord is my refuge), *Esrɔm miele* (We are learning to resemble Christ) and *Yibi ma* (Give out freely).
- b) Professor Kwabena Nketia; composed songs like *Agya Nyame adom ahwe yen* (God's mercy takes watch over us) and *Onyame beko ama wo* (God shall fight for you).
- c) Mr. Augustus Adu-Safo: his songs include *Momma yensɔre kɔ Bethlehem* (Let us arise and go to Bethlehem), *Yesu aseda* (Christ's gratitude) and *Yerebɔ ose* (We hail you).
- d) Dr. Martin Q. Amlor: his songs include; *O! Yehowa Mawu* (Oh! Jehovah God) and *Mina miazo yi ngo kple Kristo* (Let us walk forward with Christ).

Nigeria

- a) Fela Sowade, believed to be the pioneer exponent of Yoruba church music, Fela wrote pieces like *Ka mo rokoso* (We must be pure in heart), *Oyigiyigi* (All powerful God) etc.
- b) Laz Edward Ekwueme, a composer and conductor, he established several choral groups. Among his church compositions are *Zidata mo nso gi* (Send down thy Holy Spirit), and *Sopuru Chineke nima mma nke idi nso* (Worship the Lord in the beauty of His Holiness).

1.4.3 Other Musical Genres

Other highly patronized contemporary African music genres that have followed those discussed earlier are Gospel, Reggae, Hip-life, Rap, etc. In Ghana for example, local dialects mostly constitute the texts of these musical types. It is interesting to note that gospel music performance in Ghana is heavily dominated by females. Some prominent female gospel musicians include:

- a). Daughters of Glorious Jesus – with songs like *Asomdwe Hene* (King of Peace), *Yesu mebɔ wo din daa* (Jesus, I shall always mention your name), *Okokroko* (The Mighty One) etc.
- b). Cindy Thompson: *Me kra* (My destiny), *Anwanwa dɔ* (Wonderful love), My Lord God.
- c). Diana Akiwumi: *Yesu bɛ yɛ* (Jesus will make it), *Ebesi me yie* (It would be well with me)

1.5 General Characteristics of African Music

- Singing, drumming and dancing are never separated; they are interrelated.
- There is no clear separation between performers and the audience.
- Some musical performances are solely for men, women, children or for all the three classes of people.
- Music performances are either accompanied or unaccompanied.
- Music performance can either be vocal, instrumental or both.
- Call and response singing technique is mostly employed in vocal renditions.
- The songs are not notated, they are learnt by rote and transmitted orally from one generation to the other.
- Since indigenous African musical types are preserved through oral tradition, the original composers are often unknown.
- Music forms an integral part of political, social, economic and religious activities of the people.

SUMMARY

So far, we have defined the term ‘African Music’ and examined two major music eras that constitute the bedrock of its studies. We also discussed African traditional and contemporary musical types and finally looked at the general characteristics of African music.



Self-Assessment Questions

Exercise 4.1

1. Explain the following terms: a) Traditional and Contemporary African Music.
2. Which gender dominates the field of gospel music performance in Ghana?
3. State three reasons why indigenous African music, to date, is still performed.

SESSION 2: FOCAL GROUPINGS OF INDIGENOUS AFRICAN MUSICAL TYPES

You are welcome to Session two of this unit. In this session, we shall look at the broad umbrellas under which traditional musical types of societies in Africa are grouped. Traditional African musical types thus, fall into three main groups: Occasional, Incidental and Recreational (Nketia, 1963:10). These groupings are based on the purpose and nature of the events into which indigenous African musical types they are incorporated.

**Objectives**

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

- a) identify the number and names of the main groups into which African musical types are grouped;
- b) specify musical types that belong to each of the groups identified;
- c) mention traditional institutions that are associated with each of these groups;
- d) state the purpose(s) of music making in each of the groups identified

Now read on...

**2.1 Occasional Music**

These musical types are performed once in a while. In other words, occasional musical types are those that are incorporated into rituals or ceremonies or other activities of individuals, groups or societies. Some of the social events that incorporate music making into ritual performances in African societies are:

2.1.1 Life-cycle Events

Music forms part of almost every stage of life of the African. Some of these stages of life are: birth, outdooring and naming ceremonies, puberty, marriage, death and funeral ceremonies.

2.1.2 Socio-Political Events

Music is integrated into socio-political events like enthronement or enskinment, destoolment or deskinment of chiefs, death and burial of chiefs, queen mothers and key personalities with high social statuses in the society. Music making also forms part and parcel of social groups and organizations like *asafo* companies, hunters', traders and blacksmiths' associations as well as state functions like durbars, festivals, regional and national celebrations.

2.1.3 Religious Events

Music used during worship by African societies is directed at addressing pertinent physical and spiritual problems that affect them. Indigenous religious music

performance therefore takes place during worship at the premises or shrines of the gods/deities in many African societies. For example, music forms part of ritual performances at the premises of *Akɔm* (Akans of Ghana), *Yeve* (Southern Ewes of Ghana) and *Shango* (Yoruba of Southern Nigeria). In the Brong Ahafo Region of Ghana, the *Ntoa* deity of the natives of Wenchi is publicly worshipped once a year during the celebration of *Apɔsɔ*, a special festival of music ritual. At other times, the deity may be consulted and worshipped at individual and group levels without intense music making. Since occasional music is performed during specific periods of the year or season, custom prohibits its performance out of context.

2.2 Incidental Music

Incidental musical types are those which are associated with activities that are non-ritual or non-ceremonial. Incidental music tends to play a secondary role in the framework of the entire activity undertaken.

2.2.1 Work Songs

Songs are sung to accompany farming activities. Societies in Africa which incorporate music making into this vocational activity, share the view, that farmers' music are avenues through which they express sentiments about their job and working conditions like weeding, tree felling, mowing, bush burning, dragging nets at sea, herding cattle etc. Farmers, fishermen as well as workers who engage in other forms of labour, believe that music incorporated into their occupational activities serves as incentive as well as energizer that psychologically goads them on to work harder to increase productivity.

At home, work songs serve other specific purposes: accompanying household tasks like building crop barns, roofing of new/old houses, pounding, grinding, threshing and drying of cereals etc. In examining ritual activities of farmers in the northern sector of Volta Region in Ghana, work songs accompany ritual performances in yam festival celebration, death and funeral rites of deceased farmers.

2.2.2 Cradle Songs

These are songs sung by nursing mothers to soothe and put their babies to sleep or to antagonize rivals (especially those without children) on misunderstandings that ensue between them.

2.2.3 Music Performed during Story Telling Sessions

Songs are intermittently sung at different stages of storytelling. The story teller intones songs in the course of his narration and the listeners also follow suit by first asking permission from the narrator to intone songs that emphasize the themes or motives of the story being narrated. It is important to note that songs sung during story telling sessions do not only prevent the listeners from sleeping or becoming inactive, but also

stress motives in the story that relate to good morals and attitudes which at the long run, help in shaping the character, and the total well-being of the listeners.

2.2.4 Music in Children's Play-Games

This musical performance which involves both adults and children, at a long run, enhances certain inherent qualities of the performers. These qualities may include alertness, agility, fast thinking, language/dialect eloquence, mathematical calculation, fitness of the body through exercise etc. Some of the play games which involve music performance are: *anhwewekyir* (Fante) or *dade megbe* (Ewe) meaning (do not look back), *adow kyekyekye* (stone passing game) and *ampe* (female game).

2.3 Recreational Music

Recreational music includes all forms of music that are not ritually or ceremonially bound. All music genres that are performed for entertainment and relaxation fall under this grouping. Recreational music can be performed by individuals or by groups of people: males, females, children or jointly performed by all of them.

Apart from satisfying entertainment roles, this musical performance by societies in Africa does not only take place in the evenings after a hard day's work, but also, it is performed on other festive or social occasions during:

- actual programme of activities in festival celebrations or state durbars as a form of additional entertainment.
- stages in funeral activities to provide entertainment to the mourners, sympathizers and well-wishers who come to accord the deceased (especially if he/she was once a member of a performing group), their last respect and farewell.
- intermissions in funeral activities where music and dance mostly enjoyed by the deceased when he/she was alive, could be requested for and performed.

On the whole, recreational musical types are performed during intermissions in festival and funeral activities as a way of either consoling or entertaining people. Notable recreational musical types include *adenkum*, *nnwomkorɔ* (Akan women), *agbadza* and *bɔbɔbɔ* (southern and northern Ewes), *adowa* (Akans of Ghana), *mshago* (Digo of Kenya) and *tora* (northern Ghana)

Can you identify and describe musical types from your traditional area that belong to any of the three categories discussed above?



Note your answer for FACE-TO-FACE discussion.

In this session, we have been able to identify the number and names of the focal groupings of African musical types. We also discussed the musical



types that belong to each of the three main groups discussed and further identified traditional institutions that are associated with each musical grouping. Finally, we discussed the purpose(s) that music serves in each of the three focal groups identified.



Self-Assessment Questions

Exercise 4.2

True or False

1. *Asafo* music is performed during death and funeral rites of only traditional chiefs.
2. Music performed in ritual activities in festival celebrations is ceremonial music.
3. Participants in play game activities in African societies are solely children.
4. Recreational music cannot be performed on funeral grounds in African societies.
5. Adowa, a social dance can be performed on funeral and recreational grounds.
6. *Adenkum*, *Nnwomkorɔ* and *Tora* are female traditional dances performed in Nigeria.



Assignment

Find out the names of two types of traditional music that are confined to the court of the paramount chief in your traditional area and describe briefly, how each of them is performed.

SESSION 3: SPECIFIC AFRICAN TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

Welcome to session three of Unit three. In this session, we are going to examine some specific indigenous music and dances, and identify societies or ethnic groups that perform them in Africa.



Objectives

After you have studied this session, you should be able to:



- a) state the names of some African musical types and the societies that perform them.
- b) discuss the occasions that determine their performances.
- c) identify the gender roles in these musical performances.

Now read on ...



3.1 Indigenous African Musical Types

We noted earlier under ‘characteristics of African music’ in Session one, that in performing indigenous music, singing, drumming and dancing are not separated or detached from each other. For this reason, let us now identify some musical types which make use of these three features mentioned. We would begin by first identifying some traditional musical types in the societies of Ghana and later proceed to examine few others from other societies in Africa.

3.1.1 Adowa

Among the *Akan* ethnic groups of Ghana, *adowa*, a dance named after the antelope, is one of the most well-known and regularly performed musical types in Ghana. *Akan* oral tradition states that this dance originated from the movements of an antelope which members of an *Asafo* company observed after bringing it home as a sacrifice to cure an ailment of a queen mother (*Abrewa Tutuwa*) in the Ashanti kingdom. After the health of the queen mother was restored, the subjects, in jubilation, imitated the movements of the antelope and this later developed into the *adowa* dance. It is mainly a female dance but the few men in the group, play the instruments and also pair up with the women to execute the dance. *Adowa* among the coastal *Akan* areas is known as *adzewa*. Apart from performing it at funeral celebrations, it is also featured during state functions, festivals, durbar of chiefs, visits of important local and government dignitaries.

The ensemble of *adowa* dance for example, in the *Akan* communities of Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Kwahu and Akim traditional areas, include the following: *adawura* (boat or slit bell), *trowa* (rattle), *atumpan* (master drum), *apentemma* (supporting drum), *petia* (supporting drum), and *donno* (supporting hour-glass drum).

Adowa performing group is most often led by a female leader called *adowahemaa*. While the instrumentalists sit in a horse-shoe formation, the singers and dancers stand behind them. The *adowahemaa* begins the performance by singing preludes or short introductory songs in a free style and rhythm as a vocal exercise and, as well, charge the performers and the atmosphere for the real music and dance session. This practice is referred to by Ewes as *gbemefofo* and Akans call it *aho*. The master drummer invites and dictates the time-line for the bell player to follow. The lead singer intones songs which are responded to by the Chorus. Adowa songs are largely in the call and response form; at times, there are two or more soloists who may tune up songs before the chorus enters to sing the song to the end.

The dance styles include solo dancing, dancing in pairs (male and female) etc. The costume used is locally referred to as *baasankye* which consists of two pieces of cloth: one is worn by the women (usually *kente*) around the body from the chest to the knee level. The other piece of cloth which is thrown over the left shoulder has one end of it hanging behind the dancer. The women have a special hair make-up locally called *dansinkran*.

3.1.2 *Fɔntɔmfrɔm*

This is a royal dance solely restricted to the traditional court of Akan chiefs. Being a ceremonial dance, *fɔntɔmfrɔm* is performed during processions to durbars in festival celebrations or state functions and to welcome an august foreign dignitary to the community. It is also performed when the chief and members of his council of elders sit in state during the demise and funeral celebration of a chief or someone who is a royal.

The origin of the dance, according to Akan oral tradition, was traced to elephants or monkeys which hunters saw in the forest performing it. After mastering the dance, they returned home and introduced it among the people. It is purely an instrumental music that is full of varieties of body movements and gestures that have symbolic meanings. A chief therefore dances to the rhythmic patterns of this folk genre to portray his rank, power and wealth. For example:

- If he dances and points his right fore-finger to the east, west, north and south and finally crosses his arms on the chest, it means “all that I have surveyed belong to me”.
- If he points to the sky, earth and finally points to his chest, it means “except God and mother Earth, nobody equals me in status”.
- If he dances and bends his trunk slightly backwards with open arms, it means “you are my backbone (fortress) on which I lean or depend”.

It is an abomination for a chief to trip and fall when dancing *fɔntɔmfrɔm*. The cause of the fall may be attributed to his misconduct that has tainted his ‘sacredness’ and for which reason he attracts the wrath and punishment of the gods or ancestral spirits and

subsequently liable for destoolment. A subject who also falls during a dance session is made to offer a ram as a fine.

Instruments that constitute the ensemble of the dance include: *From* (*bɔmmaa*), the master drum, *atumpan* (supporting drum), *apentemma* (supporting drum), *brenko* (supporting drum), *paso* (supporting drum), *apentemma* (supporting drum), *donno* (supporting drum) and *dawuro* (bell). Though *fɔntɔmfrɔm* is mainly a male dance, at present a few courageous women who understand the drum language of the dance, are not barred from performing it.

3.1.3 Agbadza

It is one of the oldest and popular musical types performed by Ewes of southern Ghana, Togo and Benin. Its performance is open to all: men, women and children, irrespective of class or religious affiliation. The origin of the name ‘*agbadza*’ has two varied interpretations: *dugbadza*, meaning, a dance which is broad based and open to all. The second interpretation, of ‘*agbadza*’ refers to girdle which was worn around the waist in *atrikpui*, a male war dance.

The structure of *agbadza* dance is in five movements: *banyinyi* (music seeking permission from the gods to perform the dance), *vutsɔtsɔ* (the real dance section), *adzo* (instrumental music for relaxation), *hatsitsia* (song cycle) is accompanied with bells and castanets and *vutsɔtsɔ*, which is a more intensive and longer dance session than the second movement. The ensemble of the dance include: *sogo* (master drum), *kidi* (supporting drum), *kagan* (supporting drum), *gakogui* (double bell) which plays the time-line, *asikpe* (handclapping). A recent addition to the ensemble is the *atsimevu* which is not used on all occasions.

The texts of *agbadza* songs reflect on the general behaviour or social life of southern Ewes in terms of their history, cultural values and practices. Being a social dance, it is performed in every town and village during festival, funeral and national celebrations. Costumes in *agbadza* dance include *kaba* and cloth for the women and the men wear togas, shorts that reach the knee level with caps on and have a cloth or several cloths tied around the waists.

3.1.4 Kpanlogo

This is the most recent of the Ga recreational musical types which emerged from earlier forms: *gome*, *kolomashie*, *oge* and *konkoma*. *Kpanlogo* is believed to have started during the wake of Ghana’s independence as a recreational music. The name is an abridged version of *kpanlogo a lɔgɔlɔgi*, meaning something crooked. Other sources of data about the origin of *kpanlogo* show the following revelations:

- *Kpanlogo* was introduced into the country from Fernando Po in 1962 by a Ga fisherman called Lincoln Otu who lived at that time at James town, a suburb of Accra.
- The music was introduced into Ga settlements by a group of Liberian fishermen who settled at ‘Kru town’ in James town.

Kpanlogo music making takes place during *Homowɔ* festival celebration, durbars, puberty rites, marriage, *kpodziemɔ* (out-dooring rites of a new-born child) and death and funeral celebrations. On the political front, *kpanlogo*, like the *bɔbɔbɔ*, of northern Ewes, was part and parcel of the political programmes of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah’s Convention People’s Party. The dance is open to all gender, but since it is an organized group, no outsider is allowed to take part and distort the dance movements during performance.

The instruments used in the dance are: *atswereshi* (2 master drums), *tamalin* (frame drum), *nono* (single/slit bell), *nononta* (double bell), *shekeshe* (rattle) and bugle, which is optional. The song texts focus on political and social issues like love, ridicule, hatred, joy, sorrow etc.

3.1.5 Bewaa

Bewaa, which is literally explained as “young people, come together”, is a social dance performed by the Dagomba, Gonja, Mamprusi, Nanumba and Wala ethnic groups in the Northern and Upper East and West Regions of Ghana to express their joy of the harvest of their farm products. It is also performed to accompany any of the following social events: enshrinement of a chief, durbars and marriage celebrations. Upon the request of the *Yaa Naa* (paramount chief), the dance can also be performed to welcome political dignitaries to his chiefdom. The ensemble of this dance includes *gyile* (xylophone), *gangaar* (cylindrical supporting drum), *kuɔr* (supporting drum), ankle bells and castanets. These instruments dictate the movements of the dancers who execute their vigorous movements in a circular formation. The performers dress in animal hides, short cloth or raffia skirts and hold whiskers (horse tails) to dance with.

3.2 Contemporary African Musical Types

Having defined contemporary music earlier in Session 1.3, I would like us now to examine in detail, three musical types that belong to this era and find out whether each of them has any blend of both African and Western musical elements or not. By elements, I mean the scale, rhythm, vocal music, harmony and instruments used in an entire composition.

3.2.1 Highlife Music

One of Ghana's most important and highly patronized musical types composed by Ghanaian musicians and partly accompanied by Western musical instruments like the guitar, accordion, jazz set, wood and brass winds, is highlife music. This music which was used around the early 1920s in musical concerts and drama became the main source of information, education and entertainment to the Ghanaian rural and urban poor.

Tracing the origin of the name, 'highlife', E.K. Nyame and E.T. Mensah (pioneer highlife musicians from Ghana), state that the term 'highlife' came to be linked with this home grown Ghanaian music which has free expression based on traditional tunes picked from the streets and later performed at western patronized clubs and entertainment centres. The name 'highlife', on the other hand, is also said to have been created by the poor majority of people who referred to the 'high life' styles lived by the privileged elite and the affluent who easily paid at that time, gate fees to enter entertainment halls to enjoy music believed to belong to African roots.

Apart from highlife music which is performed in Ghana and other West African countries, African traditional musical types that also have a blend of both African and Western musical elements and practiced to date, like the highlife include: *kwela*, *jive* and *mbaqanga* in South Africa, *chiremunga* in Zimbabwe, *benga* beat in Kenya, *soukous* in Central Africa, *juju* and *apala* music in western and southern Nigeria respectively, *makosa* in Cameroun and *mbalax* in Senegal.

Unlike the indigenous musical types, highlife music performance has no strict cultural restrictions that relate to whom it should be played for, occasion(s) of performance, place of performance etc. As a genre that has imprint of Western culture, highlife musicians lay claim to their individual compositions which are at times, protected by 'Copy Rights Law'. Refer to Session 1.3.1 to see the names of some highlife music composers mentioned earlier. To date, highlife music which is performed on almost every occasion at the political, social, economic and religious levels is still enjoyed, especially by the adult population in the West African sub-region.

3.2.2 Juju Music

This brand of music which is a synthesis of African and Western musical cultures emerged in the 1960s among the Yoruba society in Southern Nigeria. It later became more prominent than the other popular musical types because its first exponents like Tunde King and Irewolede Denge. They were later followed by other prominent composers like Tunde Nightingale J.O. Araba, C.A. Balogun, Sunny Ade, I.K. Dairo Ebenezer Obey and Prince Adekunle. The zeal and untiring efforts of all these musicians helped in sustaining the performance of juju music.

The singing and dance styles as well as the rhythm of Juju music, have mostly been adopted from Yoruba culture. The songs are not only enjoyed by the Yoruba communities, but it is also well patronized by societies that share common bounders with Yoruba land. Juju music is performed during traditional and national celebrations.

The ensemble of this dance is a blend of traditional Nigerian and Western musical instruments. It employs a lot of Western guitars, African drums, especially *Iya Illu* (hour glass tension drum), locally referred to in many societies in Ghana as the *donno*. It employs percussive instruments (idiophones) like rattles, bells etc. to strengthen its rhythmic base. The themes of the songs are taken from hymn tunes, Christmas carols, folk, and highlife tunes. The songs are not only sung in Yoruba or Nigerian local languages, but are also composed in Western languages like English and French.

3.2.3 Gospel Music

The advent of European presence in Africa, especially in the Gold Coast around the 15th century, brought with it, Christian liturgical music that impacted both positively and negatively on the music traditions of African societies. Despite the positive effects of Christianity and missionary education on Africans, Western technology on the other hand, brought a plurality of synthetic and entirely foreign brands of music to Africa. Since the 1980s, one of the latest musical types, that has caught up with almost all African Christian influenced churches and communities with the aim of shaping the lives of the people both physically and spiritually, is Gospel music.

The songs, which are recasts of selected hymns from various Christian hymn books, are given mere instrumental accompaniments. At times too, the composers either write new melodies and harmonies for texts selected from hymn books or they write their own texts and music. At large, the lyrics of gospel songs are mostly extracted from the Bible or based on psychological, physical and spiritual problems that affect people in their societies. Other composers claim that they receive their song texts from God through physical encounter, meditation or through dreams.

The Gospel music industry, which at present is dominated by female artistes, produces the largest percentage of audio and video-cassettes in the country. The instrumental rhythmic support to the songs is most often in the various traditional African dance veins: *agbadza*, *adowa*, *bɔbɔbɔ*, *akpi*, *nnwomkorɔ* etc. The music which is performed on both joyful and sorrowful occasions is also composed in other popular musical styles like reggae, raga, funk, calypso and jazz. Besides the popular gospel stars mentioned in Session 1.3.4, other Ghanaian gospel stars include Tagoe Sisters, Diana Asamoah, Florence Obinim, Prince Ifeoma, Stella Dugan, Kwaku Gyasi, Sonnie Badu etc.

Which male or female gospel artiste(s) can you identify from your traditional area or from places nearer to where you live? What are the titles of some of their gospel songs?

Pay a visit to a rehearsal of an organized traditional musical type (not discussed in this session). Find out information about the dance and try to write down your facts which should specifically relate to the following:



- when and where it is performed.
- gender of the performers
- how it is organized and performed.
- differential roles of the dance performers
- social role(s) of the dance

This session made an in-depth examination and discussion of some specific traditional and contemporary African musical types, ethnic groups or societies that perform them, occasions of performance of the musical types and gender of the practitioners. The session further identified and discussed specific genres that emerged from a blend of African and Western musical cultures. In the next session, we are going to discuss how societies in Africa organize and perform their musical types.



Self-Assessment Questions



Exercise 4.3

1. Which musical types emerged during the advent of European presence in South Africa?
2. On what are the themes of gospel songs mainly centred?
3. When is highlife music performed in Ghanaian or West African societies?
4. Explain the origin of the term ‘highlife’.
5. Which gender dominates the gospel music industry in Ghana?
6. Define contemporary African music.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear
- difficult topics if any.

**SESSION 4: THE ORGANIZATION AND PERFORMANCE OF
AFRICAN MUSIC**

Dear student, we welcome you to session 4 of this Unit. This session discusses how societies in Africa generally organize and perform music in their respective cultures. Having done the assignment given you in Session 3, I hope you will find the discussion of this topic quite easy, interesting and useful.

**Objectives**

By the end of this session, you will be able to:



- a) identify the categories of organizers and performers.
- b) describe the various ways in which music is organized and performed in Africa
- c) discuss the performance roles in African music
- d) describe dance as an integral part of African music performance.

Now read on...

**4.1 Categories of Performers and Basis for the Organization/
Performance of Music**

The organization of indigenous music in Africa is controlled by several factors: gender, age- group and the function of the music performed. The people who organize and perform these assorted musical types are men, women, children or a combination of the three groups. Among the reasons that inspire Africans to organize and perform their indigenous musical types are: they are bound together by ethnic and/or close linguistic ties such as belonging to the same homesteads, village, town or part of it. Owing to this social cohesion, every individual is aware of the needs of his/her society and gets involved in all activities that are of joint interest to the members. Since music performance encourages involvement in collective behaviors, the people come together to share common interests, ideas, uphold beliefs that strengthen their social bonds and re-affirm values that inspire their corporate lives.

Through communal music making, individuals have the chance of sharing in the creative experiences of fellow members; hence, they develop attitudes of learning very fast from one another. During organized music performances also, the younger generation, especially the potential musicians among them, has the opportunity of studying and understanding their musical cultures. The organization and performance of music in African societies generally fall into two groups: organized autonomous group of musicians and dancers, and spontaneous musical groups.

4.1.1 Characteristics of Organized Musical Groups

- Members of these groups come together as traditionally recognized autonomous groups of musicians or are attached to traditional institutions to perform musical type. Examples of these autonomous groups in Ghana are: *bɔbɔbɔ*, *adowa*, *agbadza*, *bamaaya*, *kpanlogo* etc. Some musical types attached to some traditional institutions are: *kete* and *fɔntɔmfɔm* (Akan courts of chiefs), *agblɔvu* and *akpi* (Ewe courts of chiefs). There are religious musical performances that are associated with traditional gods/deities like *Yeve* (god of lightning and thunder worshipped by Southern Ewe and Yoruba societies), *Akonnedi* and *Akɔm* (worshipped by some Akan societies).
- They are consistent in structure and membership. Membership may be through hereditary or family line. (Eg. *kwadwomfo*: confined to the court of the Asante king).
- They have set of rules and regulations as well as differential roles for members.
- They have well defined sets of instruments and costumes for performance.
- They hold practice sessions (rehearsals) to co-ordinate their dancing activities.
- They have executive members charged with the administration of the group.

4.1.2 Characteristics of Spontaneous Musical Groups

The members are music lovers who often times, are brought together by a particular occasion to make music. The characteristics of these ad-hoc groups therefore, are a direct opposite of those of the organized groups due to the following reasons:

- Leadership position during music performance is only temporal: it ceases when the performance is over.
- They have no assigned instruments and costumes or have no rehearsal periods.
- They are not obligated to one another: membership of the group ceases and breaks up as soon as the musical event is over.

4.2 Ways in which Music is Organized and Performed in Africa

The organization and performance of African music can take the following ways: vocal music (singing), instrumental music, a combination of vocal and instrumental music, and of course, dance which is also a crucial component of music performance.

4.2.1 Vocal Music: Call and Response Patterns

Singing in most African societies is organized into simple call and response patterns. By call and response pattern, the lead singer (soloist) sings an entire song through (from the beginning to the end) and, then, it is repeated by the larger group of singers (Chorus). This is also called solo and chorus form of singing. However, in all the songs that are sung in the various societies of Africa, the organizational interrelation between the call and response sections does not typically follow the same pattern.

A soloist is therefore, a person who intones or tunes up a song before the Chorus enters to sing. In some songs, the chorus repeats of the solo sections are on different pitch (sound) levels that go either above or below that of the solo singer. In other instances, a lead singer (Cantor) merely intones the opening phrase of a song and then the Chorus joins in to sing together with the lead singer to the end. This is referred to as the cantor and chorus form of singing. The soloist/cantor possesses certain innate qualities that qualify him/her as a lead singer: sweet singing tone, strong retentive memory and good dancing skills. At times, the periods during which the chorus joins in to sing depends on when the heightened levels of music performance occur. When a performance is animated, the Chorus joins in immediately after the lead singer intones the song. At other times, the Chorus section delays in joining the solo performer.

4.2.2 Other Forms of Vocal Performances

- Individual solo singing: this is undertaken for example, by nursing mothers who sing lullabies for their babies, women who sing dirges, men (fishermen) who sing as they haul or mend their fishing nets, boys who sing as they herd cattle etc.
- Solo singing with self-instrumental accompaniment: this is true of professional West African musicians called praise singers who sing praises of royals and noblemen. They are also noted as orators, historians, geographers and teachers. Their songs inform, educate, entertain and, regulate societal behavior. They sing and accompany themselves with simple traditional instruments locally called *goje* and *kora*. These are traditional string instruments. They also use the *donno*, a double headed drum. Praise singers are locally referred to as griots in Senegal, *gewel* in Gambia. They are also known as *maroka* and *oriki* singers among the Hausa and Yoruba societies respectively in Nigeria.
- Combination of both vocal and instrumental ensembles: singing and playing of instruments (like drums, bells, rattles, wooden flutes, animal horns and string fiddles) take place concurrently.

4.3 Pure Instrumental Music Performance

Even though music performance in the cultures of Africa does not detach singing, drumming and dancing from each other, there are musical types that are purely instrumental and solely restricted to certain classes and statuses of people in the society. One of the African traditional institutions that incorporates instrumental music performance into its programme of activities is the court of chiefs/kings. The rank of paramount chiefs in some societies is specifically marked by the number of musical types and instruments that are confined to his court. Examples of instrumental musical types that are confined to the court of chiefs and performed solely through dance movements without any form of vocal accompaniment in Ghana are: *fɔntɔmfrɔm* (Akans), Kete (Akans), *agblɔvu* (Northern Ewes) and the *lunsi*, (professional drummers) of the state of Dagbon, in northern Ghana.

4.4 Dance

In African societies, the place of dance in musical performances is very crucial. The reason is that music and its rhythmic patterns stimulate motor response, intensify one's enjoyment of music and eventually lead to physical body movements. Dance as an art, is therefore, movement of the body to rhythm and music. In organized or spontaneous musical performances, a dance is considered as a form of emotional expression, social interaction and physical exercise to the practitioners. Through appropriate dance movements and symbolic gestures, dancers are able to express their cultural beliefs, explain the feelings of an individual, a couple or an entire community.

African dances, as non-verbal forms of communication, often comprise miming, procession, and actual choreographed movements and gestures etc. They are also classified on the basis of gender and deeply reinforce community structures like age, status, kinship and context. The basic dance movements may be simple or intricate: in some dances, instead of moving the whole trunk in a simple rhythm, it is only the upper or lower part which is emphasized. Among the Urhobo of Nigeria, dancers may move their shoulders up and downwards, expand their chests, raise their pelvis, arms and legs to different rhythmic patterns of the music. The *amakwenkwe* (young men under the age of 20 or 21) of the Xhosa society of South Africa, perform the *Umteyo* (Shaking dance) which involves rapid undulation or shaking of the thorax so that the whole length of the spine appears to be rippling. In the performance of *avihawo* (dirges), among northern Ewe women in Ghana, the dance style involves the movement of the hips in addition to intricate foot works that move and alternate from side to side with the arms swinging in the direction of alternating footsteps. The dance may be open to all, or it may be an activity in which one, two, three, or four individuals (regardless of sex) take turns in the dancing ring. Team or massed dances also do occur. African dance formations may be linear, circular, serpentine, or columns of two or more rows. On the whole, dance creates a sense of unity and social solidarity among the performers and the entire society.



Watch a traditional music performance in the local area you reside. Identify the name of the musical type and describe four dance formations that are executed in the dance by the performers.

SUMMARY

In this session, we have learnt that African music is performed by organized and spontaneous groups. The practitioners of these assorted musical types are men, women, children or a combination of the three groups. Music making is seen as a means of communication, encouraging involvement in collective behaviors, sharing common interests, ideas, beliefs and strengthening social bonds and values that inspire corporate lives of Africans. Dance, an integral part of African music performance, also makes use of elaborate costumes, masks, props, body art, and gestures to communicate. Even though it is a non-verbal art, it is a means of expressing

deep seated spiritual connection that holds and binds Africans together and draws them closer to their gods and ancestral spirits.

Self-Assessment Questions



Exercise 4.4

1. Why do societies in Africa consider music and dance performances as symbolic?
2. Mention four elements that are very crucial to the organization and performance of African music.
3. Why is *fɔntsɔmfrɔm* dance considered very important in the Akan society of Ghana?
4. What are *avihawo*?
5. Identify two traditional dances from outside Ghana and describe how they are performed.
6. Why do traditional societies prefer music making on communal (collective) basis?
7. Explain the following terms: a) soloist b) a cantor c) chorus.
8. State three reasons why music performances in African societies are not the same.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear
- difficult topics if any.

SESSION 5: CLASSES OF AFRICAN MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Welcome to the penultimate Session of this Unit. In this session, we are going to make a general study of the classes of musical instruments that constitute the ensemble of music and dance performances in Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Objectives

It is hoped that by the end of this session, you will be able to:

- a) state the definition of the term ‘musical instrument’.
- b) identify the number and the names of the classes of African musical instruments;
- c) mention some specific instruments, and describe their materials of construction, playing techniques as well as their social roles; and
- d) identify some Ghanaian musical types as well as those of other Africa societies that make use of some of the classes of African instruments discussed.



Now, read on...



5.1 Classification of African Musical Instruments

An important element used by most African societies to accompany their singing and dancing activities, are musical instruments. Varieties of musical instruments therefore abound in the cultures of most African societies. Africans, like other neighbours all over the world, use musical instruments that vary in many respects: materials of construction, methods of construction, shape, tone colour (difference in the sound of instruments) etc. The definition of instrument in this context is any device other than the voice which produces sound. Voice, of course, is also an instrument, but for the purpose of our discussion in this session, the focus is on instruments that have been constructed by Africans themselves.

The scientific classification of instruments, based on how sound is produced has five categories: **idiophones**, **membranophones**, **chordophones**, **aerophones** and with the latest addition called electrophones. The last category, electrophones, which generate their sounds through the use of electrical current, for now, will not be part of our discussions because strictly, they do not belong to the tradition of indigenous African musical instruments.

5.2 Idiophones

Idiophones are instruments that produce sound through vibration of their bodies. They are more often than not, solids that produce sounds when beaten. Instruments which belong to this category are the most widespread types in the musical environments of Africa. Idiophones can further be grouped into two categories: primary and secondary idiophones.

- primary idiophones: are held in the hand and played either by shaking or hitting the instruments. Examples of these instruments are: *nnawuta/gakogui* (double bell), *trowa/axatse* (enmeshed gourd rattle), *frikyewa/fritsiwɔe* (castanet), *akpe* (wooden clappers), *pambrovu* (stamping tubes made from stems of bamboo) etc.
- secondary idiophones: are instruments that are either worn/attached to parts of the bodies, costumes of performers and activated by the movements of their bodies or hanged/attached to the instruments and they vibrate in sympathy with the instruments whenever they are played. Examples include: jingling metals, ankle buzzers, and small arm, waist or wrist bells. Among the musical roles that idiophones play are to:
 - a) provide rhythmic accompaniment to songs and thereby boosting the rhythmic foundation of a performance.
 - b) create melodies with idiophones like the *gyile* (xylophone) and *mbira* (thumb piano) which have definite pitches to support vocal renditions in music performances.
 - c) provide signals that draw the public to ceremonies like *dipo* and *bragorsɔ:* (puberty rites of adolescent girls in the Krobo and Ashanti societies in Ghana).
 - d) scare birds away from paddy fields with small bells and empty cans.

5.3 Membranophones

They are instruments (drums) that produce sound through vibration of a stretched membrane or skin over their openings. In other words, they are drums with parchment heads. (Nketia, 1963:94) Drums can either be single or double-headed. Single headed drums are those that have one end covered with membrane (animal hide). Examples are: *atumpan*, *apentemma*, *kwadum*, *petia* and *sogo*. Double-headed drums have both ends covered and types of them include the *donno* (hour glass drum) and *brekete* (drum found in the three northern regions of Ghana). In appearance, drums can be goblet, tabular, rectangular, conical, cylindrical or bottle-shaped.

The materials used in constructing drums are logs of wood (e.g. *atumpan*, *apentemma*, *agblɔvu*, *laklevu* etc) or strips of wood bound together by iron hoops or nails (e.g. *atsimevu*, *sogo*, *tamalin* etc). Some drums are made from gourds (e.g. *kuɔr* used in the three northern regions of Ghana). Others are made from clay, that is, earthenware pot drums which are very common in southern Nigerian societies.

Drums are played through one or more of the following techniques:

- a) stick – to play drums like the *atumpan*, *kidi* and *kagan*
- b) hand – to play master drums; *sogo* and *vuga/havana* in *agbadza* and *bɔbɔbɔ* dances.
- c) stick and hand – to play the *atsimevu*.
- d) armpit and stick – used in playing the *donno*.
- e) heel and the hand – to play *gome* drum (of the Ga) when the player sits on it.

- f) friction – rubbing the surface of *laklevu* (of northern Ewes) or *etwie* drum of Akans. These two societies use these instruments to imitate the snarl of a leopard.

In examining the roles of drums in the societies of Africa, it can be noticed that they serve dance, signal and speech purposes.

- **dance:** selective use of rhythms and tone patterns in recurring and contrasting sequences based on the regularity of pulse and strict rhythmic patterns of the ensemble, generates motor feeling which is transferred into different dance forms.
- **signals:** drums apart from serving music purposes, are used in some African cultures to relay messages in short repetitive rhythmic patterns to members of the community. Typical drums that serve signal purposes in some Ghanaian traditional societies are *vukpo* (northern Ewes) and *twenesini* (Akans). Drumming in this context is a series of broken drum beats that are played at only mono tone levels.
- **speech:** this is different from the signal mode of drumming which uses short and repetitive rhythmic patterns. In the speech mode, sound produced by drums (like the *atumpan* of the Akans and *Iya Illu (dundun)* of the Yoruba, are capable of closely imitating the tones and subtle inflections of their languages. These instruments therefore communicate important pieces of information from chiefs to their subjects or announce matters that relate to danger or imminent disaster to members of the society. To the African, speech mode of drum language is quite important, because, it stimulates and guides social behaviour of society members: the drum texts warn, praise, ridicule, raise alarm, rally people or express sympathy.
- The use of drums, on the whole, is important because some of them serve as religious symbols of traditional political office: hierarchical structure, status and power of traditional African rulers.

5.4 Chordophones

They are instruments that generate sound through stretched string(s) fixed onto their resonators. They can simply be described as African stringed instruments. The number of strings on these instruments vary from one instrument to the other; ranging between one string to as many as twenty-one strings. All over Africa, one can find different types and sizes of chordophones. Chordophones are beaten, struck, bowed or plucked and examples we would like to discuss are:

- musical bow, mouth bow and earth bow
- harps, lutes etc.
- fiddles

5.4.1 Musical Bow

One of the most widely used African chordophones is the musical bow which looks like a hunting bow. The string that is fastened to both ends of the bow is either struck or plucked with a stick. In some other cultures, the people provide a gourd resonator for the bow or the player uses his mouth as a resonator. He does this by placing the string in between his parted lips so that his mouth acts as a resonator whose sound can be amplified or lowered by opening or closing the mouth. A popular local mouth bow used in some Akan communities of Ghana is called *benta*. The gourd resonator bow in the Republic of Benin is called *tiepore* and in some cultures of societies in Rwanda where it is fairly widespread, it is known as *Munahi*.

5.4.2 Harps

Harp which is a plucked string instrument is mostly found in the Central and the West African sub-regions. Its number of strings varies from one locality to the other and from one producer to the other. A local equivalence of the harp found among some ethnic groups in the Akan society of Ghana is known as *sepewa*. The local names of this instrument in some other African societies are: *Wombi*, which has eight strings and played by the Pongwe ethnic group of Gabon. The *kora* has between nineteen to twenty-one strings and it is mostly used by praise singers (see Session 4.2.2) in Senegal and Gambia.

5.4.3 One-stringed Fiddle

A popular one-stringed fiddle used in Northern Ghana and in the West African sub-region is the *goje*, a bowed-stringed instrument. It is believed to have originated from North Africa through religious contact or through the Trans-Saharan caravan trade. This instrument is widely used in the Muslim regions of Cameroun, Chad, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, Nigeria and almost the entire zone that extends from Senegal to the Lake Chad. It has varieties of local names and spellings from one community to the other. The various names by which goje is known include *goge* (Hausa and Zarma, Gambia, Nigeria), *gonjey* (the Dagomba and Gurunsi of Ghana), *gonje*, (the Mamprusi of Ghana), *njarka* (the Songhay of Niger), *n'ko* (the Bambara, Mandinka and other Mande languages of Guinea, Mali etc), *riti* (the Fula, Serer, and Wolof of Senegal) and *durunya* (the Frafra of Ghana).

The sound box of the instrument is constructed from a hemispherical calabash or wood with a nailed alligator or cow skin. A single horse string is fixed to a short neck and stretched over a bridge. A hole is made on sound box to allow sound to escape through it. The instrument produces sound by use of a bow which is a curved stick (with horse hair string fixed to both ends) that is rubbed against the string in a forward and backward movement of the arm. Tuning is done by adjusting wooden or metal pecks fixed to the neck of the instrument. String instruments in the numerous cultures of African societies play important cultural roles among which are the following:

- They accompany solo singing or in an ensemble to support musical activities in festival and funeral celebrations.
- They accompany poetry recitals, praise and narrative songs in some African societies.
- The *goje* for example, is believed to create and maintain suitable atmosphere for the performance of rituals during magical incantations of the Mauri and Djerma in Niger to call upon their gods *Genii*, *Babai* and *Zatu*.
- The *wombi* is used by the Pongwe ethnic group in Gabon to accompany religious songs to heal the sick.
- They are used in musical activities during birth, outdooring, naming ceremonies and traditional wrestling matches of some societies.
- They are used to sing praises or eulogize chiefs, nobles, affluent community leaders and heroes in the society.

5.5 Aerophones

These are instruments that are played by blowing air into them to produce sound as a result of the vibrating column of air that passes through them. In other words, they are simply called wind instruments. In Africa, many societies make use of a limited number of aerophones. They can be put into three main categories: flutes, reed-pipes, animal horns or trumpets.

5.5.1 Flutes

They are made from materials with natural bore that is plants like the bamboo, stalk of pawpaw, millet etc. that have holes naturally created in them by nature. Others are the tip of gourds, horns or trumpets of animals. There are traditional flutes that have been carved out of wood and at present there are others that have been made out of plastic and metal tubes. A number of these tubes are at times bound together to make pan-pipes with each pipe producing a note at a time. It would be interesting also to note that in some African societies, flutes are made out of clay and others are fashioned out of the shell of fruits or sea shells.

These wind instruments are either side-blown or end-blown with varying number of finger-holes. The end-blown flutes are more common than the side-blown types. Among the best known end-blown flutes are the *atenteben* of the Akan in Ghana, and the *Oja* of the Igbo in Nigeria.

5.5.2 Reed-pipes

Two types of this instrument can be identified; single-reed and double-reeds. Single-reed pipes are made out of the stalk millet or a similar plant. It is widespread in the savannah belt of West Africa in countries like Burkina Faso, northern Ghana, Benin and Chad. In Malawi, the single-reed pipe is locally called *kheru*.



Which other local plant (not discussed in this session) did you use in constructing single reed-pipes when you were young?

The *algaita*, a traditional trumpet of the Kanuri and the Hausa of northern Nigeria, is a popular double-reed pipe which is often used in their musical events. Instead of keys, it has open holes for fingering. The instrument is also spelt *alghaita*, *algayta* or *algeita*.

5.5.3 Trumpets

The trumpets are made of animal horns and elephant tusks. Apart from the *algaita* which is end-blown, most of them are side-blown instruments. The *nja* or *kaho* found in northern Nigeria, *mmensuon* (processional flute music for Akan chiefs) in Ghana, and *ekpere*, used by the Urhobo ethnic group in Bendel state of Nigeria, are all side-blown trumpets. There are some indigenous end-blown trumpets that are made out of wood or of metal, or parts of a gourd. In musical performances, trumpets can be played as solo instruments, in pairs or as an ensemble or at times combined with drums. The shapes and sizes of aerophones in Africa differ from one society to the other.

In examining the social significance of wind instruments in African cultures, it can be noted that they play both musical and non-musical roles:

- Apart from its musical role, the Baule of Cote d'Ivoire, the Akan and Ewe societies of Ghana regard a large number of elephant tusks that are used in the processional music of a chief as a demonstration of the state of wealth in that chiefdom.
- Flutes for example, are used for signal purposes; the Brifor and Builsa young cattle herders in northern Ghana, play flutes to signal their colleagues about their movements in the fields and also to alert those at home about their journey back home.
- Aerophones are used to sing praises or eulogize chiefs, nobles, affluent community leaders and heroes in the society.
- Similar to the role of chordophones, some aerophones are particularly suitable for accompanying solo singing or perform as an ensemble to support musical performances in social activities like in festival, puberty rites, funeral celebrations etc.



Can you think of any other way(s) in which specific instruments play socio-cultural roles in your local community?

Hello! cherished learners; I think we are now in a position to confidently identify the classes of musical instruments in Africa and can even move further to describe some musical instruments that belong to each of the classes discussed. Let us always remember that generally, there are four classes of African musical instruments: idiophones, membranophones, chordophones and

SUMMARY

aerophones. The classification is based on materials of construction available in a society, on how sound is produced and the life-style of the people naturally determine the type(s) of musical instruments that a society uses. Some African instruments play dual roles: they are used both in musical and non-musical contexts. Examples of instruments that play dual roles are the *atumpan* and *donno*: they can be used for music and communication purposes in some African societies.

Self-Assessment Questions



Exercise 4.5

1. Give two reasons why there are differences in the types of instruments used to accompany music and dance performances in African societies.
2. Explain the following terms:
 - a) mono tone
 - b) parchment head
 - c) primary/secondary idiophone
 - d) end-blown/side-blown instrument
3. What materials are often used in constructing one-stringed instruments in West Africa?

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear
- difficult topics if any.

SESSION 6: SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF MUSIC IN AFRICAN CULTURES

Dear Student, welcome to the sixth and final session of this Unit which of course, brings to a close, the study on music in African cultures. Congratulations for having reached this level. In this session, we are going to find out reasons why societies in Africa, in spite of their exposure to varieties of foreign cultures and music today, still persist in performing music that belong to their traditional roots.



You need to note at this point that to date, global cultures (including those in Africa) that maintain their indigenous musical cultures, is an indication that these varieties of music continue to serve some specific needs and purposes in their day to day socio-cultural behaviour and interaction.

Objectives

It is hoped that by the end of the session, you will be able to:

- a) state the functions of music in the social events of Africans; and
- b) identify specific functions of some indigenous musical types in Ghanaian societies.

Now, read on...

**6.1 Social Functions of Music in African Community Life**

In African societies, music constitutes an important element of socio-cultural behaviour: it may be organized as an outlet for mass expression of sentiments and in connection with events of local and national significance. For this reason, actual music performance on any occasion in African societies depends on the social event and those involved in it, for it is customary to perform music genres in relation to the different phases of community life or in terms of particular needs and purposes they serve in the communities that perform them.

In Africa, music integrated into social activities is strongly considered as an important cultural tool that unites, shapes and sustains societal life. Music, which therefore, is seen as an avenue that draws Africans closer to the Supreme Being, spirits of their gods and ancestors, will be discussed in this session in relation to the following social events:

- life cycle
- religious
- economic
- political/ceremonial
- recreational/leisure

6.1.1 Life-cycle Events

Music making supports cultural activities that are performed at different stages of life of individuals. In most African cultures, singing, drumming and dancing are highly considered as core cultural values that are crucial to ritual performances. Rituals are therefore considered powerless if they are devoid of musical performances that characterize them. Some of the traditional events that incorporate music into their ritual performances are:

6.1.2 Outdooring/Naming Ceremonies

Among the Hausa, Fulani and Yoruba of Nigeria, the Ga and Dagomba of Ghana, music is performed in birth rituals to welcome a new baby (believed to come) from the spiritual to the physical world. Among the repertoire of songs that are sung, some of their themes centre on:

- i. gratitude to the gods and spirits of the ancestors for successfully granting the arrival of a new member to the society.
- ii. wishing the child a happy stay, to grow into a useful adult in the family and the society at large.
- iii. praises and congratulation to the family of the new-born child.

6.1.3 Puberty or Initiations Rites

Puberty rites like *dipo* (Krobo), *bragorɔ* (Ashanti), *gbɔto* (northern Ewes), *gbelele* (southern Ewes) in Ghana, *elima* (BaMbuti pygmies of D.R. Congo), circumcision and excision rites for boys/girls (Dan and Luchasi ethnic groups of Cote d'Ivoire and Eastern Angola), mark the transition of life of especially, young adolescent boys and girls from childhood to adulthood. The initiates, who are camped for some period of time outside their homes, receive instructions mostly through songs and dances which form part of their initiation rites. In south-eastern Angola for example, the initiates dance to the observation of the elderly who criticize and make corrections in their dance movements before they are finally re-integrated into the society through public music and dance performances.

6.1.4 Marriages

Marriage or wedding ceremonies are periods for intensive music making in some societies in Africa. For instance, among the Ga, Hausa and Yoruba societies, music performance characterizes marriage activities. At points in time, individuals or groups of people may break into singing folk songs which later lead to accompaniment with handclaps. Among the Dogon ethic group of Mali, a bride's first appearance at the house of the groom is marked with elaborate music making. To these societies, the omission of music in such events depicts incompleteness of the customary activities associated with the marriage occasion.

A contemporary feature now incorporated into traditional marriage ceremonies is employing the services of disk jockeys to play both traditional and foreign popular music with western electronic gadgets. Though foreign music now forms part of marriage celebrations in African societies, music used in marriage rituals are the indigenous types because they are believed to invoke the presence of the spirits of the gods and ancestors to superintend over nuptial ceremonies and, as well, bless, unite and make couples fertile in readiness for procreation.

6.1.5 Funeral Celebrations

Funeral celebrations are occasions which integrate varieties of musical performances from the period of preservation of the corpse, interment, and after burial rituals. Recreational music is performed at times during funeral celebrations when the deceased was a former member of the group. In other instances, a recreational music which the deceased enjoyed when he was alive may be requested by the bereaved family to be performed for him in addition to dirges that characterize funeral dramas. Among the Akan and Ewe ethnic groups in Ghana, singing of dirges is the prerogative of adult women. The texts of these mourning songs, known as *avihawo* by the Ewes, and *nsuiε* by the Akans, are intended to:

- accord the deceased their last respect and farewell.
- petition the ancestors to accept the deceased into their fold in the spiritual world.
- recount good deeds of the deceased and urge those alive to copy and replicate such good deeds.
- console the bereaved family, entertain sympathizers and personalize death by frowning on its wickedness to humans.

Can we affirm that music making is part and parcel of all funeral celebrations in every African society? Why do Moslem societies or communities in Africa shun music making during death and burial rites of their members.



Note your answer down for Face-to Face discussion

6.2 Religious Events

As music cuts across the entire socio-cultural foundation of African societies, worship of the Supreme Being and the lesser gods is not devoid of music. A religious philosophy of Africans expressed through religious music about God, is that, He is the greatest ancestor, caretaker and protector of the society and therefore deserves praise, gratitude and honour. Africans acknowledge God's sterling qualities and do not worship him directly but through lesser gods who are believed to be His creations. Modum (1982:45-47), supposed: "music as an important element in indigenous religious worship, is found in instrumental, vocal, dance or a combination of two or all three forms is meant to prepare the psyches of the devotees to commune with the divinities and praise them for

their favours, protection and redemption”. These functional roles of music largely explain why traditional societies in Africa involve their divinities, and ancestral spirits directly in their material, moral and spiritual lives. Indigenous African religious songs therefore entreat every worshipper to live a dignified life that warrants the attention and blessing of the Supreme Being, spirits of the gods and ancestors. Failure to live up to expectation is considered as falling below the dignity of the Supreme Being and the lesser gods.

Newly trained priests and priestesses, acquire skills to communicate with unseen spirits at various stages of worship through the use of special religious songs, declamatory texts and dance movements. For example, every devotee of the *Yeve* cult among the southern Ewes is taught the music and dance peculiar to the cult. Therefore if any traditional god is moved outside its original premises and established elsewhere, it goes along with its music traditions. Generally, the names of religious musical types are derived from the names of the gods. Examples are *akɔm* music, *akonnedi* music, *yeve* music, *kple* music, *tigare* music etc.

A classical submission by Parrinder on music in African traditional worship is that “the most common situation in which they manifest themselves is the musical situation in which music which affects them is performed. They descend to the people through their human media and participate in the drama of worship” (1949:41). In summary, the themes of indigenous religious songs in African societies are intended to achieve the following objectives:

- project the dogma of the gods, and expressing the interrelation between the gods and their worshippers.
- show the power and kindness of the gods.
- stimulate to action and sustain the condition of ecstasy in the media of the gods until the mission of the gods are fulfilled.

Songs of petition sung during traditional religious worship in most African cultures centre on:

- long life and prosperity
- protection from all forms of evil/demonic attack and diseases
- cure to childlessness
- good rain, land fertility and bumper food crop harvest
- abundant children

6.3 Economic Events

Music performance is closely linked with various work situations in the diverse cultures of Africa. Occupational musical types, which of course are incidental in character, play secondary roles to manual labour undertaken by many African societies. Some of these traditional vocations include farming, fishing, hunting, trading, blacksmithing etc.

6.3.1 Music in Farming and Fishing Activities

Music accompanies farming activities on the farm. Societies in Africa which incorporate music making into farming activities share the view that, farming songs are avenues through which they express their feelings about their jobs and working conditions that relate to weeding, tree felling, mowing, bush burning, dragging nets at sea, herding cattle etc.

In Ghana for instance, farmers, fishermen and other indigenous vocational workers believe that music integrated into their occupational activities serves as an incentive as well as energizer that psychologically goads them on to work harder to increase productivity. At home, work songs serve other specific purposes: accompanying household tasks: building crop barns, roofing of new/old houses, pounding, grinding, threshing and drying of cereals.

In the Republic of Benin, co-operative groups of young workers called *Dokpwe*, help one another to work on the farm, build and roof houses. In building new thatch houses, they take turns in digging and gathering clay from deep pits which take few workers at a time. Those who stand at the edge of the pits waiting for their turn, sing songs which are accompanied with bells and rattles to urge on the working zeal of their comrades.

Fishermen sing at sea to petition the gods of the sea and the land for protection from all forms of dangers at sea and on the land. They sing songs also to alleviate tiredness while they row their boats and haul their nets ashore in rhythm to the movements of their hand muscles. Traders, including market women also use music to advertise their wares to attract customers to come and buy them.

6.3.2 Music in Hunting Rituals

Despite the fact that contemporary life in most African societies tends to overlook hunting, in the past, it was a traditional vocation which offered means of livelihood to professional hunters. They often form associations because of their mutual interests. Though they are neither musicians nor people whose associations are musical groups, they employ music in their ritual performances. One is eligible for membership of the association after killing two or three wild games like a lion, buffalo, elephant, leopard etc. The local name of this genre in Akan is *abofe*. The Ewes call it *adevu* and the Yoruba of southern Nigeria refer to it as *ijala*.

Some of the ritual activities into which music is integrated are:

- prayers, libation and sacrifices for protection from attack of wild forest animals.
- initiation/promotion of amateur hunters who qualify for professional hunters' status.
- death and funeral rites of deceased hunters.
- funerals organized for the games killed.

- giving honour of ‘burial’ to games killed so that their spirits might not loiter around to haunt the hunters and bring misfortune to the entire society.

It is interesting to note that in hunters’ music and dance performances, master hunters and their boys in training, enact forest scenes through body movements that include tracking animals, taking quick and short steps, crawling, halting, aiming and firing.

6.4 Music in Indigenous Political/Ceremonial Events

One of the most important musical types associated with indigenous political system in Africa is music of the traditional courts of chiefs. Customarily, chiefs are ritually installed or enskinned amidst music making. They have special music played for them on state functions like festival ceremonies, durbars, as well as death and funeral celebrations of deceased chiefs. In Ghana for example, *kete*, traditional Akan court music, is purposely performed for royals who qualify to be carried in palanquins. *Fɔntɔmfrɔm* is also an Akan court music that accompanies chiefs in procession to and from durbar grounds. It is also played during festival and funeral ceremonies of royals and important dignitaries.

Some musical instruments at the courts of chiefs in African societies do not only accompany singing and dancing but are also regarded as mythical symbols of office: they show hierarchical structure, status and power of traditional African rulers. The Lovedu society of South Africa has the *digoma*, a sacred drum, mystically linked with the life of their queen. The *atumpan* (talking drum) which is very dominant in the Akan societies of Ghana, does not only play the role of a master drum in *adowa* ensemble or a supporting drum in *fɔntɔmfrɔm* dance; it is also used for communication purposes to disseminate information: to rally round society members, give instructions and directions. In the olden days, this instrument was used to direct and give announcements to soldiers on the battle field.

In most societies in Africa, music is performed in annual festivals that are instituted around major agricultural rites, state gods or divinities, renowned heroes/heroines, or around episodes from history and traditions of the people. Festival celebrations are always important occasions for music making and public re-enactment of the beliefs and values on which the solidarity of the people depends.

6.5 Music in Recreational Events

As we mentioned earlier, (see Session 2.3), recreational music includes all forms of music that are not ritually or ceremonially bound. All musical genres that are performed for entertainment and relaxation are collectively referred to as recreational genres. Recreational music can be performed by individuals or by groups of people: males, females, children or performed jointly by all these classes of people. It may be performed during festival and funeral ceremonies or in other social activities between

actual programme of events or as an additional form of musical entertainment. Among the reasons that precipitate recreational music performances in most African societies are to:

- express joy for good rainfall seasons and bumper crop harvests.
- show gratitude to the Supreme Being, spirits of the gods and ancestors for granting good health and success in their traditional vocational activities.
- honour invitations from individuals, groups or government dignitaries to perform at district, regional and national celebrations.
- grace activities during birth, outdooring, naming, puberty and marriage ceremonies.
- accord a last respect and bid a deceased farewell during death and funeral celebrations, to console bereaved families and, as well, provide entertainment to mourners, sympathizers and well-wishers at funeral gatherings.
- bring sanity to the society through songs that run commentary on positive and negative societal attitudes which deserve praise, correction, change or total condemnation.
- perform music for sheer relaxation after a hard day's work.

This session examined the social roles of music in African societies and notes that apart from being an avenue of entertainment and relaxation, it is also linked with other activities of everyday life of the people. They therefore believe that musical types associated with their traditional social institutions (social, political, religious and economic systems), are collectively regarded as an important cultural tool that unites, shapes and sustains African societal life.

SUMMARY**Self-Assessment Questions****Exercise 4.6**

1. Give four reasons that have sustained the performance of African music to date.
2. Why do Africans at times perform recreational music during funeral ceremonies?
3. Identify two African musical instruments that play dual roles.
4. Why do some African societies confine traditional musical performances solely to the court of their chiefs?
5. Identify three reasons why African societies always make reference to their gods and ancestral spirits in songs.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear
- difficult topics if any.

UNIT 5: LANGUAGE AND ETHNICITY IN AFRICA**Unit Outline**

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Session 1 | Meaning and Scope of Language |
| Session 2 | African Languages and Dialectology |
| Session 3 | Ethnicity: Meaning and Types |
| Session 4 | Survey of Ethnic Conflicts in Africa I |
| Session 5 | Survey of Ethnic Conflicts in Africa II |
| Session 6 | Effects of Ethnic Conflicts in Africa |

You are welcome to unit five of this course. In the previous unit, it is hoped, you learnt about some of the important roles music plays in African cultures. It is also hoped that you have been able to link these roles to specific cultures on the African continent. In this unit, we shall discuss the issue of language and ethnicity in Africa. There are six sessions in this unit. In session one, we shall explore the general and global meaning of language. Session two narrows the discussion about language to African languages and dialectology, while session three introduces us to the controversial topic of ethnicity. Sessions four and five take a survey of ethnic conflict areas in Africa, while session six discusses the effects of ethnic conflicts on the continent.

**OVERVIEW****Unit Objectives**

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- 
1. provide a general definition of language;
 2. state factors that cause a language to break into dialects;
 3. explain the concept and types of ethnicity;
 4. outline the causes of ethnic conflicts in Africa; and
 5. discuss the effects of ethnic conflicts on the African continent.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- difficult topics if any and
- issues that are not clear.

SESSION 1: MEANING AND SCOPE OF LANGUAGE

We welcome you to the first session of this unit on Language and Ethnicity in Africa. In this session, we shall look at some broad definitions of language from a few renowned linguistics experts, and then move on to discuss the functions and properties of human language.



Objectives

By the end of the session, you should be able to:



- a) explain what language is;
- b) state and explain four properties of human language; and
- c) discuss at least three functions of language.

Now read on....



1.1 What is Language?

People ordinarily see language as a tool that man uses for thinking and communicating. But the fact is that Language is a very complex human phenomenon and the more attempts made to define it, the more complex it becomes. This makes the definition of language a challenging task because there is no single definition that can cover its total nature. Let us now discuss one or two definitions of language and their implications.

1.2 Definition I

“**Language** is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily-produced symbols.”

This definition by Edward Sapir, is taken from his book *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*. Try your library or any other library near you for this book and read it. Have you noticed the expression *non-instinctive* in the definition? What does that mean? It probably means the chance of your acquiring a particular language is not automatic, not even your mother tongue. For example, a child born in the Ashanti region to Eve parents who speak Twi to him/her will grow up speaking Twi. The child will not just start speaking a language because it is the language of his/her parents irrespective of where he/she is raised. Can you mention names of some footballers who do not necessarily speak the language of their parents? Think about Adam Kwarasey and Mario Balotelli.

1.2.1 Weaknesses

The first major weakness of this definition is that it is imprecise because the use of ‘ideas’ and ‘emotions’ is not defined. No matter how broadly we construe the terms ‘idea’, ‘emotions’ and ‘desire’, the three words cannot adequately cover the total field defined by language.

Secondly, the definition gives the assumption that only human beings have the use for language. Animal language is thus excluded from the definition.

1.3 Definition 2

"A **language** is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates."

(B. Bloch and G. Trager (1942).

1.3.1 Shortcomings

This definition puts all emphasis on social functions of language. In doing so, it takes a very narrow view of other important roles language plays in society.

1.4 Unique Properties of Human Language

We shall now turn to an important aspect of the topic. Do you remember we hinted that it is not only human beings that have language? Refer back to one of the weaknesses we identified in Sapir's definition. Indeed, all creatures are capable of communicating with other members of their species. There are however, some features which distinguish human language from all other forms of communication or signalling systems. These features are considered unique properties of human language. We should, however remember that humans cannot fully understand how other creatures actually communicate.

1.4.1 Displacement

This property states that human language is capable of referring to events in the past, present and future. Whereas animal communication is almost exclusively designed for the present moment, here and now, and cannot effectively be used to relate events which are far removed in time and place, human language users can refer to past and future time, and to other locations. This property of human language is called displacement. It allows the users of language to talk about things and events not present in the immediate environment. Animal communication is generally considered to lack this property. Can your pet cat or dog communicate to you what it will do tomorrow?

This property enables us to talk about things and places whose existence we cannot even be sure of. We can refer to mythical creations, demons, fairies, angels etc. It is the property of displacement that allows the human, unlike any other creature, to create fiction and to describe possible future worlds.

1.4.2 Arbitrariness

The case generally is that there is no 'natural' connection between a linguistic form and its meaning. For example, if we take the linguistic form 'table' or 'crocodile', there is no iconic relationship between the form and that four-legged piece of furniture, or that

long reptile to which the forms refer. It is the arbitrariness of human language that allows different languages to have different names for an object.

We expect that your class is made up of students of different linguistic backgrounds. Good. Find out how each of the languages represented in the class calls the following: snail, cockroach, crocodile, and broom. Do you now realize that the name of each object varies from language to language? This is because of the arbitrariness of human language which does not allow fixed rules for assigning names to objects; otherwise, all languages will have the same word to refer to an object or a concept.

Exceptions to the rule

Exceptions can, however, be made of some words in language which seem to echo the sounds of objects or activities. These words whose sounds suggest the meaning of the words, are known as onomatopoeic words. Have you realized by now that the Gonja word “kichan” and the Eve word “tsaxe” (let these words be pronounced to you by native speakers of the languages), local names for the guinea fowl are near imitations of the sound made by that bird? What about the twi word *kokoroko* for the turkey?

You are now clear about what onomatopoeic words are. Go through your own language and identify a few of them. Share them with your colleagues during the next FTF meeting.



However, in any language, these onomatopoeic words are relatively rare, making the vast majority of linguistic expressions arbitrary.

In the majority of cases for animal signals, there appears to be a clear connection between the conveyed message and the signal used to convey it. This is because for any animal, the set of signals used in communication is finite – that is, each variety of animal communications consists of a fixed and limited set of (vocal or gestural) forms or movements for specific needs/purposes.

Example:

- A hen during egg-laying period
- A hen sitting on egg
- A mother hen with its chicken
- A billy goat hungry
- A billy goat mating

It can be noted that each of the situations above has a fixed set of body/vocal movements through which it is communicated.

1.4.3 Productivity

A feature of all languages is that new utterances are continually being created and accommodated. New situations arise or new objects have to be described. Language users therefore, manipulate their linguistic resources to produce new expressions and new sentences. The productivity property of human language is also termed “creativity” or “open-endedness”.

The communication system of animals is not capable of admitting any new utterances, and therefore constitute a closed system.

1.5 Functions of Language

Among the many functions language performs in our lives are the following:

1.5.1 The Instrumental Function

This function follows a very simple rule of intention, action and purpose with the aim of using language to achieve a purpose in a straight forward manner. Example, A child crying or screaming in order to attract attention.

1.5.2 The Regulatory Function

Is a more deliberate process in which language is used to attempt to guide other individuals to one's purposes. Example, An electoral candidate giving a rally speech in an attempt to win the voting confidence of the listeners. This function is a combination of control and eloquence in deliberation to influence others. A motivational speaker would use this function to spur listeners in the direction needed for the talk to be successful.

1.5.3 The Interactional Function

This is a social use of language. Here, language is used to bridge personalities and build relationship between individuals. For example, a group of UCC distance learning students speaking in campus jargons could be building a campus solidarity among themselves. This happens whenever two or more individuals are communicating to learn more about one another's intentions, thoughts and feelings.

1.5.4 The Personal Function

The Personal function entails the exploration of one's innermost feeling and emotions. It is much more intimate and less structured than social language because of individual differences in psychology and perspective. An example can be a group of young campers sharing their personal fears and phobias over a camp fire. In comparison with the interactional functions, the personal function is more of self-exploration and expression of personal ideas, thoughts, feeling and fears. Writing diaries or voice recording versions of diaries are good examples of the personal function of language.

1.5.5 The Imaginative Function

This function is a very fluid function as it governs the use of creativity of the human mind where language forms the imaginative strata in complex emotional and human portrayal in literature, such as plays, poetry or short stories. It can even be said that it is a convergence between the personal and the heuristic functions of language. For example, a student trying to compose a poem about his life might reach deep into his emotions as well as draw from his life experiences to word his poem in a unique way. The imaginative function makes use of language in creative ways especially in literature to portray fear, doubt, agony or even euphoria.

1.5.6 The Informative Function

Is used to pass on information, organize facts and data, and educate others through deliberated language. This way, it is derived from the instrumental and heuristic functions. For example, a teacher trying to impart statistical knowledge into his students in the classroom would require the informative function. This function is more linear than the imaginative function because it starts off with the purpose to inform others of certain ideas or points.

In this session, we looked at the meaning and scope of language. We also examined two definitions of language by renowned linguistics experts. One common flaw identified in both definitions was the tendency to restrict the use of language to only humans. We also discussed the functions of language and observed that language performs both inter and intra-personal functions. The session finally established that there are certain features of human language which are not shared by the communication systems of other species and therefore constitute unique properties of human language.

SUMMARY

Self-Assessment Questions



Exercise 5.1

1. What is language? Discuss any two functions of language.
2. Discuss, with examples, each of the following properties of human language;
 - a) Arbitrariness
 - b) Productivity
 - c) Displacement

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear
- difficult topics if any.

SESSION 2: AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND DIALECTOLOGY

You are welcome to session two of this unit. In session one, we looked at the broad scope of language. We hope you still remember some of the definitions and their implications. We also hope you appreciate the functions and properties of human language. In this session, we shall distinguish between language and dialects.

**Objectives**

By the end of the session, you should be able to:

- identify the four major language groups in Africa;
- state the relationship between language and dialect; and
- name and explain, with examples, the three levels at which one dialect of a language may be distinguished from another.

Now read on...

**2.1 How many African Languages do we have?**

It is difficult to put exact figures on the number of African languages. According to Hameso (2001:24), a conservative estimate puts the number of African languages to well over 800, while another study pointed that there are 1,300 languages from which fifty were widely spoken. Some other researchers quote even higher figures. What all researchers have agreed on, however, is that African languages can be categorized into four main groups as follows:

- The *Niger-Kordofanian*: this is the largest and most widely spread language group in Africa, and includes the Niger-Congo and Bantu languages found in countries stretching from Cameroun in the west to the coasts of South Africa including Zimbabwe, Kenya and Tanzania.
- The *Afro-Asiatic* language family, according to Hameso (2001), is the second largest group, and covers much of North Africa. It consists of Semitic languages (Arabic, Hebrew, Amharic etc.), Hausa and the Berber languages.
- The *Nilo-Saharan* languages are mainly spoken in Central Africa, their home being Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. It is also found in north eastern Nigeria.
- Khosian* languages are spoken in southern Africa.

2.2 Dialects

The word “dialect” is derived from the Greek word *dialektos* to describe a variety of a language used by people from a particular geographical area. A dialect, therefore, is a geographical based variation of a language having particular linguistic features which make a native speaker of a language identifiable with the part of the area of the particular language from which he/she comes.

2.3 The Concept of Mutual Intelligibility

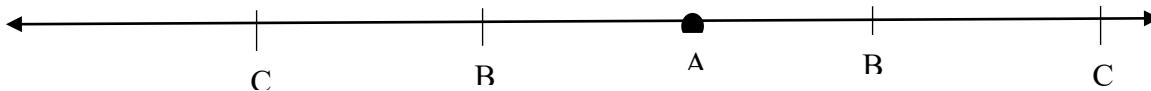
Some linguists have attempted to distinguish dialects from language by saying that dialects are mutually intelligible (comprehensible) while languages are not. Therefore, when two people try to communicate but are not comprehensible to each other, then the two speak different languages.

2.4 Dialect Continuum

The principle is that the vaster the area over which a language is spoken, the more the tendency of that language to break into dialects. This theory can be represented on what is linguistically known as the dialect continuum.

A dialect continuum is a network of dialects in which geographically adjacent dialects are mutually comprehensible, but with comprehensibility steadily decreasing as distance between the dialects increases.

Let us consider a hypothetical language A on the continuum below. As one moves progressively left or right away from the centre, there is bound to be variation. This means that at point B, the language spoken might be slightly different from that spoken at point A. At point C, however, the language is likely to vary slightly from point B, but significantly from point A. The only condition is that for A, B and C to be described as dialects, they must be mutually intelligible to speakers of the three variants.



The implication here is that for a dialect to exist, there must be a common core (centre) from which all variants diverge, but the divergence must not be too significant as to be unintelligible to speakers of other variants of the language.

Accordingly, dialects of a language can differ from one another in different ways, but they must be enough alike to be mutually comprehensible. It is in this light that dialects are defined as "...variants, but mutually intelligible, forms of language".

Anthropological linguists also define dialect as the specific form of a language used by a speech community. In other words, the difference between language and dialect is the difference between the abstract or general, and the concrete or the particular. From this definition, no one speaks a 'language'. Everyone speaks a dialect of a language. Those who identify a particular dialect as the 'standard' or 'proper' version of a language are only using the term to express a social distinction. Do you know what this implies? It only means that truly speaking, no version of a language is the "original" or "pure" form.

2.5 Distinguishing one Dialect from Another

A dialect is a complete system of verbal communication with its own vocabulary and/or grammar. Therefore there are three levels at which one varieties of a language can be distinguished from other dialects of the same language. These three levels are vocabulary, phonology (pronunciation) and grammar. We shall use a few languages to explain this.

2.5.1 Vocabulary

Taking Akan, for example, have you realized that sometimes, the Asante, Fante and Akuapem dialects each has a different name for the same object? Let us consider the word used by each of the dialects above for the English term “yes”. While the Asante would say /aĩn/, the Fante would say /nnyoo/ with the Akuapem saying /jiu:/. (Note that these are phonological transcriptions of the words, and not spellings).

Another English word which has different names used to refer to it in the three dialects of Akan under discussion is “marriage”. In Asante, the name for it is *awaree*, in Fante, is *awar* while in Akuapem, it is *aware*.

Examples in Eve

In Eve, the table below illustrates dialectal differences at the level of vocabulary level in four (4) dialects.

ENGLISH	EUE			
	ADLO	GBI	HO	TONGU
basket	abaka	sentsre (Peki)	kusi	
crab	‘galā		agadza	
garden egg	agbitsa		tē	
okro	fetri	atise (Peki)	fetri	
kenkey	ɖɔkunu	kɔŋ/ ɖɔkunu		kokoe
pepper	tadi	atadi	atadi	able
pineapple	atɔtɔ	(a)blande		

2.5.2 Phonology

Phonology deals with sound and therefore, with pronunciation. Asante, Fante and Akuapem differ from one another in the way certain words are pronounced. Similarly, dialects of Eve such as Adlo, Gbi and Tongu pronounce certain words differently.

Study the tables below carefully for Akan and Eve respectively.

Akan

ENGLISH	AKAN	
	ASANTE	FANTSE
Eat	di	dzi
Eating	didi	dzidzi
It is difficult	ayedin	W'ayedzin
I want	mepɛ	mepjɛ
	pɛ	pjɛ
Thing	adeɛ	adze

Eve

Phonology

ENGLISH	EUE			
	ADJO	GBÍ	HO	TONGU
Market	aʃi(me)	asi(me)	asi(me)	
Duck		kpákpá(xe)		kpàkpá(xe)
Urine	qupɔ	aqupɔ		rurɔ

2.5.3 Grammar

Under grammar, dialectal differences manifest mostly at the sentence level.

Akan

English: I am going to (the river side) fetch water

Twi: mekɔ bu nsuo

Fantse: moro kɔbu nsu

English: come, let's go

Twi: bra yɛkɔ

Brong: bɛnkɔ

Eve

English: where are you going?

Uedome (Ho, Hohoe): fine neyiɛ?
Fika néyinà? } meyina nuquʃɛ

Aŋlo: Fikə néyinà? } meyia nuqugə
Tongu: gaa yiɔ? }

In this session, we discussed the relationship between language and dialect. It has been established that dialects are variants of language, and that whatever form of language we speak is only a dialect of a language. It has also been said that dialects, unlike language, are marked by mutual intelligibility. While speakers of different dialects of a language will understand each other, speakers of different languages will lack mutual intelligibility. The session also explains the three levels at which dialects of a language may be distinguished from one another.


 SUMMARY

Self-Assessment Questions



Exercise 5.2

1. Giving specific examples from any language of your choice, show how geographical distance is an important factor in dialectology.
2. Provide in the table below the Asante, Fante and Akuapem equivalent of the English words listed at the left of the table.

ENGLISH	AKAN		
	Asante Dialect	Fante Dialect	Akuapem Dialect
Yes	Ãin	nnyo	Yiw
Now			
Fasting			
Marriage			
Sheep			
Bread			
Food			
Stone			
Onion			
Cat			
Dog			
Pawpaw			
Egg			
Girl			
Boy			

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- difficult topics if any and
- issues that are not clear.

SESSION 3: ETHNICITY: MEANING AND TYPES

You are welcome to session three of this unit. In session two, we looked at the relationship between language and dialects. We also discussed the three levels at which one dialect of a language can be distinguished from another. In this session, we are going to look at the issue of ethnicity and its effects on nation building. We hope you will enjoy this session as well.



Objectives

By the end of the session, you should be able to:

- a) explain what ethnicity is;
- b) state what makes a person ethnocentric; and
- c) discuss the positive and negative side to ethnicity.

Now read on ...



3.1 What is Ethnicity?

An ethnic group is a collectivity of people who share the same primordial characteristics such as common ancestry, language and culture. Ethnicity, defined as group identity based on linguistic differential, is a logical product of language, hence the claim that language is the basis for ethnicity. Indeed, there cannot be ethnicity without language. This is why an ethnic group is described in relation to language. For example, you may belong to one of these: Dagomba ethnic group, Eve ethnic group, Gonja ethnic group, Sefwi ethnic group. Is your ethnic group included in the examples cited? Think about the language you speak. If you speak language X, then you belong to X ethnic group. Ethnicity would then refer to the fact of belonging to an ethnic group and, by extension, the allegiance the individual owes his/her ethnic group and its cultural practices.

3.2 Ethnocentrism

There is the tendency for some people to become so overly loyal to their ethnic group that they see other ethnic groups as inferior and unimportant. It is good to love one's ethnic group, but it is wrong to regard others as inferior to yours. This is what an ethnocentric person does. An ethnocentric person is described as a person who fails to recognize that other people's cultures are also important and valuable.

3.3 Positive Ethnicity

Ethnicity has the potential to embody both positive and negative elements. On the positive side, it promotes the appreciation of an individual's social roots in a community and the creation of a social network which provides material and emotional support for members of the society.

Ethnicity also gives individuals and societies internal cohesion and, by extension, national cohesion. It is important to note that when there is a close bond of friendship within the individual ethnic groups, it is highly likely that such a bond will exist at the national level as well.

In addition, ethnicity encourages individuals to provide for each other's security. It is a pride for one to know that one belongs to an ethnic group, and that one's survival depends heavily on the internal security provided for other members of the group. If this is the case, then one also needs to help provide and maintain security with everybody in the group becoming 'each other's keeper'.

It promotes a sense of identity and fosters a sense of belonging. It is often said that take a person's language from him and he/she is left with no identity. Do you understand what this means? From the linguistic point of view, belonging to an ethnic group (and we said this is tied to language) gives the individual his/her primary identity; belonging to a nation is secondary. This may sound controversial to the politician. Ethnicity strengthens this sense of belonging.

Ethnicity facilitates social development. In a country where the central government is not able to provide adequate social amenities for the citizens, individuals often come up with assistance in the form of projects for social development. The logical thing is that such projects are sited in the philanthropist's environment. Every person would want to develop his/her area before anybody else's.

3.4 Negative Ethnicity

Negative ethnicity can lead to ethnocentrism. Do you remember the point we made that being overly loyal to one's ethnic group makes one ethnocentric? It is a negative trait that can cause ethnic conflicts.

Ethnicity often results in internal disintegration. Do you know that disintegration is the opposite of cohesion? Since language is the basis for ethnicity, and since language is a two-edged sword, the misuse of language can break up relations within the group. It leads to social exclusion. There is the tendency of members of one ethnic group to regard other groups as not belonging. This social exclusion alienates others and strains relationship with them.

Ethnicity leads to nepotism in governance. As it often happens in Africa, certain ethnic groups are favoured by ruling governments, making members of other groups feel cheated. This nepotism results in bad governance. In Liberia, Kenya and Burundi, conflicts resulted from some ethnic groups being favoured over others by the respective governments.

There is also the case of unequal distribution of national resources. Some central governments in Africa distribute development projects based on ethnic considerations. This is especially true in countries where political parties are formed along ethnic lines. The intention of government in some countries is to reward people who are sympathetic to the cause of the ruling party, or punish groups that voted against the ruling party.

In this session, we discussed the subject of ethnicity which has been defined as the fact of belonging to an ethnic group. It has been observed that though it is good to be loyal to one's ethnic group, being overly loyal leads to ethnocentrism which is undesirable. Finally we noted that ethnicity has the potential to embody both positive and negative elements, a few of which have been discussed.



Self-Assessment Questions



Exercise 5.3

1. List any four positive elements of ethnicity.
2. Explain the term *ethnocentrism*. How can the individual check ethnocentrism?
3. In what ways can ethnocentrism lead to ethnic conflicts?
4. Discuss four positive and two negative features of ethnicity.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear, and
- difficult topics if any

SESSION 4: SURVEY OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN AFRICA I

You are welcome to session four of this unit. In session three, we looked at the concept of ethnicity and also noted that contrary to what pertains in Africa, ethnicity is not always negative. In this session, we shall take a survey of selected ethnic conflict zones in Africa.



Objectives

By the end of this session, you should be able to:

- a) identify some causes of ethnic conflicts in Africa; and
- b) discuss the causes and nature of conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria.



Now read on...

4.1 Introduction

There is no doubt that there are many protracted conflicts throughout the world, of which many are ethnic conflicts. In Ghana for instance, the Kusasi and Mamprusi conflict in Bawku in the Upper East Region and that between the Konkomba and Dagomba in the Northern Region that occurred could be cited as some of the examples of the ethnic conflicts experienced in Ghana. Indeed, violence among ethnic groups in Africa escalated between 1994 and 1997. Rwanda experienced in 1994 one of the worst genocides of the twentieth century. Some 800,000 people, mostly but not exclusively Tutsis, were slaughtered by the Hutu-run state. We shall learn more about this particular conflict in the next session.

4.2 Ethnic Politics in Africa

The often asked question is, if each individual has many ethnic identities (dimensions) such as group ancestry, language, culture, religion, or territory, plus the smaller identities nested within these factors (e.g. Clan within ancestral group), then why does one identity (ethnic identity) rather than another become the basis for political conflict? In answer to the above question, it is believed that political institutions are often the reason. Electoral rules, for example, may privilege one of several ethnic cleavages say ‘tribal’ rather than language differences as in Zambia. As (political) institutions change, the dimension of ethnicity changes too.

Taking advantage of Zambia’s shift of electoral institutions from competitive parties to a single party system and back, it becomes clear that at both elite and mass levels, ‘tribal’ identities were more effective in campaign discourse and voter choice in single party elections, whereas language identities succeeded more in multi-party elections. In elections during the single – party regime, candidate success was organized in terms of the dominant “tribe”. The difference was so marked that parliamentary candidates

running in the same constituency who won on the basis of their ‘tribal’ appeal in a single-party election frequently lost in a succeeding multi-party election in which they affiliated with a party not associated with the ‘home’ language of that area.

4.3 Some causes of Ethnic Conflicts

Historically it has been proved that colonialism in Africa carried within itself the seed of ethnic conflict. The arbitrary demarcation of boundaries fragmented Africa into smaller weaker status without giving much attention to the prevailing socio-cultural peculiarities of the people. With the ethnic groups thus fragmented, they now lacked the internal cohesion that would ensure the integration of the continent as a whole.

Also the infamous policy of separate development in certain parts of Africa and the policy of indirect rule through which the colonial authorities were able to govern by using minority groups accounted for some of the inter-ethnic conflicts on the continent. A case in point is that of Burundi and Rwanda. These two groups find their origin in the colonial policy of indirect rule where the Tutsi minorities were imposed on the majority Hutus.

Another cause of ethnic conflict in Africa is the challenge associated with political tension, especially in the nations that are emerging from one party and dictatorial regimes into democracy. Several nations are faced with the opposition fighting to dislodge incumbent regimes that have unyielding commitment to remain in power. In such cases elections are staged and managed to offer a front to legitimize the stay of the already entrenched rulers. In such cases as in Kenya and Zimbabwe just to mention a few, people have succeeded in creating situations in which, out of despair, aggrieved opponents organized rebellions based on ethnic backgrounds against the incumbent. The Media, especially the foreign ones have also contributed in fuelling the ethnic problems in Africa.

4.4 Selected Ethnic Conflicts in Africa

We shall now turn our attention to conflict situations in specific African countries to see how ethnic identity has been used to trigger violence in those countries.

4.4.1 Conflict in the Democratic of Congo

The DR Congo is fragmented into two hundred tribes and the only unifying factor during the independence period was the “black skin”. Preferential treatment started on tribal lines from the few blacks who managed to entrench themselves in positions of government, sparking off intense envies among the various ethnic groups with most of these ethnic groups not wanting to be dominated by another. As a result of this struggle for supremacy and recognition among the various ethnic groups, fighting erupted in Kasai Province between the Baluba and Bena Lulua. In that conflict, over two hundred (200) houses went up in flames. That was a few weeks of independence.

As hatred for one ethnic group by another got entrenched, it developed into unending conflicts with devastating consequences. For instance, Kabila's forces consisted largely of soldiers from eastern Congo's small Bahyamulenge ethnic minority. These forces attacked Hutus and the remnants of Mobutu's army because the refugee Hutus in the Congo border with Rwanda posed a threat to the Tutsi-led government of Rwanda. Thus, a first war began on October 6, 1996, as a Rwandan drive to destroy the bases of the genocidal forces made up of the army of *ancient regime* and the extremist *Intrahamwe* militias in the Hutu refugee camps in Zaire (now DR Congo).

To pursue and destroy the Hutu forces which would be retreating westward into the vast Congo territory, Rwanda needed Congolese allies to legitimize its invasion. This alliance was found in Laurent – Desire Kabila, a retired revolutionary involved in cross-border ventures, and among the Congolese Tutsi, who were fighting for recognition of citizenship. While Rwandan troops were officially charged with the task of destroying armed Hutu soldiers and militias, they massacred thousands of Hutu old men, women and children between the Great Lakes in the east and the border between the two Congos in the north-west.

4.4.2 Conflict in Nigeria (Background to the Biafran War)

At independence in 1960, Nigeria's about two hundred and fifty (250) tribes, each with its own language and customs, were divided into three and later four regions each dominated by major tribes: Hausa and Fulani in the North (29.8 m), Yoruba in the West (12.8m), and Igbo in the east (12.4m).

The better-educated, change-oriented, aggressive Ibos in the East resented Northern dominance and the many evidences of federal corruption. The tragic events of 1966 began on January 15 when a military coup toppled the government and led to the establishment of a military rule under an Igbo general Johnson T.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi who surrounded himself with Igbo advisers. Northern resentment led to attacks on Ibos, and on July 29, the regime of general Ironsi was overthrown and Lt Colonel Yakubu Gowon, a Northern Hausa became chief of state.

In September, some 20,000 to 30,000 Ibos were massacred and many more were attacked and maimed. This atrocity gave cause to the Igbo ethnic group to believe themselves marked for extermination. Ibos from all over Nigeria consequently returned in a mass migration to the eastern region where, under their regional military governor Lt Colonel (later General) Chukwuemeka Ojukwu, many pressed for local autonomy leading to independence.

The break came on May 30, 1967, three days after the federal government divided the four regions into 12 states in a move to decentralize and thereby reduce tribal

antagonisms. Fighting then broke out in June and by the close of that year, the federal forces had closed an ever-narrowing ring around Biafra.

SUMMARY

In this session, we started looking at some sources of ethnic conflicts in Africa. It has been observed that several factors ranging from social, political and economic have led to ethnic clashes on the continent, and that ethnic identity, more than any other form of human identity, has caused more violent clashes. The session also examined ethnic clashes in two African countries – the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria. In each of the cases, the strong presence of ethnic sentiments is obvious.



Self-Assessment Questions

Exercise 5.4

1. Outline the features of ethno-politics in Africa.
2. How did ethnicity contribute to the political tension in the Democratic Republic of Congo?
3. Discuss the role(s) played by the major ethnic groups involved in the Biafra war in Nigeria.

SESSION 5: SURVEY OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN AFRICA II

You are welcome to session five of this unit. In session four, we started looking at some sources of ethnic conflicts in Africa. It has been observed that several factors ranging from social, political and economic have led to ethnic clashes on the continent. The session also examined ethnic clashes in two African countries – the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria. In each of the cases, the strong presence of ethnic sentiments is obvious. In this session, we shall continue our survey of ethnic conflicts in Africa and concentrate on other regions of the continent.

**Objectives**

By the end of this session, you should be able to:

- a) identify the causes of ethnic conflicts in selected countries; and
- b) discuss the causes and nature of conflicts in the Sudan, Togo, Rwanda and Burundi, and Kenya.

Now read on...

**5.1 Conflict in Togo**

Togo is a tiny country at the eastern border of Ghana. It became independent on January 27, 1960 with Sylvanus Olympio as first president. On January 13, 1963, Eyadéma led a group of some French army veterans from northern Togo to overthrowing and executing president Sylvanus Olympio, who had refused to provide commissions for Kabiyé soldiers in the army, which was dominated by the Eve ethnic group.

On May 5, 1992, an ambush in northern Togo killed two opposition leaders, while the main target of attack, Gilchrist Olympio, a rival of the presidency and son of Togo's first president, whom Eyadéma deposed, was severely wounded. Two months later, in July, another opposition leader, Tavio Amorin, was murdered in Lomé.

The army, which has, since the coup in 1963, been made up in large part of members of Eyadéma's Kabiyé tribe, had never really accepted the August 1991 national conference's decision to strip Eyadéma of most of his powers, restrict his ability to be a presidential candidate, and appoint Koffigoh, his rival from the Eve ethnic group, as Prime Minister of a transitional government.

On August 26, 1992, Koffigoh signed an agreement with the army restoring some of Eyadéma's former powers and allowing him to stand again for presidency. Soon thereafter, Koffigoh's interim government was dissolved, and a new government with more Eyadéma supporters was installed.

It is worthy to note that the political crisis in Togo during the reign of Eyadéma was essentially a violent rivalry between ethnic groups. According to commentators, “decades of undemocratic rule by Gnassingbe Eyadéma has only succeeded in creating bitter acrimony and enmity between his Kabiye ethnic group of the north, and the ethnic groups of the south which constituted a strong opposition to his rule.

5.2 Ethnic Conflict in Sudan

Darfur is a region inhabited by light-skinned Arabs in the north and the black Africans in the south. They are bound by blood through centuries of inter-marriage. The two rebel groups are drawn from three tribes: Zagawa, Fur and Masalit, and there are more than eighty different tribes and ethnic communities in Darfur

One ethnic conflict in Africa that has engaged the attention of world leaders including those from Africa is the war in the Darfur region of Sudan. In the latest conflict, it has been reported that by early 2006, about two hundred thousand people had been killed in Darfur and as many as two million made homeless by the conflict. Indeed, some media analysts describe the crisis in Darfur as the world’s “worst humanitarian crisis”.

5.3 Chronicle of Ethnic Conflicts in Darfur

- Conflict between Taisha and Salmat, Southern Darfur (1980s)
- Conflict between Fur and Arabs in Jabal Marra (1978 – 1989)
- Conflict between Zagawa and Rizigat, Northern Darfur (1994)
- Conflict between Arabs and Masaleet, Western Darfur (1994)
- Conflict between Zagawa and Rizigat Darfur (1997 – 1999)
- Conflict between Zagawa and Al-Ghmir West Darfur (1999)
- Conflict between Arabs and Massalit, West Darfur (2003)

The conflicts just listed above constitute only a fraction of what the Darfur region has been able to offer, and continues to offer Africa and the world.

5.4 Genocide in Rwanda and Burundi

In 1994 in Rwanda, a country in east central Africa, between 500,000 and 1 million people, mostly of the Tutsi ethnic group were slain by extremists of the Hutu ethnic group.

Retributive genocide is undertaken to eliminate a real or potential threat. It is most likely to occur when one group dominates another group and fears its rebelling, or when the other group actually rebels. The attempted extermination of the Tutsi in Rwanda by the Hutu in trying to maintain control of the government in Rwanda by the Hutu in 1994 is one example of this type of genocide. The Hutu tried to maintain control of the government in Rwanda by destroying the Tutsi.

The problems that led to the 1994 Rwanda's crisis – over population, economic backwardness, and ethnic tensions – are far from being resolved. Politically, the Tutsi-led government appears bent on repeating its predecessors' mistakes by repressing its rivals and jealously guarding its power.

In neighbouring Burundi, a similar repression has led to the formation of Hutu Rebel movements and resulted in a long term civil conflict that killed hundreds of thousands of people.

Many Tutsi are increasingly convinced that the only way to ensure their survival is to repress the Hutus. Many Hutus, on the other hand, believe that they have been proclaimed guilty by association and that no one cares about their sufferings under the current Tutsi-led government. Extremists on both sides retain the belief that the only solution is the annihilation of the other.

Summing up the sordid situation in Burundi immediately after the war, Lemarchand (1996) observed that “Nowhere else in Africa has so much violence killed so many people on so many occasions in so small a space” (p.124).

5.5 Conflict in Kenya

Ethnic conflicts in Kenya occur frequently, although most are minor skirmishes. Major conflicts have also led to migrations of ethnic minority communities with roots in other geographical areas.

The most significant conflict witnessed since Kenya's independence from Britain was the 2007-2008 Kenyan crisis, a series of inter-ethnic clashes ignited by the 2007 disputed presidential elections, for which the campaign had been going on for a full year. It affected six of eight provinces, mainly in the following regions: Nairobi, Rift Valley, Coast and Western. The main candidates were sitting President Mwai Kibaki and his challenger, Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement.

The 2007-2008 Kenyan crisis was a political, economic, and humanitarian crisis that erupted in Kenya after incumbent President Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner of the presidential election held on December 27, 2007. On December 27, 2007, Kenyans voted in their fourth general election since the return of the multiparty system. Despite serious concerns of over voting irregularities by international and domestic observers and evidence from exit polls showing large gains for the opposition party – including a narrow margin of victory for opposition presidential candidate Raila Odinga – on December 30th, the electoral commission officially declared victory for President Mwai Kibaki.

In part due to the ethnic and geographic diversity of the Kenyan politics, no one narrative can explain the reaction of opposition supporters to the announcement of Kibaki's swearing-in, which was done hurriedly and at night. In addition to staging several non-violent protests, opposition supporters went on a violent rampage in several parts of the country, most noticeably in Mombasa, Eldoret, Kericho, Kisumu, Nakuru and parts of Nairobi. Police shot hundreds of demonstrators, including a few in front of TV news cameras, causing more violence.

Targeted ethnic violence (as opposed to violent protests) heightened and at first was directed mainly at Kikuyu people – the community of which Kibaki is a member – living outside their traditional settlement areas, especially in the Rift Valley province. This violence started with the killing of over 30 unarmed civilians in a church near Eldoret on New Year's Day. Tensions in the Rift Valley have caused violence in several previous Kenyan elections, most notably in the 1992 Kenyan Elections. The violence continued for a couple of weeks, while political solution was being negotiated. At first, Ghana's then President John Agyekum Kuffour arrived in the country and was rejected by the Kibaki team. The Kikuyu then engaged in retaliatory violence against groups supportive of Odinga, primarily Luos and Klenjin, especially in the areas surrounding Nakuru and Naivasha. This was after wealthy Kikuyu businessmen agreed they had to do something to defend themselves.

The Kikuyu removed people from buses (plying the Nairobi-Kisumu/Kakamega route) and hacked them to death. One of the worst cases was when a Luo family of 19 people was burnt to death, only the father surviving.

In Mombasa, Kenyan Coastal took the streets to protest the electoral manipulations and support their preferred candidate, Mr. Odinga. Tension was quite high as the landless indigenous Coastal communities felt this was a time to avenge the grabbing of their land by mainly up country Kikuyu tribesmen. Looters also struck a number of stores in Mombasa. The slums of Nairobi saw some of the worst violence, some of these ethnically-motivated attacks, some simple outrage at extreme poverty, and some, the actions of criminal gangs. The violence continued periodically for several months, particularly in the Rift Valley.

5.6 Reasons for the Unfortunate Situation

Looking back at the various conflicts on the continent is not to remind the war victims of their grueling past, far from that. Rather, the aim is to establish the underlying causes of the various conflicts. From the exposition, therefore, it can be ascertained that every bit of conflict has the ethnicity variable as a cause. It must be admitted right away that ethnicity is increasingly creeping into partisan politics of all African states.

There is absolutely no doubt that ethnicity is at the heart of all day to day political concerns and social practices. Governments and citizens alike are haunted by the tribe to the extent of creating a duality between national sentiment and the sense of a nation state that represents one whole entity.

In this session, we continued looking at some sources of ethnic conflicts in Africa. It has been observed that in each of the cases, ethnicity is at the heart of the conflicts. The session also examined ethnic clashes in a few other African countries such as the Sudan, Kenya and Togo.

SUMMARY

Self-Assessment Questions



Exercise 5.5

1. Explain the historical background to the tension between the Luo and the Kikuyu ethnic groups in Kenya.
2. Discuss the source of rivalry between the Hutu and the Tutsi in Rwanda.
3. Examine ethnic relations in the political history of Togo in 1992.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- issues that are not clear, and
- difficult topics if any

SESSION 6: EFFECTS OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS

You are welcome to session five of this unit. In the previous two sessions, we took a survey of some sources of ethnic conflicts in Africa. It has been observed that several factors ranging from social, political and economic have led to ethnic clashes on the continent, and that ethnic identity, more than any other form of human identity, has caused more violent clashes. The session also examined ethnic clashes in selected African countries including the Sudan, Togo and Kenya. In this final session, we shall discuss the effects of these conflicts on the continent.



Objectives

By the end of this session, you should be able to discuss the effects of conflicts on:

- a) countries directly engaged in conflict; and
- b) countries outside zone of conflict.



Now read on ...



6.1 Impacts on Countries in Conflict

6.1.1 Effects on individuals and families. Conflict makes life a constant process of adapting to basic insecurity and permanent crises for the generations caught up in war. Genocides and political clashes are estimated to have claimed millions of lives and creating untold hardship for individuals and families. Remember we said that in Rwanda alone, between 500 and one million people were killed in 1994.

- One cannot rule out the fact that these wars have created several refugee problems.
- In today's world, there are more than 25 million internally displaced people of whom over 15 million are Africans. In West Africa, the Liberian Civil War alone displaced hundreds of thousands of people.
- Wars displace whole populations and make millions homeless. The number of refugees increased from 2.5 million in 1970 to 17.5 million in 1992. An additional 24 million people were displaced, in large part because of wars and accompanying distress.
- War prevents people from meeting their basic needs by destroying crops, land and the environment.
- Civilians, mostly women and children, bear the brunt of war, accounting for over 80 percent of war victims. Conflicts contribute to the "feminization of poverty" as women must assume men's responsibilities in addition to their own.
- War and militarization impose special burdens on children when children are drafted into armies and the number of orphans and homeless children grows. War impairs physical and mental development, destroys schools, and immerses

children in a culture of violence, fueling the desperation that forces children to pick up a gun before their reach adulthood.

6.1.2 Effects on Communities and Social Structures

War destroys a society's social fabric and coping mechanisms when civilians are direct targets or affecting bystanders; returning to normal community life can take years following the deliberate destruction of social institutions and ways of life.

War disrupts the support provided by wider family and kinship systems, exacerbates divisions between groups, increases intra-group insecurity and hostility, disrupts inter-group economic relations, and promotes disease. For instance, after the killing subsided in Rwanda in mid-1994, deaths continued as refugees and the internally displaced fell victim to disease from lack of food and potable water.

6.1.3 Effects on National Economies

Violent conflicts and complex emergencies have profound short-and long-term consequences on economic resources and institutions. They destroy local and national economies, capital and investment, and skew productive economic activity, often deliberately.

- War weakens or completely disrupts the resource base on which populations depend. Asset depletion and transfer are especially debilitating to pastoral and farming communities. In Somalia, for example, combatants often stripped villages of all of their assets. Most of the dead were minority agriculturalists with no military capacity or protection.
- War destroys the physical and social infrastructure, human capital, and local economic institutions. Killings or forced conscription can mean insufficient labor for productive work.
- Conflict disrupts trade and economic activity. Armies target merchants while trading systems collapse.
- War reduces investment by the government, aid agencies and domestic and foreign entrepreneurs. War reduces possibilities for recovery by frightening away foreign investment.
- War reorients resources from socio-economic development to the military.
- War promotes the drug trade and arms sales as the means to support armies.

6.1.4 Effects on Political Institutions

War destroys national political systems, killing current and future leaders, sowing bitterness and division between communities, destroying or altering traditional **political** institutions, and changing power relations and national **political** institutions.

Planned genocide is not the only way through which populations are targeted. In civil wars, the distribution of power or assets depends on who is harmed or spared; this distribution is often along ethnic or regional lines.

Wars worsen **political** inequalities, for example, when the powerful are enriched by stealing assets or when poverty affects a group's ability to exercise human rights. Democratic institutions are compromised when war suppresses press freedoms and civil rights.

Ethnic conflicts also sows permanent enmity between ethnic groups. This encourages the persistence of covert ethnic warfare which, like open conflicts, stifles development.

6.2 Effects of Conflicts on Countries Outside Zone of Conflict

Unfortunately, conflicts of whatever form, do not affect only countries engaged in fighting, but usually have spill-overs to other otherwise peaceful countries. For example, as a result of the recent upsurge in ethnic conflict in Bawku in the Upper East Region in Ghana, many people sought refuge in the neighbouring countries, including Burkina Faso and Togo. You probably still remember the Budumbura refugee camp in Ghana that hosted refugees from Liberia.

6.2.1 Pressure on Social services

Since inflows of these human refugees are usually unexpected and unplanned for, the host countries have to adjust their budgets to receive and resettle them thereby putting pressure on their limited resources. Hospitals must be re-equipped to cater for the sick and injured, and school intake expanded to receive children of the refugees.

6.2.2 Diseases and Social Vices

Inflow of refugees into a country implies “import” of diseases and social vices. For example, refugees from ebola infested regions are likely to carry the virus into the host country. This applies to other communicable diseases like HIV/AIDS.

Similarly, young refugees who are now deprived of their means of livelihood, are likely to resort to unauthorized ways of surviving. While the males would normally opt for armed robbery to survive, the females would resort to prostitution. Controlling these vices becomes additional burden on the host countries.

In this session, we have been discussing the effects of ethnic conflicts in Africa. We stated that conflicts do not affect only those countries directly involved in war, but also on countries outside the zone of conflict. We observed that in countries engaged in conflict, war affects social, political as well as economic life while on countries not directly engaged in the conflict, activities of refugees greatly affect social and economic life.





Self-Assessment Questions

Exercise 5.6

1. Discuss the socio-political effects of ethnic conflicts on your country.
2. In what ways do ethnic conflicts affect any one country outside the zone of conflict?
3. Discuss any four economic effects of ethnic conflicts in any African country of your choice.

UNIT 6: AFRICAN IN THE UNIPOLAR WORLD**Unit Outline**

- Session1: The East-West Conflict
Session2: Effects of the Cold War on Africa
Session3: Effects of the End of the Cold War on Africa
Session4: The State of Democracy in Africa
Session5: How to Nurture Democratic Development in Africa
Session6: Africa and Globalisation

You are welcome to the final unit of this African Studies course. The intensification of East-West conflict after 1945 provided one of the most crucial dynamics in world affairs and one which affected all parts of the world. Specifically, the relationship between the two super powers and the so called 'Third World' has been vital issue in African politics and foreign policy. The course gives an insight into how events after independence, particularly the cold war, have shaped Africa's political and economic development. In this unit, we will try to examine the continuing influence of East-West structures on contemporary African politics and development. We will then discuss Africa's relationship with the international community following the end of the cold war.

**Unit Objectives**

By the end of the unit, you should be able to



1. explain the East-West Conflict
2. state some of the effects of the cold war on Africa
3. discuss the effects of the end of the cold war on Africa
4. explain the state of democracy in Africa
5. identify some measure that can be taken to nurture democracy in Africa
6. identify the effects of globalization on Africa

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- difficult topics if any and
- issues that are not clear.

SESSION 1: THE EAST-WEST CONFLICT

Welcome to session one of our last unit of this module. In this session, we shall try to understand the East-West conflict; its origin and the nature of the conflict. We will also examine some key concepts associated with the conflict and their implications for Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Objective

By the end of the session, you should be able to:



- (a) give a definition of the cold war;
- (b) explain some key concepts such as capitalism, socialism, democracy, social-democracy etc.
- (c) discuss the nature and characteristics of the cold war.

Now read on...



1.1 What is East-West Conflict?

The East-West conflict refers to a period of intense tension, antagonism and competition between the western bloc led by the United States of America and the eastern bloc led by Russia. The conflict was characterized by intense competition for influence, particularly in ‘Third World’ countries. But it also involved military competition or rivalry between the two super powers.

The conflict is popularly called the ‘Cold War’, a term coined by Walter Lippman in 1944. You will be surprised that a war can be referred to as cold. Yes, it is referred to as the cold war because the two super powers did not go to any battle field to fight directly. It was an ideological war. While the US and its allies were propagating the ideology of capitalism, Russia and its allies were talking socialism/communism. We shall examine these concepts in a moment.

It is however important for us to note that although the two super powers did not engage each other in direct war, they fought indirectly through their surrogates. Those kinds of wars are referred to as proxy wars. Sometimes, the two super powers covertly influence conflicts in parts of the world. Can you give an example of such a proxy war in Africa? The most classic example, which I am sure you will give, is the Angolan civil war. We shall return to this war when we come to discuss the effects of the cold war on Africa.

1.2 Origin of the Cold War

Historians trace the origin of the cold war to the 1918-21 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. But the war (the rivalry between the US and Russia) actually intensified after 1945, following the end of the Second World War. Prior to 1945, European countries (Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain,) dominated the world,

colonizing most countries. Do you know that even the US was colonized by Britain? At the end of the Second World War, the European powers began to lose control over their colonies. They had dissipated their energies on the First and Second World Wars and thus lost political and economy power. At the same time, the US and Russia emerged simultaneously as two super powers.

They both developed:

1. Different ideologies – the US stood for capitalism while Russia was for socialism/communism.
2. Industrially.
3. Nuclear weapons.



You will note that I used socialism and communism as if they meant the same thing. In fact, they do not; there is a slight difference between the two. Discuss this at your next face to face meeting.

The US held the belief that capitalism is the best economic and political system that countries all over the world should adopt to resuscitate the economies that had been ravaged by the Second World War. The US got some western European countries, including those former colonial powers, to support her. Those countries joined the US to form an alliance called the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). In which year was the NATO formed? I am sure your answer will be 1949.

Does the word NATO ring a bell in your ears? I hope you remember the forceful removal of Muammar Gaddafi from power by NATO. In response, Russia also got the support of some eastern European countries and formed an alliance under the Warsaw Pact in 1955.

Discuss the countries that joined Russia to form the Soviet Union or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (the USSR).

The consequence of this was the polarization of the world into two blocs – east versus west – in what is referred to as ‘bi-polar world’. One of the aims of NATO was to prevent Soviet expansionism. That is to prevent Russia from spreading socialist ideology all over the world.

What infuriated the US most was the ability of Russia to spread socialism deep into the heart of Europe as to divide Germany into two. One half of that country was capitalist and the other half socialist. A wall was actually built to divide the city of Berlin into two.



Do you know the date this wall was pulled down and Germany once again became a united country? Discuss this at your FTF meeting.

1.3 Understanding some Key Ideologies/Concepts

1.3.1 Capitalism

According to Ethridge and Handelman, capitalism refers both to an economic system and to an ideology. As an economic system, capitalism is one in which profit-seeking behaviour, not government decision, determines what happens in the economy. Capitalist ideology, on the other hand, is a set of ideas that provides philosophical and analytical support for such a system.

The elements of capitalism include the following:

- 1) It places great emphasis on individualism. Capitalism tends to emphasize individual accomplishments, talents, and the private sphere of life. So capitalists are more comfortable with self-interest than with public interest as a motivating force.
- 2) Capitalism distrusts central government control of social resources because government's decisions are not driven by profit-seeking. In other words, government should not control prices of goods. Prices should be determined by market forces. Capitalism does not care about affordability; it is not bothered about communal good, in so far as the individual makes as much profit as possible that is good for the capitalist system.
- 3) Capitalist thinking favours the idea of the consumer having a choice among competing private outlets for goods and services.

In sum, capitalist system, according to Adam Smith, thrives on three basic principles – private property, the profit motive and free competition.

1.3.2 Socialism

In its broadest sense, socialism simply supports social equality and criticizes the power of private property. Socialism has deep concern about the divisive effects of private property.. Socialism emerged consequent to the abuse and excesses of the nineteenth century industrial capitalism which was characterised by low wages, long hours of work, child labour and poor working condition. The social philosopher, Karl Marx, was a strong critic of capitalism and an advocate of socialism. Marx believed that capitalism would eventually be replaced by a classless society in which the means of production would be collectively owned and production would be to the benefit of all.

Some of the elements of capitalism includes:

1. Its idea is that a just society requires purposeful social action. In other words, private action, incentives and interests cannot lead to the achievement of a fair society.
2. It focuses on the potential for community and public interests. It opposes excessive emphasis on profit seeking and self-interest.

3. Socialism wants to establish a greater public role to counter the forces dividing society and the selfishness unleashed by private interests.
4. Socialism focuses on communal values and needs
5. Socialists favour public ownership of production. The government sector of the economy employs a large proportion of the workforce in implementing programmes for social security, education, income and health care.
6. Socialists contend that a basic income and adequate medical care are fundamental human rights not simply advantages that those with good fortune can enjoy.
7. Socialists believe prices of goods should not be left to the vagaries of the market.
8. It favours command economy.

1.3.3 Communism

This ideology was rooted chiefly in the ideas of two thinkers – Karl Marx, the nineteenth century German political economist, and Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the Bolsheviks revolution who became the first communist leader of the Soviet Union.

Some of the key elements of a communism are:

1. capitalism is unjust evil system; because it permits one class (the bourgeoisie) to exploit another (the proletariat).
2. capitalism must be destroyed and replaced by a classless society. In other words, communism aims at elimination of all inequalities.
3. the transition to a classless society must be directed by a group of leaders (the Vanguard) of the proletariat.

The first communist system was created in the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, after which many socialist states were created.

It is important to note, however, that the USSR does not operate an absolute communist economy, just as there is no country in the West which is hundred per cent capitalist. For example, in the Soviet Union, individuals give rooms or houses out for rent, and that is capitalism. Professionals such as doctors, lawyers can engage in private practice. Similarly, China since the 1970s under Deng Xiaoping has relaxed the law which outlawed private ventures, thereby allowing some degree of capitalism. The United Kingdom operates national health insurance policy, to make health care affordable to all its citizens, though that country prides itself as a capitalist country.

In Ghana, the New Patriotic Party is said to be a capitalist party. But the NPP government introduced the National Health Insurance policy, Capitation Grant and Mass Transport. These are all socialist interventionist measures.

We have so far discussed the meaning of the expression cold war. We examined the origin and nature of the conflict. We concluded by taking a critical look at the differences between some key ideologies. An appreciation of these ideologies is crucial to understanding the cold war and the east-west structures that continue to shape African politics and development to this day.

SUMMARY

Self-Assessment Questions



Exercise 6.1

1. What is the cold war?
2. In which year was the NATO formed?
3. Which countries were the main protagonists in the Cold War?
4. Why was the East-West conflict referred to as the Cold War?

This is a blank sheet for your short note on:

- issues that are not clear and
- difficult topics or concept, if any

SESSION 2: EFFECTS OF THE COLD WAR ON AFRICA

You are welcome to the second session of this unit. In this session, we will discuss the effects of the cold war on Africa. Specifically, we will discuss the choices that most African countries made at independence and how that shaped state and politics in Africa during the era of the cold war.

**Objectives**

By the end of the session, you should be able to:



- a) state the effects of the cold war on Africa;
- b) explain how the cold war shaped African economies and politics;
- c) describe how the cold war gave support to the apartheid system in the southern African region; and
- d) state why most African countries adopted socialism and one-party system at independence

Now read on...

**2.1 The Formation on One-party States**

Most countries in Africa emerged as independent states in a world divided into two blocs –east and west. These countries had to make a choice between the two ideological blocs.

If you were Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, for example, which of the two super powers would you support? In other words, would you choose capitalism or socialism? Making a choice between the two was not an easy task; if you chose one, you would antagonise the other.

Most African countries chose socialism for various reasons

1. They were colonized by the western European countries that formed the capitalist bloc. Note also that Russia supported most anti-colonial movements in Africa. It therefore did not politically prudent to support the capitalist bloc.
2. They admired the way Stalin used socialism to quicken the development of Russia, hitherto a backward country, to the extent that it could emerge as a super power in the world.

In adopting socialism, most countries also became one-party states. In almost all countries, opposition parties were banned or absorbed into the ruling party. in some countries, some leaders of opposition parties were imprisoned. In Ghana, for example, Dr J. B. Danquah, a leading Gold Coast intellectual and leader of the UGCC and Mr Joe Appiah were arrested and imprisoned and detained under the Preventive Detention Act of 1958, which empowered the CPP to detain anyone for up to five years without trial.

In Sierra Leone, Siaka Steven was detained and eventually sentenced to six months imprisonment on charges of libel, sedition and conspiracy. In Nigeria, Chief Awolowo of the Action Group Party was imprisoned after he was tried for sedition and conspiracy to overthrow the federal government.

Why did most African countries adopt one-party states? Some of the reasons were:

1. The argument was that a multiparty system would create favourable conditions for the two super powers who could use opposition parties to foment trouble and disintegrate the various countries.
2. Socialism was comfortable with one-party rule; and African traditional system operated on the basis of communalism. In fact, in West Africa, only Sierra Leone and Nigeria did not practice one-party rule.

As a result of the one-party system, most leaders personalized and centralized power. Power was centralized in the few ruling elite. The masses were excluded from decision-making.

By adopting socialism, most governments operated what is known as ‘command economy’; central planning. Consequently, government-owned state enterprises (the parastatals) increased and the civil service grew phenomenally, because government was the largest employer. Everybody who completed school looked for government job. Thus a huge chunk of government revenue went to pay salaries and wages.

The press was also heavily censored. Almost all the media houses were owned by the state. No private radio stations were tolerated. In effect, governments controlled information that the public should hear or read.

The population of the cities also increased astronomically. The cities in Africa were said to be growing in the 1960s at 10 percent a year. Government also controlled imports through the issuance of import license. Citizens could not import just about anything, as is the case now. But there was widespread corruption and by the late 1970s, African economies were in crisis. Overdependence on foreign donors increased Africa’s debt stock to new heights.

2.2 Frequent Coups

Many African countries experienced coups and counter-coups, most of which were super-power induced. From 1975, there were about 70 coups that succeeded in toppling governments in Africa. The one that took the world by storm was the 1966 coup which overthrew Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. Indeed, only Kenya and Tanzania did not experience military seizures of power. Thus super power intrusion was responsible the increase in armed conflicts and coups in Africa during the cold war. They were also responsible for the proliferation of weapons on the continent, particularly the powerful

AK 47. Indeed, both the US and Russia competed for land on which to establish military base in Africa. In the process there was the influx of dangerous weapons into the continent. Some of those weapons got into the hands of groups opposed to political authority in the various countries. Political instability therefore became a distinctive feature of African politics during the era of the cold war. Those leaders who prevented coups did so with the support of one of the super powers. For example, Jean-Bedel Bokassa of the Central African Republic and Mobutu of Zaire, now D. R. Congo

2.3 Support for Dictators in Africa

The two super powers supported dictators and brutal regimes in Africa. Democracy was non-existent in most countries. Yet both the US and Russia turned blind eye to atrocities committed by some African dictators such as Mobutu, Eyadema, Kamuzu, Banda, among others. Brutalities and authoritarianism on the continent was accepted as a norm.

2.4 Support for the Apartheid System

As a result of the Cold War, the US and its allies threw their support behind the apartheid government in South Africa.

What is apartheid? Discuss this at your FTF meeting.

In 1948, the National Party formed by the Afrikaners took over the government of South Africa and proceeded to adopt the apartheid system. Apartheid is an Afrikaner word meaning ‘separate development’. That is the various people in South Africa were developed according to race. Under the system, movement of blacks was restricted; they could not go to the same school, hospital or board the same buses or train coaches with whites. Blacks had no voting rights and so they were denied so many rights. The races were segregated and blacks bore the brunt of this policy. The leaders of black groups such as Mandela of the ANC who opposed the apartheid system were imprisoned. Others such as Steve Biko were killed. Britain and the US labeled Mandela as a terrorist.

Despite all the atrocities of the apartheid regime, including the Sharpeville massacre, the US and its allies supported the apartheid government to remain in power to serve as a bulwark against Russian expansionism in the southern African region. It also made the Frontline States in the region vulnerable to the apartheid system.

Note, for instance, that South-West Africa, now Namibia was transferred by Britain, one of the capitalist countries to South Africa and the latter ruled SWA until the end of the cold war.

Do you know the circumstances under which South-West Africa came under South Africa? Discuss this at your FTF meeting.



2.5 Delay of Complete African Independence

The cold war prolonged complete decolonisation of Africa. Ghana gained independence in 1957, followed by Guinea in 1958. By 1960, many countries south of the Sahara had gained independence. That is why 1960 is known as the year of Africa's independence. This notwithstanding, it is important to note that many countries in the southern African region were still not independent. The South African region was very important to the US and its allies. The region was, and is, still home to important minerals such as gold, diamond, copper, coal, chromites and tantalum. The capitalist bloc made heavy investments in the region since the discovery of diamond and gold in the region in the second half of the nineteenth century. In order to protect their investment they needed to prevent Russian intrusion into the region. The plan was to support the apartheid regime in South Africa, the apartheid government was anti-socialism and anti-Russia and that served the purpose of the west.

Another of the policy of the west was to support the surviving colonialists in the Southern Africa region to remain in power, not to grant independence to Africans.

Why this policy?

The idea was that, if they granted independence to Africans, they would support Russia and turn their countries into socialist states. The presence of Russia in the region would be a major threat to the economic interest of the west.

Consequently, Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, Namibia as late as 1990, the apartheid system collapsed in 1990, following the end of the Cold War. Angola gained independence in 1974, thanks to the coup that was staged in Portugal in that year.

Note that though Angola became independent in 1974, the two super powers were engaged in proxy wars in that country. Thus the Angolan civil war became one of the most protracted on the continent. Just after independence was declared in 1974, Russia supported the Movement for the Popular Liberation of Angola (MPLA) led initially by Augustinho Neto and later by Dos Santos to occupy the seat of government in the capital. The US then armed the Front for National Liberation of Angola (FNLA) to drive the MPLA from power. Later, another faction, UNITA, emerged from the south of the country also supported by the US and South African soldiers. Thus, the MPLA was pro-Russia and socialist while the other two were pro-capitalist factions. At a point, Russia sent a large number of Cuban soldiers to Angola to protect the MPLA.



Could you identify other effects of the cold war on Africa? Think about that.

We have so far discussed the effects of the cold war on Africa. You noted that the cold war subordinated Africa's development, because Africa's development was not the primary objective of the two super powers. The super power induced conflicts destabilised the continent. We noted that most conflicts in Africa during the cold war were super power induced. I hope you enjoyed the session and your FTF meetings made things clearer.

SUMMARY

Self-Assessment Questions



Exercise 6.2

1. How many warring factions were in Angola?
2. What is a parastatal?
3. What was the rate of growth of African cities in the 1960s?
4. In which year did Namibia gained independence?

This is a blank sheet for your short note on:

- issues that are not clear and
- difficult topics or concept, if any

SESSION 3: THE EFFECTS OF THE END OF THE COLD WAR

Once again, welcome to the third session of this unit. In this session, we shall discuss the effects of the end of the cold war on Africa. The sudden collapse of the USSR left the US as the super power of the world. Socialism became a discredited ideology as the whole world was ushered into a unipolar world – a world dominated by one super power. This had implications for state and politics in Africa.



Objectives



By the end of the session, you should be able to

- a) explain what we mean by the end of the cold war; and
- b) state the effects of the end of the cold war on Africa.

Now read on...



3.1 The End of Bi-polarization of the World

The end of the cold war marked the end of the division of the world into two ideological blocs – east versus west. Communism became a discredited ideology. This has popularized capitalism and democracy in Africa and many other regions of the world where communism and socialism had reigned supreme. Most countries abandoned command economy and adopted neo-liberal models on development. Privatization of state-owned enterprises became a major economic policy in many African countries

3.2 Liberalisation of the Media

You will remember that in Ghana the airwave was liberalized, following the end of the cold war. Many private FM stations were set up, including private TV stations and private newspapers. Hitherto, we had only GBC 1 and 2. All of this revolutionised the media landscape and made press censorship no longer tenable.

Discuss the liberalization of the media in Ghana at your FTF meeting.



3.3 Decline in US and Soviet Assistance to Africa

Following the end of the cold war, there was a drastic decline in US and Soviet aid to African countries. The US, for instance, had no motivation to invest in Africa since the collapse of the USSR. Russian support to African countries also disappeared. Of course, Russia itself was facing serious economic problems at the time. Those African countries that had depended on super power support lost their external support and became vulnerable to pro-democracy movements. The point is that foreign powers continued to interfere in Africa after the end of the cold war, but the nature and scope of the interference changed markedly.

3.4 Resurgence of Multiparty Democracy

There was a rapid spread of democracy after the end of the cold war. Those African leaders who had expressed aversion to democracy were forced to allow multiparty elections, uphold human rights, rejuvenate the judiciary and allow for diffusion of political power. The west used IMF and the World Bank to bring recalcitrant African leaders to heel. Thus the collapse of communism has brought about a sudden spread of democracy as a credible political ideology. There was pressure on saw dictators such as Rawlings of Ghana, Eyadema of Togo change from being military rulers to presidents under democratic rule.

Discuss some of the IMF and World Bank conditions attached to loans to African countries at your FTF meeting. I am sure your discussion will focus on such issues as liberalization of trade, removal of subsidies, privatization, among others.

3.5 Military Interventions became Less Rampant

Another changed evinced by the end of the cold war was a decline in the incidence of coups and counter coups that punctuated the political history of Africa in the cold war era. Military seizures of power are no longer fanciful. The military in most African countries have now been confined to the barracks. There is an exception to this general picture. We saw NATO bombard Libya and forcefully removed Gaddafi from power. Similarly, French soldiers removed Gbagbo from power. But these military interventions were organized at the state and regional levels, not organised by one or two soldiers. The point is that soldiers in Africa no longer find coups attractive.

3.6 The Collapse of Apartheid

The end of the cold war saw the collapse of apartheid rule in the southern African region. South Africa withdrew from South-West Africa, paving the way for that country to become independent under the name Namibia in 1990. In South Africa itself, de Klerk took over from P. W. Botha as Prime Minister. The latter lifted the ban on the ANC and in March 1990, he released Nelson Mandela who became the first black president of South Africa after winning the 1994 general elections under the ticket of the ANC. All of this showed that the cold war had indeed ended.

3.7 Upsurge in Armed Conflict

The end of the cold war led to upsurge in violent conflicts on the continent. The spread of democracy and the loss of external support to client states emboldened the zeal of prodemocracy groups to take arms against some African dictators. This led to violent conflicts and the loss of life and destruction of property. Notable examples were the conflicts in Liberia, Somalia, Zaire, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Central African Republic, Sierra Leone and the list goes on. In Rwanda we saw the killing of some 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutus.

3.8 The Intensification of Globalisation

Another development evinced by the end of the cold war was the intensification of globalization. African countries have become integrated into the capitalist system more than any time in the past. They have become vulnerable to external influences as a result of globalization. The continent is being culturally and economically globalised by the globalisers.

We shall return to this topic of globalisation later in this unit.

In this session we have discussed the effects of the end of the cold war on Africa. We noted that the end of the cold war had implications for Africa. Most importantly, the end of the cold war did not bring the anticipated peace to the continent. On the contrary, there was escalation of violent conflicts, some of which were allowed to reach exhausting proportion, such as the Rwandan genocide.

SUMMARY

Self-Assessment Questions



Exercise 6.3

1. About how many Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed in the Rwanda genocide?
2. Why did the US support dictators in Africa during the Cold War?
3. What is apartheid?
4. Which South African Prime Minister released Nelson Mandela from prison?
5. In which year was the first multi-racial elections were held in South Africa?

This is a blank sheet for your short note on:

- issues that are not clear and
- difficult topics or concept, if any

SESSION 4: THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

One of the assumptions that underpinned the imposition of multi-party democracy by the West on sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s was that democracy would foster peace, stability and national security. The transition to multi-party democracy in Africa after the end of the cold war was problematic and years on, democracy in sub-Saharan Africa remained fragile. In this session, we will discuss the definition of democracy, forms of democracy, some principles of democracy and conclude by finding out the reasons for which democracy is fragile in Africa.

**Objectives**

By the end of the session, you should be able to:

- a) define democracy;
- b) identify some forms of democracy;
- c) state the principles of democracy; and
- d) explain the state of democracy in Africa



Now read on...

**4.1 Definition of Democracy**

The word democracy comes from two Greek words – *demos* (people) and *Kratias* (rule). This literally means ‘rule of the people’. Abraham Lincoln defines it as ‘a government of the people, by the people, and for the people’. It is also defined as a government by the people of a country through their elected representatives. It is a government that adheres to freedom of speech, religion and political opinion, that upholds the rule of law and majority rule and that respects the rights of minority.

I am sure you have come across many other definitions of democracy, some of which appeal to you more than those I have stated. Discuss other definitions that you have come across at your FTF meeting.

Democracy is an old form of government, not new at all. In ancient times, particularly in Athens, issues that were of public interest were discussed and decisions taken in the assembly of the adult males, excluding females and of course, slaves. Now, such a form of democracy, where all citizens gathered to take a collective decision, is simply implausible because of the emergency of large cities with huge populations.

Since the seventeenth century, a new variant of democracy has emerged known as representative democracy.

What does it mean?

It is a kind of democracy in which power is vested in the people, but the use of that power is delegated to the representatives elected by the people. The thinking behind this type of democracy is that the electorate is represented in government by proxy.

This type of democracy is also known as liberal democracy. In fact, in liberal democracy power rested in the people but it is exercised on behalf of the people by delegated representatives. For example, we all cannot be president of Ghana at the same time, so we elect one person to exercise presidential authority of our behalf, so we are all presidents of Ghana by proxy.

This modern form of democracy, according to Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, is a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives.

Let us look at David Held's classification of democracy.

He identifies three forms of democracy:

1. The original type of democracy practised in Athens was participatory democracy, where citizens were directly involved in decision-making. That is the one we discussed earlier.
2. Liberal or representative democracy, a system of rule embracing 'elected officers' who undertake to 'represent' the interest or views of citizens within the framework of 'rule of law'.



What is rule of law? I know you will say it means equality before the law.

In what other ways can you explain the rule of law? Discuss that at your FTF meeting.

3. The third variant of democracy is based on a one-party model. It was practiced by the Soviet Union, East European societies and many 'Third World' countries, including Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana.

It is important to know that 'Third World' is no longer used to describe former European colonies. They are now referred to as developing countries. 'Third World' was originally part of a contrast drawn, particularly during the Cold War.

First world countries were the industrialised states of Europe, the US, Canada, Greenland, Australasia (Australia and New Zealand), South Africa and Japan. Nearly all the First World countries operated multiparty democracy.

Second World societies were the communist states. These were the communist countries of what was then the Soviet Union (USSR) and Eastern Europe, including for example, Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany and Hungary. Second World countries

had centrally planned economies, which allowed little room for private property or competitive economic enterprise. They were all one party states.

Now countries are classified as Developed, Developing and Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs) – Brazil, Mexico, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan.

4.2 Principles of Democracy

- 1) Political pluralism, where power is widely diffused among a number of competing groups and interests, in which opposition parties have a realistic chance of winning political power.
- 2) Popular participation in the political process including universal suffrage (franchise) and free choice by the people of those who should govern them. Those elected should remain accountable to the electorate and there should be the possibility of voting them out of power if they no longer have the support of the electorate. There are regular elections and at regular intervals.
- 3) Rule of Law, respect for human rights, and equality of access to all citizens and groups to state power and resources.
- 4) Constitution or respect for the ‘rules of the game’ which includes civil control of the military and the efficacy of representative, judicial and oversight institutions.
- 5) Right to dissent is respected and opposition has its honoured place. Independence of the judiciary and the press is also ensured.

Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl stated that the specific form democracy takes is contingent upon a country’s socio-economic conditions as well as its entrenched state structures and policy practices. According to democratic theory, because governments are the servants of the people, the legitimacy of rule has to be based on consent carried out through competitive, periodic elections. Moreover, because the purpose of government is to protect and increase human rights, the authority of rulers has to be defined by law. To democratic societies, therefore, the good life is found in political societies characterised by constitutional government, limited governmental authority, and an open pluralistic culture.

Note that there is another form of democracy called social democracy. In Ghana, the NDC prides itself as a social democratic party. But what does it mean to be a social democrat?

Social democracy is part of liberal democracy. Social democrats temper capitalism with socialism. They try to pursue capitalism with a human face, mindful of the vulnerable, the underdog and the poor in society. Social democrats favour what is called ‘welfare state’.

What is a welfare state? Discuss this at your FTF meeting.

4.3 State of Democracy in Africa

We noted that democracy is fragile in Africa and some of the reasons for the fragility are:

4.3.1 Winner-Takes-All Politics

The failure to grant equal access to state controlled resources to various groups - winning parties embarked on winner-takes-all politics which was a major feature of authoritarian politics of old. People who have the requisite skills and qualification are often excluded from holding political offices. Supporters of political parties are given appointment even if they did not have the expertise to occupy those offices.

4.3.2 Ethnic and Religious Character of Political Parties

Most political parties are formed based on ethnic and religious affiliations. In Ghana, the perception that NDC is Ewe party and NPP is Asante party is really a threat to sustainable peace in the country. In some countries, democracy has been reduced into northerners versus southerners. The point is that in established democracies, political parties are formed around ideologies. In Africa, ideologies are not yet developed, even if ideologies exist, the overwhelming majority of illiterates cannot make any meaning out of those ideologies. Therefore what inform the choice that most electorates make during elections are ethnic or religious affiliations of leads of political parties. This certainly accounts for the fragility of democracy. Nationality bonds are weak as efforts at forging national integration become problematic.

4.3.3 Lack of Tolerance and Consultation

Most often, governments do not consult their citizen when they want to take major policy decisions. The people are kept in the dark or taken by surprise, particularly when it comes to implementing harsh economic policies. This widens the disjunction between the government and the citizens and makes it difficult for the government to be accountable. In Effect, it pitches government against the citizens, who often resort to demonstrations and strikes to seek redress.

4.3.4 Over Dependence on Donors

Over dependence on donor institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank makes governments accountable to those institutions rather than the electorates. Top-down secretive manner of negotiating for loans and grants also contradicts the principle of democracy. Usually, these donor institutions give stringent conditions for loans, most of which are inimical to the development of the recipient countries. A classical example of such conditions is the removal of subsidies on agricultural inputs.



Discuss the effects of such policy on agricultural development in Africa at your FTF meeting.

4.3.5 The Incongruity between Western Liberal type of Democracy and African Political Landscape

There have been suggestions in recent times that Africans should have what is called social welfare democracy that is compatible with Africa's social and political structure and with its level of economic development. The proponents of contextual democracy feel that Africa should be left to work out the forms of democracy most suitable to them. In Ghana, for instance, the way people (including some people in government) call into radio programmes and insult elders in society and even the president and opposition leaders is disturbing, to say the least. This has the potential of disturbing the fragile peace enjoyed by the citizens. There seems not to be enough understanding of what liberal democracy really means.

President Rawlings asserted in June 2013 that 'democracy should reflect Africa's culture'. He said further that 'the primary challenge of emerging democracies in Africa is the failure of the west to acknowledge the inherent flaws in its type of democratisation'. He observed that 'there was no encouragement of home-grown democracy imbued with the socio-cultural backgrounds of individual African states'. These comments reflect the incongruity between western form of democracy and the traditional African political landscape.

What is your view about this assertion by former President Rawlings?

4.3.6 Poor Supervision by the Legislature

In most sub-Saharan African countries, the legislature which has powers to monitor and supervise the executive power simply functions as an extension of the executive branch of government. A classic example is Ghana where most ministers are appointed from parliament. The question is who supervises who in this case?

On the whole, Africa's democratization for the past 20 years cannot be described as successful. Most of the so-called democracies in Africa cannot pass the test, if they are subjected to a rigorous definition of democracy – a definition that goes beyond just holding periodic elections. A recent edition of the *Economist* considers only Mauritius to be a full democracy in Africa. For instance, we saw the recent brutal crushing of street protests in Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

4.3.7 Relaxation of Pressure from the West

One of the reasons for the poor democratic development in Africa in recent years is that the pressure from western donors on African governments to reform their politics had fizzled out. In the past, Western donors used the IMF and the World Bank to force African governments to adopt democratic principles. But now, China has emerged as the major economic player in Africa, giving financial aid to many African countries without any political conditions, and making it possible for African governments to

ignore the Western donors and democratic reforms. China will certainly not force African governments to adhere to democratic principles or uphold human rights.

4.3.8 Fragmented Opposition Parties

Another reason is that opposition parties, as we noted earlier, are weak, fragmented and susceptible to endless quarrelling. In Ethiopia's 2010 parliamentary elections, for example, there were 92 opposition parties to challenge the late Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi. In the end, they won only two seats in the 547-member parliament. In Cameroon's 2011 election, over 200 opposition parties contested the polls and over 50 presidential candidates. Zimbabwe has 23 opposition parties.

How many parties are there in Ghana?

The stark reality is that prospects for democratic change in Africa are bleak with the existence of multiple opposition parties that do not have any realistic chance of winning political power. What it means is that most countries will have one-party dominant system that will not make for true liberal democracy.

4.3.9 The Emergence of Terrorist Groups

There is now a growing fear that Africa could become safe haven for terrorist and armed groups which could destabilise the continent. The presence of Boko Haram in Nigeria is a cause for worry for the whole of the West African sub-region. That terrorists could capitalize on contested electoral outcomes to foment trouble in various countries is real.

SUMMARY

We have so far discussed some definitions, forms and principles of democracy. We went on to look at the state of democracy in Africa and we concluded that democracy is fragile in Africa. We also look at some of the reasons for the fragility of democracy in Africa.



Self-Assessment and Exercises

Exercise 6.4

1. What is liberal democracy?
2. What is social democracy?
3. State one reason for the fragility of democracy in Africa
4. What form of democracy did Ghana adopt under Kwame Nkrumah?

SESSION 5: HOW TO NURTURE DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

You are welcome to the fifth session of unit six. Democracy has come to stay in Africa. But there are certain things that must change if democracy is to thrive on the African continent. There is the need to develop solutions that will help us to sustain democracy in Africa. In this session, we will discuss possible ways by which democracy can be made to work effectively in Africa.

**Objectives**

By the end of the session, you should be able to state the measures that should be taken to nurture democracy in Africa.

Now read on...

**5.1 Improvement in the Economic Condition of the People**

The first has to do with economic wellbeing. Most African countries have weak or distorted economies. Most countries export largely primary agricultural products. The prices of these primary goods keep dwindling on the world market. Sometimes there are even limitations on how much they can export. This makes it difficult for African countries to earn enough foreign exchange for development. This coupled with poor infrastructure makes living conditions in Africa very poor. African governments have to add value to their primary products and diversify their economies. Until Africa gets the economies right, they will always get the politics wrong. The West has been unanimous in insisting that democracy must come first before aid follows.

5.2 Redistribution of Wealth on North-South Basis

Social democratic principles should be enforced in the global world such that global wealth can be redistributed so that poorer or weaker countries in the south can benefit from the gains of globalization. In fact, substantial portion of the economic gains from globalisation can be redistributed to those who are most in need. There should also be a regulated capitalism. What unbridled capitalism does is to make a few rich while the overwhelming majority is in abject poverty.

5.3 Education

There is the need for the electorate to be educated. The illiteracy rate in Africa is still very high. To appreciate this problem you have to take a look at the number of ballot papers that were rejected at the last polls in Ghana. Some electorates could not simply put their thumb against the candidates of their choice. Liberal democracy requires that the electorate should be literate so they can make rational choice between competing candidates based on the candidates' manifestos. But this is certainly not the case in Africa. How many people can read and understand party manifestos? Even those who

can read do not bother to read those manifestos. Unfortunately, in popular elections, the vote of the educated and non-educated has the same value.

5.4 Parties should be formed on National Basis

Measures must be taken to ensure that political parties are not formed on the basis of ethnic and religious affiliations. Politicians should be made to desist from capitalizing on deep-seated ethnic or religious animosities as a way of winning votes. Some unscrupulous politicians play one ethnic group against the other political expediency. Because of the heterogeneous nature of most African countries, there is the need for politicians to be circumspect in the way they go about their campaigns to avoid inter-ethnic conflicts.

5.5 Free and Fair Elections

Free and fair elections are at the heart of multiparty democracy.

In virtually every general election in Africa, the outcomes are seriously contested. This stems from the fact that most electoral commissions are simply not independent. There is no level playing field. Most voters' registers are bloated making it difficult for votes to be verified. There is the need for adequate census data which will ensure the credibility of voters' registers. All political parties should have equal access to state resources. There should be no manipulation of the electoral process by incumbent governments. This will make the electoral outcomes acceptable to all and minimise electoral violence.

5.6 Opposition Parties must Unite

Opposition parties must present a united front to prevent incumbent military regimes from maintaining their grip over power. Fragmentation of political parties seems to suggest that politics is a power game. Political parties seem to be placing too much weight on elections while ignoring other aspects of democracy, such as political tolerance accountability of governments and rule of law.



We have discussed the measures that can be taken to nurture democratic development in Africa. We noted that there is the need for some facilitating changes to take place if Africans are to witness improved governance. It is said that Africa's problem is that 'it never knows good governance'.



Self-Assessment and Exercise

Exercise 6.5

- 1) Give one reason why political parties are fragmented in Africa.
- 2) Why is it difficult to have credible voters register in Africa?
- 3) Why do incumbent governments find it easy to win elections?

SESSION 6: AFRICA IN THE ERA OF INTENSIFICATION OF GLOBALISATION

Welcome to session six of our last unit. Since 1989 when the cold war ended there has been intensification of globalization. But Africa has found itself at the periphery of globalization; it has much to lose and little to gain from globalization. In this session, we will examine the word globalization in order to get a clear understanding of what the term really means. We will proceed to look at the factors promoting globalization and evaluate Africa's place in the global village.



Objectives

By the end of the session, you will be able to:

- 1) define globalization;
- 2) identify the factors promoting globalization; and
- 3) state Africa's place in the global world



Now read on...



6.1 Definition of Globalisation

Globalisation is not a one off event. It is a historical process that has gathered momentum enormously in recent decades. As a process, we cannot say that globalization will be complete at some point in time. The term has become common in recent years due to its intensification.

Why do we say that it is a process? We say so because it is continuous. Many years ago, customers who wanted to cash money from the bank had to go to the banking hall fill a form to withdraw money. Later, people could go to a cash machine to withdraw money without going to a banking hall. This is an innovation in banking. Now money exists in electronic form such that people can move huge sums of money across borders with ease. This has revolutionised the banking sector.

Why do we say that globalization is a historical process?

The phenomenon has been with us in different forms for many centuries.

The term refers to the fact that all nations increasingly live in one world, so that individuals, groups and nations become ever more interdependent. As we noted earlier, the term is now topical because of its sheer pace and intensity over recent decades or so. It is the intensification of the process in contemporary time that is of much concern to us. This is an added reason why we say that globalisation is a process.

Let us now look at some classical definition of globalization.

Anthony Giddens defines globalisation as ‘the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. In other words, culture, politics, economic and other social activities are stretched across national boundaries such that events and decisions taking place on one side of the world have a significant impact on the other’.

Schech and Haggis also define globalisation as the intensification of global interconnectedness, a process which they see as being associated with the spread of capitalism as a production and market system.

6.2 Factors Promoting Globalisation

There are three main things promoting cultural globalization. Let us look at them:

6.2.1 The ‘Shrinking’ of the World

First, the world is effectively becoming smaller in terms of the distances that can be covered in a given period of time, due in large part to faster and more efficient means of transport. It takes about six and a half hours to fly from Accra to London, using some of the fastest airlines such as the British Airways or KLM. It is now easier and faster to travel from Accra to Tamale because of domestic flights that have been introduced in recent times.

6.2.3 Easier and Better Communications

There is a better and easier means of communication now with the availability of cable and satellite television as we can now hear about what is happening elsewhere in the world more quickly than we ever did before. We can talk to our friends and relations abroad with much ease. During the world cup in Brazil, we watched the games live in our homes as though we were in Brazil. What it means is that events anywhere in the world can be seen and heard by people in distant places.

What really is the implication of all this?

It means events anywhere in the world can have resonance in other parts of the world. It has implication for governance as well. African governments, for example, are mindful of the fact that their actions cannot be hidden from people all over the world. It also has implication for cultural globalization. For example western food and music are now spreading across the world; there is increasing cultural globalisation.

6.2.4 The Existence of Money in Electronic Form

There is a dramatic acceleration in the spread of financial flows and transactions, with the possibility that money can now exist in a purely electronic form, so that it takes only seconds to send and receive money from one part of the world to another. Indeed,

distance has become less important to economic activities, and large corporations operate within a ‘borderless’ world. Africa now lives in a fast changing and ideologically unpolarized world with growing international dependency among nations. But globalization has already proved unfavourable to African economies in many respects. The real worry is how regimes and policy-makers in Africa are responding to the policy implications of the neo-liberal financial institutions. Predictably, most governments are fearful of any breach of IMF conditionality, as they believe that this would endanger their access to funds and international capital markets. They are quite simply unwilling to antagonise the IMF and the international financial community. This in turn has led to realigning African nations’ domestic or national priorities to the international value which they must accept in order to enhance their credit status. Market reforms, in their present incarnation, have resulted in the IMF gaining extra-territorial rights in borrower nation-states of Africa.

The Cotonou Agreement of June 2000 between the EU and ACP countries tied aid to political performance of recipient countries. This has given the donors a virtual mandate to interfere in the political and economic direction taken by recipient countries, a form of neo-colonialism. Those who believe in adherence of sovereignty as a necessary condition for development argue that a heavily dependent economy whose leaders have lost control to foreign masters cannot develop successfully. African governments are too evidently dependent on external support to the extent that they are likely to lose legitimacy at home. There is the fear that pressure from donors may constitute a new form of indirect rule over the African continent.

Globalisation is essentially about partnership but what it means in practical terms is an increased donor right to interfere in the politics of recipient countries. In this world of globalization, many are called but few are chosen. According to KI-Zerbo, ‘in this world in which we live, there are the globalisers and the globalized. Africa belongs to the latter category’. The stark reality is that sub-Saharan Africa has certain generic shortcomings that make her integration into the global market very difficult. Colonialism put in place a system of extreme dependency on a narrow range of primary exports which remains to this day. Due to plunging terms of trade, commodity-dependent nations need to export more and more every year just to stay in the same place. From 1997, raw materials lost half their purchasing power in terms of manufacturing goods. The question is how many bags of cocoa can buy one Nissan pickup from Japan?

On 13 August 2003 at the Southern African International Dialogue Forum held in Maputo, Mozambique, Uganda’s President, Museveni, labelled globalisation as a new form of opposition. Mugabe stressed that Africa did not have the capacity to enter the global village, maintaining that the continent was still grappling to put up basic necessities such as good roads, railways and transportation. Obasanjo, former President

of Nigeria, concluded at the July 1999 OAU summit in Algiers, that the ‘tragedy is that Africa is being bypassed and its marginalisation turning into de-linkage. Years down the line, not much has changed in Africa. The continent remains at the periphery of globalisation.

In an era of globalised economy, all countries try to fight their way to prosperity by boosting exports. All nations look outwards, depending on international trade for their economic survival. According to WTO, the value of world merchandise trade rose from 21 per cent in 2004 to \$8.88 trillion while world service jumped by 16 per cent to \$2.10 trillion. Yet, as UNDP’s 2005 Human Development Report points out, ‘after more than two decades of rapid trade growth, high-income countries, representing 15 per cent of the world’s population, still account for two-thirds of world exports. The success of any country vis-à-vis another depends on how competitive it can price its goods in the world market. Unfortunately, Africa’s raw materials do not attract high prices in the world market.

In fact, many critics of globalisation insist that markets, if not restricted, also produce volatility, inequalities, concentrated economic power, and environmental degradation. Hence, they advocate imposing social restrictions on market forces to ensure that the economy serves the common good. This is why social democrats believe that structures and inequalities of capitalism require democratic reforms, including a redistribution of income and power from rich to poor.

While it is true that globalisation has boosted growth and lifted millions out of poverty over the past 15 years, the process has been at best uneven. It has been highly selective. Most of the gains have been in Asia, especially in China and India. Globalisation has ignored other parts of the world. In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of people living on less than a dollar a day is still very high.

Globalization brings about global competition with increasing inequalities to the detriment of vulnerable countries. According to UN report of 2001, computer penetration is less than 3 per 1000 and just one out of 1500 people have access to the internet. Only 2-5% percent of the world television sets were in Africa. Most foreign investors perceive superior opportunities in East Asia, Central Europe and Latin America. Investors still regard Africa as a risky place for investment. But the point has to be made that democratic development in Africa will be unlikely in the absence of a new global order. Trading rules are negotiated among the major industrial powers with scarcely any reference to the concern and interest of weak and vulnerable countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

It is important to note that neo-liberal models ensure Africa’s deeper integration into the prevailing global market. The rapid and unilateral liberalization of imports has

devastated local manufacturing enterprises. The promotion of Africa's traditional commodities has led to declining prices in the world market in the face of stagnant world demand. Technology gap limits financial and investment inflows, and poor terms of trade to Africa. There is indeed a great deal of unequal bargaining power in global markets.

Trading rules are negotiated among the major industrial powers with scarcely any reference to the concern and interest of weak and vulnerable countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Globalization enables developed countries to use Africa as a dumping ground for goods which are unwanted in their countries. The global campaign for trade justice continues while the industrial countries continue to drag their feet on the relaxation trade rules that do not favour developing countries. The Bretton Woods institutions need to become more democratic and focussed on the needs and interest of the citizens of the world than fixated on narrow goals of market fundamentalism. In other words, these institutions must make improving the lives of ordinary people central to their policies.

Infusion of foreign cultures. Africans are losing their identity through the infusion of foreign culture in terms of dressing, food, music, etc. Areas of the world that were formerly excluded from the full force of global capitalism, global communications and global cultural intrusions are now more integrated into these networks than at any previous time.

However, there has been some progress at the international level in building institutions which enforce global citizenship and bolster international law-however imperfect. Among these achievements are the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, the UN Ban on Landmines, the International Tribunals on former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and the International Criminal Court.

Democratic development in Africa as elsewhere in the world would be greatly bolstered by the reforming of economic globalization towards what Sandbrook calls social-democratic globalization. For democratic development to succeed in Africa, certain facilitative changes at the global level must take place. This includes debt cancellation, social restrictions on global markets and mechanisms for redistribution of income on a North-South basis.

Critics have long maintained that adjustment packages are defectively designed: they rarely create the sustained growth required by poverty alleviation. They increase the burden of the poor in general and they offer compensatory schemes that are too meagre and urban-biased to be of much use.

This is a blank sheet for your short notes on:

- difficult topics if any and
- issues that are not clear.

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