AFRICAN IDEOLOGIES AND THE INNOVATIVE TREND: TOWARDS PRIORITIZING AFRICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract

This paper examines African ideologues and the innovative trend embodied in the new digital technologies. It prioritized African history and culture as a necessary balance for the digital age. In as much as there are many advantages of the innovative technological devices in African societies today, there are also multiple challenges associated with them that meddle on African history and culture which has the capability of devaluing them if not checked. The current technological trend and innovations have almost everyone and every nation entangled in it either for the best or for the worst. African youths and children are most vulnerable to the negative side of this. This paper examines African ideology and the new trend of the technological/digital age. It highlights history and culture as the major factors that must be prioritized in present times for the sake of Africa's balanced future. The paper relies on archival and written sources. The findings here will help researchers in cultural studies, historians, and those in African studies.

Keywords: **African ideologies, innovative trend, prioritize, history, culture**

Introduction

The word innovation has different meanings. It encompasses the creation of so many things. This paper focuses its discourse on digital technological innovations and advancement. Digital technology is trending recently and has reached almost every part of the world. The world is digitally expanding and the continent is moving along with it as it continues to engage in all necessary technological and digital outlets. Nowadays, all nations and individuals need digital technology for the effective running of businesses and individual achievements in vast ways. Mastering the technicalities enclosed in digital technology is paramount to avoid being cheated out along the way. Maximizing

and implementing the strength and power of digital technology in this era is crucial and seeking the right discourse will balance Africa's future history and culture. In the view of Asante (2015:1), history is always about ancestors, their lives, their families, their failures, their successes, their behaviours, their cultural institutions, their deeds, political, economic, and social. Jerven (2015) also believes that history matters for economic development.

Africa is the pride of the black race and the resource hub of the world. It is the cradle of civilization with centuries and sequential historical occurrences, rich cultural ethnic groups, and physical displays, rich flora, and fauna, the continent had been and remains the center of attraction for tourists and foreigners. Thus, prioritizing and preserving her history and culture in the face of digital advancement is vital towards safeguarding the future of Africa. In the words of Isichie (1997:13), the dominant impulse in the 1960s was to prove that black Africa had a history at all, a history as worthy of study as any other. Africa, just like the rest of the world's continents needs to thrive and engage in developmental activities otherwise it shall remain behind. History, culture, and the embedded ideologies of a given people have made popular nations of the world stand out. Collins and Steams (2020:17) said that it is almost impossible for people not to look at history, and this means there is every reason to learn how to study it well. Similarly, Falola (2008:3) observed that culture opens the window to understand social classes and elite behaviour, to socialize its members, and to reproduce established practices and values. Nkoh (2006:1) also note that at the heart of one strand of the debate surrounding Africa's development /underdevelopment is African culture.

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Engagements in African history discourse by African scholars is a priority for the future of the continent sake even as the digital age continues to boom. There is no doubt that Africa's digital technological ability and smartness is still far low than those in developed countries like Europe and America, yet the limited level present in the system is already influencing the lives of individuals and nations positively and negatively depending on the approach. There is no denying the fact that the innovative digital/technology trend has its fair share of disadvantages that is equivalent to its successes. What is more, the digital maturity and discipline expected to be applied by some adults, youths, and children are regrettably lacking, hence the negative reports on fraudulent activities using digital devices by some youths in this digital era. Social networking, for instance, engages the youths as well. Bishop (2014:119) affirm

that the social networking service, Facebook, was at a time one of the most popular websites of its kind. African ideology and philosophy have been the foundation for the continent's solid existence for centuries; hence, prioritizing its history and culture at this period is crucial towards her future.

The concept of African ideology

The term ideology has many forms of approaches for discussion such as political ideology. Here, the ideology being discussed is the African ideology. African ideology is observed in the mode of conduct, philosophy, and worldview of the people. Speeches, proverbs, rituals, and ceremonies are all part of the socio-cultural ideology. African thoughts and ideology are different from the rest of the world because of how the system is formed. African traditional ways have helped in the smooth operation of the society in the past. Before now, the people's lifestyle was far more undiluted and more conserved than what is being experienced presently. Africa ideology and worldview are firmly observed and expressed more by the elders who understood it well than the youths in this digital age. The presence of digital technology and various electronic devices tends to interfere with African cultural values. Historians are increasingly concerned to challenge and complicate that logic by exploring processes of continuity and change that transcend the pre-colonial and colonial eras and extend in turn to the time of renewed sovereignty from the 1960s (Parker and Reid 2013).

Naturally, Africa as mentioned earlier is a traditional society and the land of the black race. An invaluable African belief is a belief that elders have wisdom and old age is golden and honorable. Respect is therefore paramount while words are spoken with caution and heavy negative news are broken down with the use of proverbs and idiomatic expressions. The thought that one can be hurt by spiritual forces when one errs or hurts fellow human beings is one of the ideologies that knit the society together. Again, religion is ritually observed and surrounded by some defined ideology. The philosophy that life comes after death and that the well-lived people will later become cherished ancestors sanitizes society. According to Committee on how people learn II (2014:3), an individual's brain develops and shaped by the set of experiences and influences unique to her - a process that occurs through the pruning of synapses and other neurological developments that take place through adolescence.

Innovative trend and digital technology

The word innovation is expansive in meaning. It talks about value and value creation in society. It is a word that explains the development of new ideas and knowledge and in this context the digital technological development. Innovation in science and technology is trending presently in Africa and other world countries. Technology has impacted so much the production of goods and services. Anderson (1994:4) noticed that the enabling technology which has brought about the current information explosion includes microelectronics, computation, signal processing, and communications…in its most basic form a computer is essentially a machine that receives, stores, manipulates, and communicates information. Strader (2011:1) also observed that digital computer systems use databases, algorithms, to store and deliver digital information on a vast array of applications. He further stated that networks, most notably the internet, interconnect these computer systems across the world enabling the exchange of data and information. Africa is not yet fully technologically advanced per se but it is tagging along with other world countries very fast. Fortunately, too, it has notable men and women who have invented or are involved in various technological and digital productions and services all over the world.

Technology is what is currently driving the world. There was a period when the manufacturing of airplanes and cars was celebrated as the highest technological innovation in our world. Today, technology has expanded and improved. Daily, new ideas continue to be introduced. Technological breakthroughs have a massive effect on nations and individuals' output. It has been seen touching the political, economic, and socio-cultural lives of the world citizens and nations. Digital technology improves lives, productivity, and communication. People use it or consult it for their economic activities, education, political activities and to transmit general knowledge and expand information. Nevertheless, operating or mastering digital devices requires some introductory knowledge and education. Some tech giants such as Google, Microsoft, Amazon, and the likes have so far helped scholars, historians, and the general populace to acquire information and knowledge on one puzzling item or the other while the present social platform techs like Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube and so on have helped the people to advertise, sell and buy products and services and, also socialize far better than before. Similarly, many people learn new skills and handicrafts such as cooking, making beads etcetera. In all these, using these apps, digital devices, and other

technological machines requires efficient skill, maturity, and competent handling for effective results and productivity.

African history: past and present

Africa is the second-largest continent in the world and the continent multiple ethnic groups and cultures. The continent has have accommodated, apart from the indigenes, other categories of foreigners in the course of her history. African history has been painstakingly building up sequentially from one period to another period and from century to century. Africa has a history even before the coming of the European colonialists. The debate that Africa has no history by some European writers is therefore untrue. History is unique and it is the foundation of any successful nation or continent. Prioritizing history is important. According to Collins and Steams,

> The study of history does more than satisfy our curiosity. Without a profound understanding of the past, societies, organizations, and individuals will make needless mistakes and fail to take full advantage of emerging opportunities (Collins and steams 2020:17).

Major historical events that occurred in Africa include the era of the early men, the presence or journey of different explorers into Africa, the period of the colonial rule, the scramble for Africa, scramble for Africa, the period of the slave trade, and the Trans - Atlantic slave trade, and the abolition of the slave trade, various initiation of independence parties, treaties, meetings and struggles, the actual independent of various African nations starting with Ghana in 1957, Nigeria in 1960, Cameroon 1960, Togo 1960 and so on and the actual post-colonial period, and many events and activities which include neo-migration issues, new Chinese interest in Africa, wars and conflicts, refugees issues, constant intertribal conflicts due to border wrong division of borders by the colonial masters and other events. There is also an account of the activities of the Arab and European merchants in Africa. It is pertinent that African history must therefore be valued by all. All national and state archival materials must be well preserved. Access to them whenever students, historians, and scholars consult them for research must be permitted. Knowledge of African history past and present is a basic tool at this period of rapid digital transformation.

Right from time immemorial, the continent has been endowed with rich mineral and human resources. The evidence of this is seen in the number of foreigners that trooped into the continent in the past and in the present times for one business venture or the other. The continent is blessed with human and mineral resources. Africa has ancient kingdoms, worthy warriors, organized societies, queens and kings of repute, successful trade merchants, and rich agricultural products. Priceless African artifacts were carted away by the Europeans from Benin and Nok in the past but some of them are being returned to Africa in the present days. Discussions are presently going on to return Nigeria stolen artifacts by Europeans during their presence in Africa. African cultures, ideology, rituals, traditions, artifacts, totems, and ceremonies are all part of African great history. According to Newell and Okome (2014: xvi), a wide spectrum of evaluations attaches to each of these terms: traditional is afflicted with ideas of cultural heritage and the preservation of moral values; modern is affiliated with ideas about progress, education, enlightenment, and superior status, but also with corruption, loss of authenticity, and degradation.

The leadership situation in some African nations such as Nigeria is not worthwhile and many influence African history and state of affairs of the continent of Africa. Most of these nations do not have good governance and while the decision-makers are engaged in looting and fraudulent practices that destabilize the African economic and political success. Chitonge (2015) observed that it was common knowledge that Sub-Saharan Africa's economies had been declining since the 1970s. Proper management and the use of technology can reduce corruption and improve governance in Africa. So far, there are some well-meaning elders, stakeholders, youths, Diasporas scholars, and citizens who have continued to speak and write about Africa and the events that shape Africa. meetings on how to improve nations in Africa are ongoing at different quarters. It is also the desire of astute African scholars to write and discuss constantly how to improve African history, identity, and place in this digitalized age. It is worthy to note that so far there are many Africans who are contributing their best in leaving lasting legacies towards Africa's growth. Africa has a set of smart surgeons and medical experts, technologists, engineers, etc. also, many have through their creativity and skills promoted African culture and history. In the literary world, novelists and writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ayi Kwei Amah, and others novels used their textbooks, novels, and plays to capture the history and culture of Africa like Things Fall Apart must be carried out by capable Africans. Historical plays like Ovonranmen Nogbasi that captured Benin history and forceful carting of Benin objects remains invaluable.

Moreso, African movies and cinemas like is being done by Nollywood is fast capturing African history and events in the movie and visual form. African music and musicology industry embellished with African native languages and traditions as seen in Flavour's Ada Ada tract for instance promotes African culture. Musicians like Miriam Makeba, Onyeka Onwenu, Yvonne Chaka Chaka, Brenda Fassie, Sunny Ade, amongst others, have trended in the world as musicians of repute while carrying African history and culture along with them. The presence of technological digital devices such as computers and flashes amongst others now help the preservation and documentation of African records and history.

African culture and the digital trend

Culture is essential in every society. It is the way people live. African culture is unique and versatile because the continent has multiple ethnic groups who speak different languages and have different styles of portraying their community or regional cultures. In sum, African culture is seen in their arts, rituals, and ceremonies. Falola observed that,

> The African elites, irrespective of their location and sources of ideas, regard culture as the number one tool in creating a difference between Africans and non-Africans, consolidating national and ethnic identities, addressing most of the issues associated with European encounter, evaluating the impact of foreign religions and cultures, and seeking enduring answers to contemporary problems of economy and politics (Falola 2008:3)

Handicrafts such as pot making and iron smelting and the designs they are given illustrate African also culture and traditions. Masquerades and mask designs vary from one African region to another but exist for social control and entertainment in the society. Also, Across Africa is museums and cultural homes where African cultures are tangibly exhibited. Similarly, food, music, and dance steps showcase the beauty of African culture. Traditional wisdom and knowledge are valued more than western knowledge because it has the needed ingredients to sustain the people in life. Thus, African culture is seen in their artifacts, the stories they tell, their dressing, food, language, expression of proverbs, mode of behaviour, and conduct. The people value old age and give reasonable respect to elders. Also, sacred objects and natural phenomena are

feared and respected. Hard work is encouraged and innovations and skills are part of the African system.

In recent times, digital technology is trending are available in many shapes. Digital devices or electronics such as computers, phones, televisions, etc. are easily available and within reach of everyone. The presence of information communication technology and apps is has made interaction easy. Engaging in the use of these devices without adequate discipline amongst the youths destabilizes African culture. In recent times the youths are cherishing foreign music and dance styles to traditional cultural ways. Handsets and computers have been abuse by children, youths and young adults as many of them play immoral videos and music with these devices. Youths have easily engaged in cyber because of the availability of computers. Fraud and fraudulent practices are against African cultural values. Lies are easily told with mobile phones while laziness has been encouraged amongst the youths who play endless online or downloaded games. WhatsApp platforms and YouTube have been wrongly indulged in by some young people and today some of them have engaged in immoral acts. These are against African cultural ethics and values.

Africa's future and the presence of digital devices

Africa's future is important and needs to be safeguarded. New innovations and developments that aspire to interfere or dilute the basics must be evaluated and readjusted. Though a traditional society, Africa is also modern in many ways. Thus, it is right that it moves with the trend and emulates other world-developed nations in technological growth. While engaging in digital technology, its future and values and heritage must be preserved for her future identity. Traditional moral and ethical values which have made the continent unique among other world nations must be practiced now despite the presence of digital technology and modernization. There is a need for the African political structure to be reassessed. The economy of Africa needs to be readjusted as well. Not every mineral resource must be exported. Industries and processing factors using digital technology to perfect the system must be adopted. Safeguarding the African future requires creating employment for youths to stop them from migrating to European countries in larger numbers to earn a better living. Already there is a high rate of brain drain. Massive exodus affects African ideology, values, and integrity. Technology can be used to create jobs for African youths. There should be African history and cultural apps and not only game apps for the benefit of the young people. Presently, science and technology rule

the world, and any given country that fails to safeguard and project its history and culture will slip away with modern technology. Already, laziness is being created by digital devices such as phones amongst youths and these attitudes can affect nations if not curtailed. The strength and energy of African youths is important for the future of Africa. Neo - and illegal migration in recent times is encouraged by Africa's internal and external economic and political crisis. Thus, imbibing and creating the right platforms for them at this time will enable Africa's future growth. African democratic governments must therefore be concerned about the welfare of African youths. Wasserman (2011) notes that the very concepts of democracy and development cannot be taken for did not grant, nor can the relationship between them be seen as without contradictions and tensions. Therefore, civilization seen in technological advancement must marry African core values and not disintegrate them.

Prioritizing African history and culture in the era of digital technology

Within the past two decades, there has been a super advancement in digital technology and innovations around the world. Almost everything has become digitalized. Individuals, organizations, companies, and governments need the efficiency and enablement that are embedded in this technology to grow faster and achieve more. African nations and their governments are not silent on these. They have welcomed this advanced technology as well to enable them to grow. But then, there is no gainsaying the fact that this digital technology may have a monumental effect on African traditional ideology, history, and culture if not checked. Asante, (1997:9) observed that these developments have presented extraordinary challenges to Africa. Already, many youths are becoming passive as they spend quality time on phones and computers. Nowadays, children are learning vulgar languages and slang through phones and computers. Quest for fast cash through illegal means is against African culture. African history and culture need to be prioritized as most valuable at his time more than ever before. The advantages of observing and knowing the benefits of these two histories must be made known to all African youths. Digital technology can be used efficiently in preserving African history and culture rather than misleading the younger generations. Similarly, digital technology can be used positively in learning and educating. To prioritize African history and culture, more discourse is needed while African leaders, decision-makers, historian scholars, custodians of culture, traditional rulers, and elders must emphasize this so that all can hear and do the right thing. Starting early to indulge in the value of history and

culture in pupils and students is vital. Oral traditions, folklores, family get-together, recitation of the activities of African heroes to the children are important factors towards preserving African history and culture in this age of digital technological presence and growth.

Africa's traditional way of life and fundamental core values must be encouraged by traditional rulers and cherished by all citizens. African history, culture, rituals, ceremonies must not be blacklisted as archaic by Africans or any foreigners. Ethnographic Museums and archival homes, as well as libraries, need to be erected in every urban center, rural villages and access must be free for the children and youths. The act of reading needs to be revived amongst the youths as the presence of phones and computers are fast taking away the reading culture amongst African youths. African ideology, philosophy, and worldview must be recited and often. Proverbs and idiomatic expressions have helped create an orderly African society that was full of local wisdom. Reviving them, therefore, is crucial for the continuation of history and culture in Africa. In essence, indulgence in positive parts of digital technology is vital while at the same time African history and cultural values must be kept in the realm of affairs and minds of every African. The use of technology must not be allowed to interfere with the history and culture of Africa because these two factors have been the foundation that sustained the continent from century to century. Already, Mentan (2010:xi) believes that the ideological strength of African rulers is wavering as their common sense is challenged more and more consistently.

Recommendations and way forward for African history and culture

Although the level of digital technology in Africa is still limited and not as sophisticated as the ones seen in the western world, its influence is already making an impact on the people and the nations. For instance, digital devices such as phones and laptops are commonly available and can be operated by the young and old. The entrainment and distractions therein are already affecting some children, youths, and marriages (relationships). Thus, to retain African history and culture as well as preserve her world view and ideology the following must be observed.: Teaching history of Africa and culture in primary, secondary, and tertiary schools across African nations must be prioritized. Reviving folklores, storytelling, and moonlight stories and games is also vital. Education is important for sustainable development and must be made compulsory for every African child. Children, adults, maids or housekeepers, must all have access to formal and informal education. Africans whether in the

Diaspora or within Africa must engage in building African history and traditional knowledge exchange. Yearly traditional festivals, rituals, and ceremonies that promote history and culture must be allowed to continue. Governments must emphasize the promotion and preservation of national monuments and artifacts across nations and states. They promote history, culture, and unity. Thus, museums and cultural homes must be revived and funded adequately. African ideology must be activated and the traditional belief system revived. The use of proverbs and idiomatic expressions is important. Local industries must be revived in all African communities. Each African community is blessed with one or more traditional skills or handicrafts and multiple resources.

Innovations and inventions being produced by African youths should be sponsored and recognized. Roschenthaler and Schulz (2016) affirm that what is remarkable is that young men and women can 'become someone in society, achieve status, and accumulate wealth through the making of pastoral careers in a general context where the possibilities for social climbing are constrained. There should be adequate investment in science and technology across Africa to enable African nations and citizens to compete favourably with the rest of the world in development. Security of life and property is important for sustainable development and for the people to have a sane environment to engage in the display of their cultural activities. Archival homes and libraries must be adequately preserved and access is given to the people to consult the materials therein.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the importance of prioritizing African history and culture at this time when fast innovative trends are going on around the world. It examined the problems and interference of digital technology in the African environment especially amongst the youths that are detrimental to African history and culture. The paper agreed that the African continent has the right to engage in digital advancement to survive and meet world standards. Technological advancement is trending all over the world presently and almost everything has become computerized and digitalized. Nations are becoming diversified and more progressive using digital technology, and other forms of technological outlets that permit the expansion of resources. The paper pointed out that while accepting and indulging in technological advancement, African history and culture remain a top priority for Africans and the continent itself.

These two therefore must be preserved, respected, and cherished. The paper also suggested that certain factors must be activated again in Africa such as storytelling and passing on of oral traditions to the younger generations, teaching history and culture in schools, retrieving all African artifacts in British museums, and preserving them adequately. The paper recommended the importance of giving African scholars and students access to archival materials during their research. Proper digital computerization and documentation of African history and culture are also advised.

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