The Arts and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in a Modernized Africa

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Edited by

Rudi de Lange, Ingrid Stevens,
Runette Kruger and Mzo Sirayi

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PREFACE

The chapters in this book are the result of a conference, *The arts and indigenous knowledge systems in a modern[ized] Africa*, organised by the Faculty of the Arts, Tshwane University of Technology. The conference was held at the Pretoria West Campus in South Africa from 25 to 27 September 2013. The conference organizing committee reviewed and accepted seventy-eight abstracts for presentation from ninety-one different authors. Speakers submitted full papers, which in turn were peer reviewed by at least two reviewers. The chapters in this book are those papers that were accepted for publication. Delegates at the conference came from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Namibia, Lesotho, Kenya, Botswana, the UK and Germany.

The conference brought scholars and postgraduate students together to discuss issues of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and the arts. They debated and presented ideas about how to promote a deeper understanding of IKS within the arts, the development of IKS-arts research methodologies, and the protection and promotion of IKS in the Arts. Indigenous (and modern) cultural and creative practices in Africa harness and represent some of its best indigenous knowledge and modern practices. It is this knowledge, embedded in song, dance, folklore, design, architecture, theatre, attire, and the visual arts that, used wisely, can promote innovation and entrepreneurship, and improve communication. IKS, however, exists in a post-millennium modernizing Africa. It is then the concepts of Afropolitanism and Post-Africanism that would induce one to think along the lines of a globalized, cosmopolitan and essentially modernized Africa. It is in this globalized environment, situated on the complex continent of Africa, that the role of IKS is continually questioned. Papers at the conference captured some of leading trends and ideas that could help to protect, promote, develop and affirm indigenous knowledge and systems, whilst also making room for ideas that do not necessarily oppose IKS but encourage the modernization (not Westernization) of Africa. Speakers also reflected on indigenous cultural and creative practices in Africa that contribute to its IKS. The conference also made provision for postgraduate students who had the opportunity to present their work in progress and discuss some of their results.

The keynote speaker, Prof Denis Ekpo, Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Port Harcourt in Nigeria, presented a paper "Africa without Africanism: post-Africanism vs Indigenous Knowledge Systems/Arts". This paper elicited a strong debate from delegates who supported his ideas and those who perceived his sentiments as "Afrophobic". With this paper, Prof Ekpo argued that modern Africa could be much better off without much of its preferred and deeply ingrained Afrophiliac self-descriptions. He interrogated the recent vogue which favours IKS (the latest, globally approved re-affirmation of Africanism) in the light of what is called post-Africanism. He argued that if one accepts that modernity/modernization is good for Africa, how does one effectively modernize: by Africanizing knowledge productions, culture and art, or might this be achieved most effectively by seeking to de-Africanize/post-Africanize them? Adherents of Africanism accept that Africa needs modernity/modernization but that it should modernize without losing its soul. He further argued that it is not Africa that should bleach and alienate itself in order to climb up to modernity; but that it is modernity that should shed its native Eurocentric hubris and be adapted to Africa's Africanness. Post-Africanism exponents say that there can be no African modernity except the messy, unworkable one that Africa is currently experiencing in most parts of the continent. They say that modernity is a non-African invention; therefore accessing it primarily through Africanism can only continue to be counter-productive. Prof Ekpo concluded by recasting post-Africanism and Africanism as two contrasting approaches to Africa's modernity project. This paper forms the first section of this book.

Femi Abodunrin's chapter on Yoruba poetry examines a vast array of literary creativity and indigenous knowledge from an eco-critical viewpoint. By indigenous, we mean those systems of knowledge and the production of knowledge that are sometimes perceived as antithetical to the Western empirical systems. Etop Akwang and Idaraesit Inyang's chapter about Ibibio indigenous tales for children explores knowledge of the Ibibio ontological universe, compartmentalized as the world of the ancestors, the living, and the unborn who all equally enjoy a lavish exegesis in these folktales. Akwasi Arko-Achemfuor's chapter about indigenous financing of SMMEs explores communal savings based on mutual trust, agreement and support. Among Ghanaians this indigenous co-operative saving is called "Susu" while most of the language groups in South Africa refer to it as "Stokvels". Kudzai Biri looks at aspects of African Traditional Religions (ATRs) and culture that have shown high levels of versatility among Christians in Zimbabwe. Using the case study of Pentecostals, she argues that in spite of the adversarial stance that

Pentecostals adopt towards traditional religion and culture, they largely source from these traditional paradigms. Ruth Cheluget and Anne Mastamet-Mason's chapter looks at the impact of globalization, consumerism and recycling on the growth and consumption of textile products. Their work is an examination of fundamental issues of purchase, use, recycling and disposal patterns of textile products in Kenya.

The effect of Colonialism on the indigenous knowledge systems of Africa, such as music, dance, drama and others, is the theme of Bridget Chinouriri's chapter. She proffers ways in which the general Zimbabwean society could implement locally based practical strategies to resuscitate, preserve and promote the intangible heritage of jerusarema/mbende dance and other musical art forms. Gloria Chimeziem Ernest-Samuel argues that in Africa, most of what represents our indigenous knowledge stems from African music, practices, oral tradition, architecture and folklore. The result is that Africans assume new identities that make them neither truly Africans, nor truly Europeans. She discusses and defines IKS as applicable to Africa by using the Igbo culture as a reference point. Michael Kretzer's chapter focuses on how the process of internationalisation affects language practice and language attitude in the use of indigenous languages at primary schools in Gauteng and North West province in South Africa. Sipho Mbatha and Anne Mastamet-Mason examine the lack of a highly skilled workforce within the apparel manufacturing industry, outdated production methods and manufacturing machines. They make recommendations as to how a province in South Africa could improve its competitive advantage.

Ondelela, a trade cloth that is a symbol of cultural identity is the focus of Catherine McRoberts' chapter. She addresses issues of the transition of Ondelela fabric from its incorporation in traditional garments to its use by contemporary fashion designers. Dave Newman's chapter about iron-age gold foil artefacts is about the wirework necklaces and anklets in the form of wrapped helices, cast, punched or wrapped beads, and pieces of gold foil objects found at Mapungubwe in South Africa. Christian Nwaru investigates the structural gap in Igbo dance theatre. He argues to establish the absence of expository and post-climatic stages or missing links in the theatricality of Igbo dance theatre. Esther Robert in her chapter looks at provers as one of the major linguistic devices in the teaching and learning process of the Ibibio, the largest ethnic group of Akwa Ibom State. She argues that the uniqueness and peculiarities inherent in certain African societies are artistically designed for beauty and should be appreciated.

Using August Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come & Gone* and *Gem of the Ocean* as illustrative examples, Owen Seda in his chapter adopts post-

colonialism as a theoretical frame of reference to argue that, as an African-American playwright writing at the margins of race and identity, August Wilson uses magical realism to foreground traditional African ancestral belief systems to transgress and rupture western rationalism. This is possible as that rationalism is predominantly based on realism and the linearity of narrative. Ingrid Stevens investigates IKS as they apply to South African crafts. Unlike IKS in traditional medicines, for example, the use of herbs such as Buchu or Rooibos, in which identifiable knowledge (and therefore the possibility of legal IP protection) exists, IKS in the visual arts, for example in South Africa, is often an example of the invention of tradition, and therefore not subject to legal protection. Isabella Wandaka and Lucy Ngige in their chapter report on an exploratory study of women entrepreneurs in Nairobi and Kiambu Counties of Kenya. Their work established the extent to which, based on the entrepreneurs' perspective, the technical and entrepreneurship skills acquired in the training, contributed to the alleviation of some of the challenges the women encountered in their business environment. The women could maximize the opportunities that came their way. Anne Mastamet-Mason and Abraham Nyoni report on a study conducted in the capital cities of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia. They look at female consumers' reasons for purchasing second-hand clothing. Their study underscores the need to create awareness among consumers of sustainable concepts that relate to the environment and that would promote a healthier environment.

CHAPTER ONE

OPENING ADDRESS
AFRICA WITHOUT AFRICANISM:
POST-AFRICANISM VS INDIGENOUS
KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS, CULTURE/ART

DENIS EKPO

The idea that there can be an Africa without Africanism is not just counter-intuitive but may be a provocation to normal thinking. The existence of a large body of native knowledges, worldview configurations, belief systems, etc. presupposes that such umbrella terms of self-recognition and world interpretation as *Africanism*, *Pan-Africanism* and *Afrocentricism* are necessary, justifiable and important. Africa cannot be without Africanism; Africa cannot but be Afrocentric. To say anything contrary will be like seeing Europe without *Eurocentrism*. The only snag here might be that Afrocentrism, unlike Eurocentrism, is a matter of our preferred vocabulary of self-description, whereas Eurocentrism is not a label by which Europe usually describes itself; rather it is mostly what others who are not happy with some of her ways, afflict her with. Thus, while Eurocentrism is mostly a stigma, Afrocentrism or Africanism refer to a preferred self-conception; they have been constructed to articulate and explain the specific content, location, modality and goals of a specific discourse, a mode of being and entrenched habits of action. Africanism is the discourse of an African way, African knowledge, an African path to modernity and development, African solutions to African problems. In this lecture, I want to examine the counter-intuitive possibility that perhaps Africa might be much better off without a number of the belief systems, mental habits, self-understanding, habits of action and world interpretation, which have come to be identified as Africanism. Put differently, I will be proposing that a considerable de-Africanization of the mind of Africa,

despite appearing as an affront to reason, could be perhaps the most reasonable thing to do at this point, to and about Africa.

Let me say that my choice of the title – "Africa without Africanism" – was in part prompted by the theme of the conference: "IKS, Arts in a modernizing Africa". Reading through the carefully crafted formulation, what struck me was the apparently oxymoronic juxtaposition of IKS and modernization. Many questions immediately troubled my mind: Can a modernizing Africa still remain stuck in promoting IKS and other nativisms without paying a price? Can an African modernity, i.e. a modernity driven by Africanism, yield a truly modernized Africa? Can Africanism serve as a good foundation for the modernization of Africa? Conversely is Africanism, or Africanization, not the chief stumbling block to Africa's proper modernization? Is the Africanization of modernity not the same thing as the abortion of modernization in Africa? Is African modernism in art and culture not unconsciously promoting the defeat or refusal of modernity in Africa?

If we answer the first three questions in the affirmative, as we are wont to do, then what we are indeed saying is that though modernity is ostensibly not an African invention, it is not Africa that should lift itself up to it, it is modernity that should shed its native Eurocentric hubris and come down to our level and fuse with our native African ways. This position, intriguing as it may sound, constitutes the basis of certain strands of intellectual Africanism. It defines the African modernism of those intellectuals who hold so strongly to what they call Africanization of knowledge, values and action strategies and plans. Paul Zeleza, for instance, does not just stop at promoting the Africanization of knowledge, he proposes the globalization of African indigenous knowlegdes and values. And lest we forget, African Renaissance (roughly a return to more authentic African wisdom and know-how in economic strategy and political engineering) as a new strategy for modernizing Africa, is a core doctrine of the African Union's (UN) NEPAD model.[1] In other words, both intellectually and in terms of development strategy, Africa is still firmly in the grip of Africanism. Hence to answer the second set of questions in the affirmative, by saying for instance that Africanism is not good for modernization and that the Afrophiliac mindset is wired to abort development, amounts to swimming against the current. Though neither popular nor energy saving, taking on again the massive current of Africanism, Africanization and indigenization of mind and action will be precisely what I will attempt to do in this lecture. To do this in the most economical way, I take IKS, African modernism in art and culture, the African path to development etc., to be various modalities and expressions

of Africanism. Then I assess their claims and their performativity by contrasting them with a contrary thought strategy called post-Africanism. Finally I analyse the values of Africanism and post-Africanism against the background of some of the negative things we have been able to do with the former and what we might do differently if we convert to the latter. My guiding parameter in this exercise is a pragmatic and simple one. It says that the point about any ideas, belief systems, or practices is their workability and their utility in relation to the needs of the people who embrace them. Consequently utility relative to needs rather than correspondence to a pre-existing essence or nature of a thing, is a sufficient criterion for judging the value, rightness and truth of such ideas or practices.

Post-Africanism, Africanism vs modernity

Having already said a few preliminary things about Africanism, let me now say one or two things about post-Africanism. So what is post-Africanism? The central issue of post-Africanism arose as an attempt to answer a basic but generally disavowed query, namely: *If we have accepted that modernity, for all its unsavoury Eurocentric genealogies and methods, is indeed good for Africa, do we best modernize by Africanizing our thoughts, culture, art, politics and development strategies or by mostly de-Africanizing them?* Defenders of Africanism accept that modernity is indeed good for Africa but that Africa can and should modernize without losing its African soul, its cultural uniqueness, its roots. In any case, the argument continues, it is not even possible for Africa to become modern and developed without first re-gathering or in Ngugi's words, re-membering its colonially dismembered and disqualified old roots. A typical saying that captures Africanism's primacy of cultural self-repossession as a precondition for modernization/development goes like this: "If you cut your chain, you free yourself; if you cut your roots you die." Here Africa's self-image is modelled on a tree that dies if the roots are cut. The roots that Africa needs to live and not die, to grow and to incorporate modernity for its endogenous development are its native cultures, its indigenous knowledge systems, its beliefs and worldviews. Hence the mission of intellectual Africanism is to rediscover, recodify and reinvigorate these native roots so that they can serve as natural stems onto which development, modernity can be fruitfully grafted. Thus, the core performative move of Africanism has been not just to save Africa's nativity from past racialist slanders but mostly to mobilize Africa's native cultures and values to serve as a foundation for a specific African path to development and modernity. Post-Africanism is a way of countering at its

root, this idea of Africa and the role that African cultures have been called to play in Africa's march to modernity/development. Post-Africanism starts from the commonsensical premise that modernity was not invented by our ancestors. Consequently, our native cultures, invented to serve specific needs, could not have been programmed to serve as a seamless foundation or preparation for modernity. Their greatest achievement was evolving forms of life and institutions that were able to support our ancestors for several millennia. In other words the importance of African traditional cultures does not include showing us how to modernize or develop advanced technologies, a modern market economy or a liberal democracy. Post-Africanism says that to access modernity and fully appropriate it for our own good, we need a mindset, strategies and values considerably different from what the ancestral wisdom of our native cultures could offer. It claims that the vigorous attempts by Africanism to encapsulate Africa as a settled identity, an essence, an already culturally structured stem onto which we can graft modernity, development and democracy have not only been counterproductive but might be the root of Africa's many development discomfitures and abject failures. Post-Africanism says that it may be infinitely more fruitful if Africa were to be described not as a settled cultural identity or essence but as an open-ended adventure in becoming. Saying, as Africanism does, that there is an African character, an African path, an African solution to African problems, amounts to not only unhelpfully caging Africa in an epistemological iron box but setting her up for making unhelpful choices in her modernization strategies. Post-Africanism proposes the intellectual and ideological un-caging of Africa from some of the disabling effects of the belief in an innate Africanness.

The Afrophiliac trap

From what has been said above, we can say that Africanism is a belief in, a consciousness of, that core structure in us which remains unchanged, constant in any possible ethnological variation, any varied empirical socio-historical experiences, diversities or apparent incommensurabilities. Senghor once referred to this bio-cultural invariant as the "African soul", others named it the "African personality", "African character" or simply the "African way". However, the trouble with Africanism is not just its belief in our essential Africanness but the fact that it has bred in us what can be called an Afrophiliac mindset. What is Afrophilia? Ostensibly Afrophilia is love for Africa, preoccupation with defending her against the legacies of old racial calumnies of imperial Europe, constant concern over

upholding her cultural identity, dignity and pride. In other words, Afrophilia is a deliberate cultural protectionism towards Africa, an obsessional care for her global image. However, a study of the genealogy of Afrophilia reveals that the most active element in it, the determinative force operating in it was not really love for Africa, but hatred of colonialism, mistrust of colonial Europe and perpetual suspicion of modernity. This is because the Afrophiliac mindset and self-identity were constructed largely on the basis of a series of negations and negativities, by opposition to all that colonial Europe said about Africa and Africans. The pioneers posited and affirmed our Africanness by positing our visceral anti-colonialism and our hatred of colonial Europe. Their love of Africa was, therefore, largely an inverted hate of colonial Europe. Thus when the Negritude poet cries out "Africa my Africa!" he believes he is only singing the praise of a beloved continent. But his exaggerated passion for Africa fulfils his desire for vengeance against Europe the colonizer; he is actually saying: "I love you Africa because I hate you Europe." And when he said, "I thank you Lord my God for having created me black", he is really saying, "I curse you Europe for making me doubt the value and validity of my skin colour". Thus the most active element in the constitution of the Afrophiliac mindset is anti-Europe vengefulness and resentment. But because our vengefulness and anger were felt to be generally impotent vis-à-vis the might of the enemy, the poet or thinker was drawn into transmuting his emotions into an exaggerated love of Africa or self-love. The canonic narratives out of which the modern African mind was constructed – from the negritude poetry of David Diop to Afrocentric historiography of Anta Diop; from Fanon's anti-colonial master narratives to the mind decolonization texts of Ngugi and Chinweizu[3] – are shot through and driven by anti-Europe *ressentiment*, anger and impotent vengefulness.[3] Through the protracted formative exposure of the modern African mind to largely negative emotions of cultural nationalism, anti-colonialism, Afrophilia seems to have become malignant, taking on a life of its own by providing a definitive grid of self and world interpretation. The Afrophiliac mindset became an irresistible urge, an unconditional imperative to always defend Africa and protect her from the calumnies of foreigners, to fend off her racial enemies and shield her traditions and native values from the mocking bad-mouthing of insensitive ex-imperialists. From an offended, humiliated and insulted continent, Africa became, under the impulse of Afrophilia, a culturally over-protected, perpetually celebrated transcendental Mother who can do no wrong and whose core ways are eternal, beautiful and good-in-themselves. However a constitutive paradox of our euphoric self-congratulatory

Afrophilia was that, despite being driven by anti-Europe/anti-colonial resentment, it coveted modernity, especially the material devices and comforts of the modern way. Thus at the heart of Afrophilia is a deep-seated schizophrenia, a divided conflictual consciousness, a subconscious anti-colonialist hate and mistrust of Europe and at the same time, a strong coveting of Europe's devices of modernity. Afrophilia for all its nativistic postures, is but a wanting to serve two masters: the magic-filled traditions and gods of our land, the reason and godlessness of modernity's science and technology. Africanism inscribes itself mostly by repressing the constitutive schizophrenia intrinsic to Afrophilia and by highlighting itself as a single-minded concern and passion for Africa. This essay posits that there is indeed an Afrophiliac structure, a specific way of thinking, feeling and doing, which reiterates itself both unconsciously and consciously in all our chief endeavors in the modern world, in all our modernity projects. The Africanization mania that seized hold of post-independence Africa and which led to the decolonization wave that affected knowledge production and dissemination, education, history, institutions and know-how, was a manifestation of our nascent Afrophilia. Afrophilia was not only extremely active as the driving force of culture, art, philosophy and literature; it led to the emergence of an African modernity (mostly in art), African reason or Afro-ratio, an African path to economic development and modernization, and African democracy. However, the tyranny of Afrophilia seems to be most effective and pernicious at the subconscious level. For instance we have come to accept that it is perfectly normal for us to react the way we do, that is, unquestioningly, approvingly whenever African cultures and traditions are mentioned, or mistrustfully, un-approvingly whenever colonialism, Europe or the West crop up. We do so because we believe that, as Africans, we are in touch with our Africanity, our African soul and that is the way our African character dictates the way Africa wants us to react. Conversely, any African who challenges our ingrained Afrophilia by seeking to deconstruct and overthrow it is a priori considered a traitor, a renegade who has either lost touch with his African soul or is a neo-imperialist agent.

Post-Africanism sees Afrophilia as born out of a necessary historic response put together by the pioneer intellectuals to counter the manifold humiliations of a mostly racist colonizing Europe. It recognizes the historical necessity of the anti-colonial response but says that the strong metaphysical idea of Africa that resulted from it, i.e. Africanity as we have come to know it today, was made, not found. Afrophilia is not the way Africa speaks or wants to be spoken about. It is what it is because we have been programmed from early childhood, through Africanized school

curricula and cultural-nationalistic propaganda, to see ourselves and Africa almost exclusively through the metaphors and images created by the pioneer poets and the anti-colonialist writers and ideologues. But in the course of so defining ourselves in relation to the foreign culture that invaded and dehumanized us, we got ourselves into a species of Afrophiliac mental trap. We started mistaking the words we use to describe ourselves as the way Africa speaks and wants to be spoken about; we mistook our narcissistic *ressentiment* against Europe as our passion for Africa. However, Africanism is no more than the habit of using repeatedly the same descriptions and metaphors created and left behind by the pioneer cultural nationalists cum anti-colonialist ideologues. We have been conditioned by Africanization to see ourselves primarily as Africans, and to esteem whatever is African, inherited from the past, as something good in itself, something the white man had wrongfully tried to uproot us from. It is this systematic and unceasing programming of our minds with Senghor's "Negritude", Achebe's "Things Fall Apart", Fanon's "The Wretched of the Earth", or Walter Rodney's "How Europe Under-developed Africa", etc., that seems to have turned our Afrophilia into a malignant narcissism: we can hardly stand whatever seeks to contradict our settled African identity and we cannot stomach the colonialism that tried to do just that. Post-Africanism says since this Afrophilia was constructed, it can also be deconstructed, i.e. constructed differently. What makes the deconstruction urgent and necessary is that the Afrophiliac mindset has become, vis-à-vis the demands of the modernity (whose products we never cease to covet), a mental trap, a severely limiting belief system. The ideal of a fully modernized and developed Africa does not appear to be inherent in the way we still continue to think and speak about Africa. What looks most active in our unrelenting Afrophilia is the subconscious hankering after traditional Africa and an unfinished distrust of modernity. In other words, our mostly Afrophiliac post-colonial culture does not contain enough good seeds necessary for growing modernity and harvesting economic progress, liberal democracy and better quality of life. The Afrophiliac trap signifies Africa's unwillingness to question the suppositions upon which our beliefs about our African selves, African cultures, African values, are founded. It is our libidinal attachment to and preference for our ancestral cultural norms and our unwillingness to question them even when it is obvious they have become globally uncompetitive and progress-resistant. Post-African Enlightenment is about Africa's emergence from its self-imposed Afrophiliac mental traps. It is about how we can think and speak differently so that our dream of a fully modernized Africa will no longer be in conflict with the subconscious

desire for an Africa that changes, not one that remains permanent in its traditionality. Post-Africanism says that to overcome the Afrocentric trap is to be ready to change our mindset and to embrace a more universally performative and modernity-compliant form of reason; it is to be ready to shift from worries over what Africa is – its nature, identity and character – to what we can make of Africa; how we can make Africa align fully with what it takes to be a fully modernized continent. Thus, vis-à-vis the entrenched Afrophiliac habits of thoughts and action, post-Africanism appears as an abnormal discourse whose aim is to disorganize the status quo by seeking to alter how we think, what we believe and how we talk about ourselves, Africa and the world. Post-Africanism challenges the exclusive guardianship of the whole of our culture by Africanism; it sees it as placing harmful limits over what we can imagine Africa and ourselves becoming. It tries to show that a major cost of our commitment to Africanism is the freezing of the modern mind, the freezing of the meaning of culture and African values. As hinted earlier, what guides post-Africanism is a pragmatic reckoning of comparative advantages and disadvantages. It asks, for instance, if we manage to rid ourselves of the tyranny of Afrophilia, i.e. the exclusively Afrocentric grounding of our beliefs and habits of action in modernity – what do we gain and what shall we lose? Is what we shall gain worth what we shall lose? Post-Africanism answers that we shall no doubt lose a well-grounded and settled sense of self; we shall lose the comforts and consolations of our hard-won and settled African identity, but then adds that such losses are only apparent since we will be indeed only freeing our minds and ourselves to be able to imagine newer, better, more performative selves, to enter into our next selves. We will regain our largely unused abilities to create new, more self-enhancing metaphors; we will be coming out of self-imposed mental traps, including the repressed schizophrenia that is constitutive of our modern mind; we will be shedding a lot of dead weight so that we can fly light and connect more freely with global patterns and codes which drive success in the rest of the world. In what follows, I want to comment, in the light of a Post-African epistemic paradigm, on a few of the major expressions as well as the consequences of Africanism. These are IKS, cultural nationalism, African modernity and African art.

Indigenous knowledge systems and Post-Africanism

I see the current vogue of IKS, especially here in South Africa, as both a manifestation of Afrophilia and a by-product of the West's politics of post-colonial guilt. There has been an unexpected ideological convergence

in the sudden positive re-evaluation and active promotion of local knowledges, know-how, old skills and belief systems as new found levers of development in parts of the Third World. Africa's unfinished anti-colonial anxiety to get even with the old bad white man (who had earlier dismissed African native knowledges as childish and useless) and the West's post-imperial desire to expiate the sins of its erstwhile totalized disqualification of other cultures and knowledges are at one unexpectedly. Using international bodies like the World Bank, UNEP, UNESCO etc. to promote and intrumentalize IKS, the world seems to have finally come to terms with what Africa's cultural nationalists had decades ago sought to drum into the ears of Europe, namely, that Africa's local cultures and knowledge systems were not primitive nullities; they are only different knowledge strategies; our native skills, wisdom and know-how are not wrong remnants of archaic epochs; they were and remain different and equally valid strategies for coping with our environments. Now the UN spearheads indigenous knowledges and local skills in Africa not only as the very foundation of sustainable rural development but sees the need to integrate them into any development strategy that can make a difference to the people of Africa. IKS is now seen as the basis of decision making in agriculture, health and even conflict resolutions. This re-positioning of the ways and know-how of local peoples vis-à-vis conventional approaches to development is nothing less than a paradigm shift. Central to this shift has been the realization that, in matters of development capability, culture (in the larger sense that includes not just forms of life but also worldview issues) matters, or, in the words of David Landes: "It makes almost all the difference."[4] What this means in effect is that culture has been found to overdetermine the capacity for development of a people and that while some cultures have been found to be, in the words of Lawrence Harrison, "progress-prone", others remain "progress- resistant".[5]

However, what struck me while studying, from the perspective of post-Africanism, the upsurge of global interest in IKS, with particular reference to Africa, was my realization that the deeper motivation both for promoting IKS in Africa and for seeking a post-African path out of our post-colonial woes, seems to derive from the same source, namely, the failure of Africa's extant strategies and paths to development and modernization. Both the recourse to IKS and the advocacy of post-Africanism are responses to the palpable multiple failures of Africa's post-colonial modernity. In other words, had post-colonial culture succeeded in birthing a modernized and humane Africa; had the African path to development delivered economic development, higher living standards, peace and political stability, who would bother to look backwards to

rediscover the misrecognized potentialities embedded in our native know-how, ancestral wisdom and local skills? If our various agricultural revolutions had yielded food for the mouth instead of just food for thought, who would want to go back to revalidate the archaic farming and soil management skills of our local farmers? Similarly, if our Africanized modern health systems had prevented maternal and child deaths, why would anybody still hanker after the pre-modern technologies of our traditional birth attendants? For the craze for IKS, apart from chiming so well with our usual Afrophliac romance with everything native, local and ancestral, represents an intense dissatisfaction with the outcome of our chosen path to development. Hence the need to look back into the past, to our local cultures in search of alternatives to the sterilities of our post-colonial paradigms of knowledge, know-how and artistic creativity.

In the same vein, the need for post-Africanism arose precisely because Africanism, the preferred reference ideology of Africa's famous path to development and modernization, only yielded under-development and an aborted modernity. The post-African search for an alternative mind-set and a largely de-Africanized cultural and social environment more adaptive to modernity and development, is a direct response to the bankruptcy of the Africanization of modernity and development.

However, the similarities between IKS and post-Africanism end at this point. For, the things that differentiate the two approaches to the failure of formal development are more important than what they superficially share. Strictly speaking, post-Africanism views the craze for local knowledge in Africa as no more than a refusal to face the real sources of our woes, a preference for diverting attention to what is no more than one of the symptoms of our malaise with modernity and development. If the recourse to IKS is partly a response to the failure of a conventional top-down approach to Africa's development, by what stretch of the imagination can IKS's bottom-up strategy be seen to serve as part of the solution to our under-development? If the sophisticated modern knowledges and skills and strategies of our elite could not take our rural enclaves out of poverty and disease, how will revalidating a return to the same ancestral ways of our locals now be able to solve problems they could not solve for ages? Or do we think that by throwing such sophisticated vocabulary as participatory management, local agency, etc. at largely unrationalized local environments, we automatically make them development-compliant? To me, the resort to IKS rather looks more like a desperate and diversionary move than a realistic search for solutions.

For this reason, post-Africanism seems to take a radical view vis-à-vis our craze for IKS. It says that IKS cannot be considered seriously as part

of the solution to Africa's developmental malaise precisely for the reason that a good chunk of what we now celebrate as IKS actually belongs to the stock of what was in reality fated to disappear to make way for the new knowledges, know-how, and the more performative, cost-effective skills offered by modernity. Of course, a few of the IKS can be recuperated and used with extensive adaptations and modifications. But as the disappearance of the archaic ancestral capacities for magic and sorcery is seen as emancipation rather than loss, so many of the IKS and belief systems ought to be seen for what they are: they are precisely the old things that should have fallen apart so that modern ways and things can step into the breach. The lone hoe maker should make way for the modern African agricultural implements factory; the local craftsman, the old blacksmith who toils away at his archaic forge and manages to fabricate one hoe a day, would be happy to see his children being well paid workers in a factory that has been built on the site of his old forge. He will be happy that his children's lives, though full of hard labour, will be far better than his own. Unfortunately, the old blacksmith's dream of a modern factory to replace his old forge could not be realized, not because he, for love of native Africa, would have preferred his primitive smoke-filled forge to the modern factory, but because Africa's dream of modernization had foundered on the very rock of the African path to development. In other words, if Africa failed to build the modern factory that would have lifted his children into the industrial age, it was not for love of old African things; it was because Africa chose a path to development that had one leg heavily stuck in tradition, magic and emotions, and the other trying to find hard ground in science and reason.

That schizophrenic path turned out to be the path of under-development, that is, the path that left the rural folk still so poor and deprived that their destinies are still under the same wretched control of the archaic blacksmith, the craftsman, the herbalist, the magician, sorcerer and other custodians of IKS. In other words, only the failure of development and modernization can explain the currently acclaimed resilience of traditional knowledge systems. Today we usually present the issue of IKS as if the practitioners absolutely like what they are doing and cannot do without doing them the same way forever. It is as if, given the choice, they would, for reasons of their Africanness, prefer their old ways to modern technology, modern skills and the more adaptive and transformational wisdom of the modern way. I think that it is we, the elite, who impose our Afrophiliac vocabulary on them by reading our newfangled cultural nationalist worries into their lives. My little experience and contact with village farmers, herbalists, craftsmen etc. tells me that they do

what they do without any of the Rousseauistic romantic hype that both
Afrophiliacs and UN experts now read into their dreary lives and work.
They persist in them because they really have no choice. Their dream is
that their children will have a better life than they currently have and so
they channel their meagre earnings from their IKS endeavours into their
children's education. Consequently, rather than shedding sentimental tears
over their fading out or the misrecognized Africanity-preserving work of
the blacksmith, beadmaker, traditional leather worker or witchdoctor, we
should more realistically view holders of IKS as people who have little or
no choice. Their surviving techniques, wisdom or motifs may occasionally
contain useful snippets that could be adapted for use but the bulk of their
knowledge is maladaptive, uncompetitive and often wholly negative and
can easily be discarded without any harm done to either the local people or
Africa's development capability. We should rather learn from the
psychology of our local folks especially their rustic pragmatism: they send
their children to school and to the city so that they, the children, might be
spared the often cruel limitations of their fate as only indigenous and local
people.

    Thus, over-romanticizing IKS and our local communities may be not
only misleading but ultimately harmful to the fate of the local people
themselves. However, even more harmful to the developmental and
poverty-alleviating mission of IKS promoters is that among most
international development agencies operating in Africa today. Their
imperative to generalize about revalorizing and re-instumentalizing
indigenous cultures/knowledge for sustainable rural development has often
led to the occlusion, misrecognition or even denial of any value distinction
between progress-proneness and progress-resistance among the many
indigenous cultures of Africa. In the language of Word Bank sponsored
studies on Indigenous Knowledge and development, all indigenous
cultures and native knowledge-forms seem to have been a priori accredited
as valuable, hidden, but waiting-to-be-tapped resources for sustainable
rural transformation and development. Indeed sustainable development, as
defined by the UN and allied international agencies, is essentially
interventionist projects that do not disturb the native sociocultural fabric of
indigenous communities and do no violence to their environments. Today
not only international development agencies but trans-national companies,
especially oil companies operating in Africa are, in all their development
initiatives, guided by the global ethical imperative to respect cultural
diversity, i.e. to act in such a way as not to disturb or disrespect the native
worldviews and cultural practices of their host or benefitting communities.
Post-Africanism says that without recognizing and intrumentalizing the

value distinction between good and bad indigenous cultures (good in the sense of progress-promoting, and bad as in obstructing progress), IKS will be nothing but one more perverse recipe for the usual incapacitating muddle and mindless hybridizations which have already paralyzed or pathologized post-colonial culture in many parts of Africa.

Finally, post-Africanism's objection to the craze for IKS in Africa is based on the observation that, in rushing to embrace the global IKS ideology, we do not seem to be concerned with whether or not IKS can really make a difference in Africa's fight against under-development and hunger; we jump at it mostly as part of our unfinished revenge against Europe's earlier unprovoked bad-mouthing of Africa's traditions. By fully and uncritically embracing IKS and even advocating the globalization of African traditional knowledges, we are indeed re-asking ourselves the very same question that the pioneer cultural-nationalists had asked, namely, what is it in Europe's traditions that we cannot keep our own? Post-Africanism understands the persistence of an anti-modernity reaction among some Afrophiliac elites as a delayed reaction to Europe's erstwhile overweening imperial hubris. But it says that such reaction is wrongheaded, anachronistic and self-defeating. To be sure post-Africanism agrees with the Afrophiliac cultural nationalist/IKS promoter that indeed there may not be anything so intrinsically fantastic about western traditions. But the truth of the matter is that that tradition happened to have invented modernity, capitalist wealth, democratic freedoms, science and technology and that virtually everybody, including Africans have come to like these things, i.e., to prefer most of them to what their indigenous traditions can offer. So the question is, if we Africans, like most other non-West peoples, have come to prefer capitalistic wealth and wealth creation, democratic freedom and humaneness to poverty, under-development and dictatorship, and these are essentially the products of the modern way of life, how far can we remain adepts of traditions and IKS and still be able to access what we have come to prefer? Is there any particular advantage in remaining Afrophiliacs attached libidinally to our IKS and other native ways if we cannot access the modern life that we so covet? The post-modern West, the World Bank and the UN may continue hypocritically to view Africa's local cultures and IKS as lucky remnants of pre-modern ways and knowledges that may save the world from their self-imposed apocalypse of a soulless materialism and technology. But I believe sincerely that what Africa wants above all is to get hold of tools and performative knowledges that will enable her to stave off the more real apocalypse of hunger and under-development in the continent. No doubt, given the weight of world opinion

and global institutions backing IKS in Africa, the post-African perspective on it is merely the voice of one crying in the wilderness. But I see the IKS ideology along with the Africanism that undergirds it as part of what may be holding us back from switching to new thoughts, habits of beliefs and actions that may save Africa from itself. In the following section, I want to discuss other disadvantages of Africanism for life in modernity.

Cultural nationalism: how too much Africanism in art and culture defeats Africa's progress

It will be really unfair to say that all that Africa did and is still doing under the lordship of Africanism was/is disadvantageous to Africa's well-being. Cultural nationalism, the return to roots, hybridization of values and worldviews, the insistence on a specific African way, thought and action, IKS, etc., as already amply shown, are no doubt not very favorable to Africa's rational development and modernization. Nevertheless they have all been the ground, the fertility principle and the justification for one of the greatest explosions of artistic/cultural creativity and performances that the post-colonial modern world has ever known. African music making after its exposure to forms, registers and genres from the West and other parts of the world, is literally now taking the world by storm. Fashion designs, entertainment, theatre performances have made the best of the return to ethnic roots to carve out a niche for globally acclaimed but specifically and proudly African brands. Hybridization which became the distorting demon that has impaired rational socio-economic modernization in Africa, has turned out to be the very growth principle in African music, entertainment and dance. Visual arts – painting, sculpture, photography and so on under the rubric of post-colonial art – are thriving and busy exploiting ethnicities and Africanness to find their way into the art markets of the world. African cinema is not doing badly and Nollywood, its most inventive and dynamic popular version, is even reputed to be the third largest movie industry in the world after Hollywood and Bollywood. The contributions of the art, culture and entertainment industry to the GDP of many African countries are not totally insignificant. Nor can one forget the many job opportunities created by the art and culture industries. The greatly positive role of art and culture, both as a sector of economic activity and as a source of renewed self-confidence and sense of post-colonial regained creative agency, is fully acknowledged and cannot be downplayed. My intention, however, is not to throw more flowers on the already acclaimed vitality, vibrancy and viability of the art and culture sector of Africa's modernity. Rather, I want to draw attention to the less

talked about reverse side of this self-same exuberance exhibited by Africa culturally/artistically. By this I mean the side of cultural/artistic Africansim that we are least inclined to talk about when we usually congratulate ourselves on the re-discovered role and importance of culture/art as the foundation of our development. I want to find out in what ways the mobilization of culture and the arts to create an African modernity or to Africanize modernity, may be working consciously or unconsciously against our very efforts to really modernize and develop the continent. In doing this I distinguish between culture as a sector of the economy and culture configured as the foundation and pathway to our modernization and development. While culture in the first sense could be beneficial in the short term, the spirit in both senses of culture could be more pernicious than previously thought.

The mission of cultural nationalism was not just to rescue Africa from an alien cultural imposition, but to re-make Africa, despite the contaminating contact with western culture, into a modern self-nativizing enclave. Cultural nationalism had hoped to achieve this mainly through what was then called the decolonization of both the mind of the ex-colonized and of the colonially implanted institutions of modern life. Of course the cultural nationalist programme of re-Africanzing Africa was mostly an ideal ideological picture held in the mind of the nationalist elite to inspire and direct its endeavours in modernity. However, that picture, although being such an emotionally impelling one, ended up by holding captive both Africa and its attempts to transit to modernity. What was it that cultural nationalism really opposed in colonial culture? To get a perspective on what really fired the unforgiving anti-colonialist imagination of pioneer ideologues of Africanism, it is better to know who their anti-hero was. This was none other than the Christian missionary. The missionary had set out to extract Africa wholly from its old pagan civilization in order to prepare it for a total turnaround in worldview. The missionaries reasoned that many of Africa's cultural practices and the worldviews that sustained them were simply maladaptive in relation to the demands of a fruitful transition to the modern way. Therefore, whenever adaptation was not feasible they wanted outright extinction rather than selective pruning or reform. The cultural nationalists not only thought the missionaries naïve and crazy for thinking that Africa could be other than She really was. For daring to think and practise cultural extinction, the missionaries became the bête noire of the cultural nationalist ideologues and they could never forgive the missionaries. The thoughts and activities of the missionaries became the negative yard stick for what was considered good for Africa. For everything they thought, said and did was not only countered in a kind

of ideological tit for tat but became the reason for re-discovering and radicalizing what was in Africa before the missionaries' cultural vandalism. Therefore, where the missionaries had preached worldview conversion, i.e. the lifting of Africa out of itself, the cultural nationalists preached a massive re-rooting of Africa, an aggressive rehabilitation of the damaged or abandoned old shrines and ancient altars, the restitution of old beliefs, customs and practices. Above all, they not only went back to revive old cultic knowleges but used such archaic esoteric knowledge as the major resource for running modern institutions of government including politics, commerce, and more. However, the real paradox of cultural nationalism was that despite its advertized aggressive traditionalism and unmitigated anti-colonialism, it wanted the colonially wrought modernity and wanted it covetously. But it wanted a native route to modernity, understood as a situation where the devices of the modern world could be mechanically appended to an unchanged native world of magic, human sacrifice and other fierce ancestral customs. It never wanted to lift Africa out of its old self as the condition for acceding to modernity. Thus cultural nationalism was only an attempted relapse into the ancestral pagan or juju-centric spirit of Africa at a time when that old spirit could not operate with its old pagan good conscience because it had to contend with the contrary demands of enlightenment, reason and humanness that colonial acculturation had already introduced to Africa.

The important thing to note here is that on its own, as a pure ideology of rebellion against the spirit of unstoppably encroaching modernity, cultural nationalism had little chance of success. Its efforts to completely block the moving locomotive of world history from alighting in Africa were futile. Besides, the inner contradiction of wanting modernity without letting go of magic would have killed it off before its time. However, cultural nationalism did not die mainly because it did not come as a pure ideology. It allied itself to, and found its most potent means of expression through, something more powerful than ideology, namely art. Art was the real force as well as the chief modus operandi of cultural nationalism. So closely tied were art and cultural nationalism that it can be said that at the inception of Africa's consciousness of modernity, all art was propaganda for cultural nationalism though not all expressions of cultural nationalism were art. We have seen that as a set of ideological dogmas about Africa, cultural nationalism was an unsustainable ideology in an inexorably modernizing world. But by becoming art, by incarnating itself in various art forms, cultural nationalism survived and became not only the rage of Africa but petrified itself meta-culturally into Africanism, the belief in the existence of a unique, specific African way, African being, African soul

with which Africans are in touch unlike non-Africans. Artistic Africanism was built essentially around a euphoric aestheticization of all that in African cultures the missionary had marked out as symbols of Africa's anthropological backwardness and evil – and thus earmarked for total destruction, for example, the mask, the shrine, the native doctor. Hence artistic nationalism was nothing but the vengeful totalized re-enchantment of the native world, the attempt through art to block or nullify all the disenchantment work done by both missionary and colonial re-education of Africa. Painting and sculpture especially fed on and lived off the bumper harvest made from confectioning masks and shrines, and the native customs, the palm wine tapper, the hoe wielding rural woman with a baby strapped to her back. African indigenous modernism was all about this conscious artistic re-primitivization of Africa for the benefit of cultural nationalist propaganda.

The trouble was that under the garb of art, as both a moral alibi and an emotional feel-good force, cultural nationalism's harmfulness became suppressed, unrecognized and therefore turned malignant. The first casualty was the very idea of African culture itself. Culture borne by the magic of artistic Africanism was hypostasized into an absolute ancestral good or deformed into what became Africanism, the ideology that says that whatever is African, native, ancestral, as opposed to what is merely borrowed and superimposed, is good in itself and should be jealously guarded as our only bulwark against cultural dispossession. Trapped in Africanism, culture was not seen as a continuous, evolving way of adapting to the modern world, a dynamic process that is enriched by borrowings across civilizations; rather African culture became a fixed static ancestral property that we possessed once and for all. African culture is nothing but such an ancestral fixity. Locked in this ancestral trap, African culture under the euphoric spell of asthetic-cultural nationalism, could not be deployed in any progress-favoring sense. What I mean here is that culture in the context of modernity is nothing but the belief systems, practices and habits that help a people to get what they want. This presupposes that there is a pragmatic distinction between what can be considered good culture and bad culture. Good culture is the belief system and practices that help to achieve development goals in modernity; bad culture is about worldviews, practices and habits that thwart progress towards modernity and undermine efforts to achieve better living standards and increased humaneness. If in Africa this useful distinction between good and bad culture had never seriously been made, it is mostly because the mission of African aesthetic modernism has never been other than using art to protect African culture not just from old colonialist racialist

slanders but also from any form of internal self-critical enlightenment (since such could be considered as harbouring a secret pro-colonialist attempt to further denigrate Africa). Thus, African culture, the altar before which the artist can only bow in prior approval and worshipful awe, is also the reason why art in Africa, rather than being a civilizing force, is often a handmaid to the many defeats of modernity/civilization in the continent. Cultural nationalism offered Africa a detour, an excuse to abort Africa's contact with modernity. Africa's aesthetic modernism gave that detour a good conscience. Blinded by cultural nationalism, Africa's inability to make modernity work is presented to the world as not just an inability but merely the result of an existential imperative to assert our unique African ability. It is above all not our inability but the permanent conspiracy of the West against us. African art, by lending lavish artistry and eloquence to the perpetual self-exonerations of Africa, is perhaps the most active element in the ideological self-blinding of Africa in modernity. African art promotes an overpowering but an unconscious desire, namely, the exemption of Africa from all that which drives success in modernity – reason, rational discipline, order, turning one's back on an unusable past. Many of our artists seem to be driven by an unconscious wish for a return to the pagan world of myth, emotion and dance. After all, Senghor, the great initiator of Africa's cultural nationalist poetry had already formulated the myth of Africa's exemption from reason: "reason is Hellenist, emotion is black". That Senghorian desire has been appropriated perhaps unconsciously by a host of post-Negritude artists – painters, sculptors, poets, film makers – for whom there is no African art if it is not about archaic rituals, juju shrines, Festac, squalid village scenes and of hungry naked girls dancing in the sun.[4] If cultural nationalist ideology had dreamed of a modern Africa which would be exonerated from the often too stringent procedures of modern reason, order and discipline, African artistic modernism is an unconscious angling after a modernity without progress, since progress is seen unconsciously as that which continues to violate and sully mother Africa. As a good illustration of how some contemporary African art practices may be subverting the grounds of Africa's orderly transition to modernity and development, let us look briefly at Nollywood, arguably the most popular and infectious form of contemporary African cinema.

Nollywood or juju-centric cinematography

Perhaps one of the lasting consequences of the success of cultural nationalism's back-to-roots propaganda is that today, despite strenuous