

The Atlantic Slave Trade and Identity Crisis in Africa: An Evaluation

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Abstract

A common tendency among a majority of Africans is the wish to be like the Whites. This wish is expressed, sometimes unconsciously, in the way some Africans talk, dress, and eat. Some even go as far as doing bizarre things like changing their skin and hair colour. All these result from the chronic identity crisis that has perplexed Africa following the era of slave trade and colonialism. What is the cause of this self-denigrating behavior among some Africans? Are the slave trade and colonialism in Africa the only cause? Or, is there something more to this? The method of philosophical analysis is used in interrogating this problem. The article finds out that although the image of the African was denigrated in the era of slave trading and colonialism; that is not sufficient reason for the continuing crisis of identity evident among a majority of Africans. It argues that endemic poverty and underdevelopment brought about by bad leadership are critical factors fueling the crisis of identity in Africa. Mental de-alienation per Kwame Nkrumah's philosophical Consciencism is recommended in this paper as a means of tackling the crisis of identity in Africa. The article concludes that until good governance is restored and Africa's level of development becomes enviable, Africa's identity crisis, the consequent wholesale imitation of White man's ways of will remain unmitigated.

Keywords: Africa, African identity, Colonialism, Identity, Identity crisis, Slave trade, Mental de-alienation.

Introduction

Slave trade and colonialism are two critical factors that have shaped the history of Africa and have continued to determine the future of most nations within the continent. While there is no doubt that the slave trade predates colonialism and even existed before Africa featured prominently in world history; it is indubitable that the slave trade became a mammoth economic activity, one that became the passion of every major world economy from the 15th to the 18th centuries due to the role Africa played in the process. The trans-Atlantic slave trade is a testament to this fact. Slavery had been an ardent event in the history of nations but the Trans-Atlantic (African) slave trade assumed an unparalleled intensity and brutishness. What is considered the greatest factor in that heinous trade was the circumstances of the Agricultural and Industrial revolutions in Europe, which required a large assortment of manpower to work in the cane fields and to assist in the factories. Accomplices in this heinous commerce were Portuguese, Spaniards, Dutch, French and the English. Of all the channels of slave trade; the sheer volumes of the slave traffic across the Atlantic and the brutality with which African slaves were treated renders the European trade fundamentally different from anything that took place within Africa itself.

It is of the view of this article that the slave trade prepared the ground for the era of colonialism in Africa. The two events cannot be essentially divorced from each other because both were exploitative and tended toward serving the selfish purposes of the West. It is, therefore not surprising that the same European powers who played prominent roles in the slave trade in Africa are the same lot who became the colonial masters of different African nations following the partitioning of Africa at the Berlin Conference. This article is, therefore an attempt to expose the negative and retrogressive effects of the slave trade (and by extension colonialism), African identity and development. The article posits that to date most Africans have not been able to overcome the psychological damages wrought by the slave trade on the African psyche. This is one of the fundamental reasons for the reign of inferiority complex and identity crisis in Africa. Regrettably, bad governance and the resulting underdevelopment have not helped the solution.

A Brief History of Slave Trade in Africa

Before 1400AD, a West African population of perhaps 20 to 25 million persons lived in relative stability. This population, while divided into numerous ethnic, linguistic, and political communities, was at the same time interconnected with ties of trade, migration, and religious affiliation. For thousands of years, West African populations had developed their societies in the overlapping zones of forest, savanna, and desert edge. Among the many social institutions and structures of these populations were some that could be called slavery, in that war captives, pawns, and other dependents were held in subservience by individuals, families, and states. While historians have little direct evidence for these early antecedents to West African slavery, it is clear that the small scale of slavery in West Africa contrasted with the far more developed systems of slavery in the regions of the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and the Middle East. Holding people in captivity could succeed only if the captors had substantial resources and substantial incentives to carry out this oppression. Slavery could expand only if connected to significant demand for captive labor- brought by the ability of a monarchy to extract servile labor, or by the existence of markets for slave-produced goods, or through purchasers who would carry captives a

distance to where these conditions obtained. In 1450 all three of these conditions were obtained along the Sahara fringe. Manning points out that within this period the declining kingdom of Mali and the rising kingdom of Borno gathered, exploited, and exported captives, as is documented in Arabic-language records. For the rest of West Africa, slavery became a major factor only after 1550, when trans-Atlantic encounters brought the collapse of Amerindian populations and the resulting demand for African labour.

The slave trade occurred within a period of five centuries; from 1400 to 1900. The slave trade encompassed four distinct waves: the trans-Saharan, Indian Ocean, Red Sea, and trans-Atlantic slave trades. The last one (i.e. the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade) was by far the most significant in terms of volume and duration. It lasted from 1529-1850 and over 12 million Africans were marketed mostly along the coasts of West Africa, and forced to undertake the Middle Passage across the Atlantic Ocean (Eltis 33). According to Bertocchi). The peak was reached between 1780 and 1790, with 80,000 slaves per year being transported, but the traffic remained very intense during the nineteenth century when between three and four million people were embarked. Throughout the period, the Portuguese were always at the center of the trade: they were the ones that initiated it and they continued it long after Britain outlawed it in 1807. The involvement of Britain culminated in the eighteenth century. France also had a prominent role, followed by Spain, the Netherlands, and the USA. The decline started after 1807, even though the process was very slow and became significant only after the mid-nineteenth century when Brazil joined in.

The three other slave trades pre-dated the trans-Atlantic wave and followed different paths: the trans-Saharan trade took people from the sub-Saharan regions to Northern Africa, while both the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea trades took people from Eastern Africa and delivered them to various parts of Asia. Bertocchi observes that Overall, the volume of these three waves comprised half of that involved in the trans-Atlantic one.

The Portuguese focused their attention on four areas of the West African coast- Senegambia, Upper Guinea, Gold Coast, and Benin. These remained the principal areas of West African contact with the Atlantic until 1650. The essence of the Portuguese slave trade primarily was the transportation of captives to Portugal and, secondarily, to the Atlantic islands the Azores, Madeira, and, later, the Cape Verde islands. This trade, lasting from 1450 until it contracted sharply by 1550; it brought West African slaves into the production of wheat in Portugal and the islands. Slaves from the Upper Guinea coast were most numerous in Cape Verde; slaves from Senegambia were most numerous in Portugal.

From about 1500, the enslavement of people in West Africa began to expand in several directions (Hogendorn & Johnson 102). Portuguese merchants returned from the Indian Ocean with cowries and sold them in West Africa. Spain built up a substantial system of enslaved labour in the sixteenth century on the Canary Islands, with slaves purchased from the Portuguese; Morocco too expanded its production of sugar. At the desert edge, the rising empire of Songhai (more than its predecessor and neighbor Mali) relied on slavery and slave trade as a pillar of its economy. Ottoman demand for slaves may have encouraged more trans-Saharan slave trade through Libya. The total of all these exports from West Africa reached about 6500 persons per year in 1500.

It was only after 1550 were slave captives from West Africa exported in large numbers to the Americas. Small numbers of Africans participated in the early voyages of discovery and conquest, and an early effort at a sugar plantation on Hispaniola in the 1520s relied on African slave labor. Manning notes that Spanish and Portuguese conquest of mainland territories in the Americas took decades, and the conquerors sought first to obtain labourers by enslaving local Amerindian populations” (Manning cited in Hogendorn & Johnson 104). After 1550, however, it became clear that the Amerindian population was declining because of disease, and both Spanish and Portuguese turned to African slave labour. The Spanish, ill-equipped to collect slaves directly, awarded a contract known as the *asiento* to merchants of other nations: Portuguese merchants dominated these *asiento* contracts from 1580 to 1660.

Note that the number of captives exported from West Africa almost tripled from 1450 to 1650, and most of the increase came from regions bordering the Atlantic. The expansion of enslavement generated improved techniques for seizing captives: armed raids, kidnapping, and judicial enslavement. Individual regions underwent cycles of expansion and contraction in the slave trade. In the peak export years, men came to be in short supply, and populations declined. Walter Rodney has argued, for the Upper Guinea region, that the first century of contact with the Portuguese resulted in an expansion of slavery where it had not previously been prevalent, and John Thornton has shown, for the same region, the social change brought by the shortage of men. The developments up to 1650 in Senegambia, Upper Guinea, Songhai, Gold Coast, and Benin served to foreshadow the elements of

the larger system that was later to emerge. The local and episodic impact of enslavement had yet to become broad and general, but the writing was on the wall.

Slaves from West Africa became involved on a large scale in sugar cultivation beginning in about 1650, as the global economy entered a period of growth. Hints of changing times that would draw West Africans into the sugar-and-slavery nexus came from new military and commercial ventures. The Dutch, seeking to develop their own commercial power and break free of Spain, launched expeditions all over the world from 1580, and by 1650 had established themselves as the greatest commercial power in Europe (Klein 99 - 103). The Sadian dynasty in Morocco, seeking also to build up commercial and military strength in opposition to Iberian powers, defeated Portugal in 1578 and destroyed Songhai in 1591. While sugar production declined in seventeenth-century Morocco, the import of slaves from the Niger and Senegal valleys expanded. These and other changes opened up the era in which the slave trade dominated the Atlantic economy; West Africa paid the price for that economic growth.

The Genesis of the African Identity Crisis

The talk about identity crisis in Africa exists because of Africa's contact with the West which many scholars agree has led to an inferiority complex among some Africans. Of course, Africa's contact with Europe is not all negative; it came with some advantages. Many practices that were repugnant like the killing of twins, human sacrifices, etc. were stopped due to the contact with the West. Formal education in the schools were introduced with great results. Science and technology were introduced to Africa largely due to western influence. In the agricultural sector for instance, pre-colonial Africa was complemented by mechanized agriculture.

Notwithstanding this good news of the colonial days, the negative impact was quite enormous and damaging to the African personality and development. The first political difficulty was the unfortunate indiscriminate grouping of political and governmental arrangements. The practice of putting together people of divergent ethnic groups, creeds and values into one country led to conflicts, disagreements and wars. Oguejofor affirms, thus: With the partitioning of Africa, different ethnic groups and nations suddenly became parts of the same political entities without any regard to their history, religion, culture or experience. Some suffered arbitrary division between colonial masters. Part of the Somali nation found itself in Ethiopia, another in Kenya, yet another in Northern Somalia and the rest became vassals of Italian peninsula. Hence, the western experience, its advantages notwithstanding, shattered indigenous political institutions and boundaries. Also, colonial administrators were overly dictatorial and left a legacy of dictatorship which the new crop of leaders that emerged following the independence era imbibed seamlessly as the ideal standard of leadership. The effect is the abuse of political power, bad governance and embezzlement of public funds that have become the modus operandi among the political elites in almost all nations in Africa. It is the same logic of selfishness and unguided passion for power and its abuse learnt from the colonialists that arguably led to the incessant coup d'etat in Africa.

Emphasizing on the damaging effects of Africa's unhealthy contact with the West as the main cause of the problem of African identity crisis, Dukor notes that "Racialism, slavery and colonialism gave rise to the African psychological and cultural alienation which also gave rise to the loss of collective identity" (Dukor 160). Also according to Ruch and K. Anyanwu, it is all this racialism, the slavery and the oppression of colonialism, the ambiguities of attitudes on the part of both whites and blacks which gave rise to the psychological and cultural alienation, to the loss of collective identity of the Africans" (Ruch & Anyanwu 168). The West considered Africa as inferior and without reasoning. They felt that the colour 'White' is superior while 'Black' is inferior and that the blacks were condemned to be primitives. Dukor expatiates:

Africans of the first half of this century have begun to search for their identity because they had the feeling that they had lost it. The three factors which led to this feeling were; slavery, colonialism and racialism; of all these, racialism is said to be the source of the colonialism and slavery. It was because Africans were considered racially inferior and culturally uncivilized that both Arabs and Europeans felt a moral justification in expiating them by reducing them to slavery. Therefore, the heart of the whole problem of African identity lies in Racialism (159). There is thus a direct connection between slave trade, colonialism and the identity crisis experienced in Africa today.

Economically, Africa suffered a grave wound too because without prejudice to other advantages, the west fed and grew on the ruins of Africa. With one hand they offered promises of hope and with another- they siphoned resources, human and material. As a matter of fact, the Euro-African through slave trade and colonialism left a colossal economic scar. With regard to slave trade alone, the millions of people carted away meant a drastic reduction of the Continent's productive capacity, especially when those sought after were those at the bloom of

their lives. Also, wars and raids aimed at gathering slaves meant serious rupture of economic and social life. Okolo had elsewhere argued that the European domination of African nations is not for mere humanitarian purposes but mainly for economic exploitation (Okolo 107). It therefore meant that during the colonial campaign, all economic activities were directed toward the needs of Europe. Once again, the implication is that Africa lost all control over the quality, quantity, speed and direction of her economy. Agricultural economy remained but it was directed towards export. Mineral exploitation and distribution of manufactured articles became the decisive sectors. Land, labour and capital were therefore diverted from traditional rudimentary economy to the export oriented sector whose direction was based on the export of single agricultural commodities, with the exception of a few countries that were blessed with the ability to supplement with earnings from mineral resources. The result today is that majority of African countries belong to the league of world poorest nations who still rely on the West for sustenance; to the extent that most African nations rely on the West to convert their local raw materials to finished products even till date.

On the religious side too, the missionaries strategically alienated the indigenous people from their culture and religious heritage almost completely. It would be acceptable if theirs was an effort to humanize the culture in terms of promoting its good values and criticizing the odious ones. But what they did was a blatant jettisoning of a whole system of values. This is the core, the major reason for the identity crisis Africans face today. Africans were alienated from themselves through the jettisoning of their culture. The African was made to idolize the western culture while considering his barbaric. Ayittey described Africans as a people denied of any real intellectual, cultural or historical accomplishment or experience, who are impotent of contributing anything to humanity (19). Fanon notes that the western invasion and the consequent erosion of the African worldview made the native to see his culture as not just unethical and devoid of values but as one that personifies a negation of values. In terms of morals and values, the native was made to understand that his essence founded on his culture is evil, corrosive, destructive, disfiguring and is an inescapable matrix of malevolent forces (32). Fanon observes that the west by a kind of perverted logic turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" (169).

Without prejudice to the quality of western education, the west appeared to have achieved a great deal of her perceived agenda to bastardize the African person and culture through it. This is because, as Nwafor Orizu bemoans as early as 1980, in the entire curriculum of schools and colleges, one seldom sees any place for African culture and psychology; neither does the schema presume to produce independent specialists in different fields of life so as to promote African welfare (142). In similar mode, Offiong observes that Just as the Europeans controlled African participation in the new Economic order, they also carefully structured African education so as to perpetuate their underdevelopment and dependency. The colonial power mainly Britain and France knew that the introduction of western education was sine qua non for the exploitation of Africa and Africans (111). On the whole, as Moneke notes, the combined indices of the combined effects of slavery and colonialism boils down to: economic, cultural, political, religious and psychological violence" (6), a most terrible form of violence that sent the identity of the African into obscurity to the extent that the average African is always ready to dump his identity in preference to the western identity.

Inferiority Complex: The Africans Blurred Vision of His Identity

What the African experienced in slavery and colonialism had indelible effects not just on what the African has but on his idea of what he is. It is here that the identity crisis lies. What happened in slavery and colonialism may be described as a deliberate depreciation of all that concerns the African; his history, culture, dignity, rights, hopes and objectives. As Martey notes, the damage was holistic, total, personal, and deep-seated (38). Consequently, Having been beaten down and violated even to the depth of his person, the Africa as it were, appeared to lose confidence in himself and by himself began to broadcast the western superiority" (Moneke 7). You notice this tendency in sayings in the local African languages that glorify the White personality. For instance, the Igbo say Bekee bu agbara (The Whiteman is a god). Further, the African manifests this accepted superiority in his unbridled flair for the exotic and an inordinate crave for foreign things, foreign cars, foreign books, foreign women, foreign studies, foreign currency, foreign skin as is the case of bleaching and hairdo" (Ezekwugo 249). In and with this frame of mind, whatever is African or Nigerian is an imitation not the original while the exotic is the original and authentic. What is indigenous is fake while its exotic alternative is the main (Moneke 7).

As if it is not enough that this mindset is unfortunately unleashing violence on the Africa personality; even more annoying is the fact that it is receiving acclaim and protection from some African scholars. For instance, Wheatley writing in 1773 referred to his own Africa as the land of errors and darkest abodes. For Booker, the life of his African forebears is seen as darkest heathernism (Wheatley and Booker cited in Ehusani 79). Areoye Oyebolas Black Mans Dilemma was an extreme showpiece of an indigenous ideological denigration of his own people and

culture (31-32). He argued very strongly that the Black man has not made any contribution to civilization and so is not qualified to lay claim on any positive identity (Oyebola 32). In his words, "the black race imitates other races. We are copycats" (32). Further, he insisted that there is something deficient in the person of the African noting that we have some basic human weaknesses that are peculiar to us" (32). Other vituperations which Oyebola vented on his fellow Africans were that in terms of technology Africans were far cruder than those prevalent among the Caucasian and Mongolian races at the same periods of history and that Africans possessed no knowledge of technology comparable to that found among the other races" (32).

Oguejiofor profoundly dismissed Oyebola's work as an intellectual failure and as light-weighted. In his *Philosophy and the African Predicament*, he rightly posits:

It is only from the background of the African psychological trauma that Black Man's Dilemma can be rightly and fairly appreciated. Oyebola's book is a good example of African intellectuals who behave as though the most remarkable sign of learning and enlightenment is the vilification of their history and culture, their people and forebears. In the end his analysis of the African situation is so full of inconsistencies, and his suggestions of the way forward so incomprehensible that the whole project becomes an abject lesson on Africa's most aching problem (49).

What has become arguably obvious is that the African man's psyche is, as if by a planned programme, being disoriented. It is this psychological trauma more than any other thing that is the bane of African identity crisis. There is as it were a tension between what the African is and what he has experienced, - a sort of confused sense of identity and split personality. As epitomized in Oyebola and many of his kind who we must agree are paradigmatic representation of most Africans, the black man is in doubt of who he is: Black or white? Half black-half white? He appears and feels he is neither, for alienated from the old he is not fully accepted totally in the new. Some authors have called this situation an anthropological neurosis. Awolowo sums it, thus, Acting from his neurosis and dense feeling of inferiority, they indulge in exhibitionism and wholesale aping of the white man, especially in things that do not matter (38).

The Need for Mental De-alienation in Africa

Some scholars have suggested that mental de-alienation is the way to free the Africans from his identity crisis. Concerned with his rethinking of the 'colonial library', V.Y. Mudimbe attempts to reimagine the colonial library as a space of contestation.

He proposed an epistemological colonization that was responsible that was responsible for reorganizing "native" African minds.

In order to give an explicit account of colonization, Mudimbe considered the historical moment in which social science and colonialism combined to 'Invent Africa', Mogobe B. Ramose, *op.cit.*, p.70.

For V.Y. Mudimbe, colonisation posits a set of representations and texts that have collectively invented Africa citing anthropology as a colonial project.

Furthermore, Mudimbe attests that the colonizing structure, which completely embraces the physical, human, and spiritual aspects of the colonizing experience, are complementary projects constitute.

To this, Mudimbe posits three main keys to account for the variations and methods representative of colonial organization: the procedures of acquiring, distributing, and exploiting lands in colonies; the policies of domesticating natives; and the manner of managing ancient organizations and implementing new modes of production. Thus, three complementary hypotheses and actions emerge: the domination of physical space, the reformation of natives' minds, and the integration of local economic histories into the Western perspective. He attests that "colonisation" has been some kind of historical accident, largely unplanned and a transient phase in the evolving relationship between more and less developed parts of the world. More so, colonialism should have produced a body of knowledge on the means of exploiting dependencies. It should also have produced a kind of empirical technique for implementing structural distortions by applying priority given to the industrial revolution over the agricultural revolution; the simultaneous promotion of all branches of industry with a preferential approach to heavy industry; emphasis on tertiary and service activities; and preference for exports to the detriment of the total economic system.

Sabelo Ndlovu observes that the success story of the people of Egypt to utilise the resources of the Nile River to build the Egyptian civilisation, which is older than the birth of modern Europe, is a testimony of how the people and the continent were self-developing and self-improving on their own terms.

He argued that the invention of stone tools and the revolutionary shift to the iron tools prior to colonialism is another indication of African people making their own history. The domestication of plants and animals is another evidence of African revolutions. This is what colonialism destroyed as it created a colonial order and economy that had no African interests at its centre.

Flourishing pre-colonial African economies and societies of the Kingdom of Kongo, Songhai, Mali, Ancient Ghana, Dahomey were first of all exposed to the devastating impact of the slave trade and later subjected to violent colonialism. What this birthed were economies in Africa rather than African economies – economies that were outside-looking-in in orientation – to sustain the development of Europe.

Ali Mazurai connects to Nkrumah's idea of consciencism emphasizing the role of human development and freedom in developing the African continent. He posits that "before colonialism, Africans had ways of training their people to develop their societies".

This was done by allowing the individual to grow within the communal settings of African societies. Except in rare cases, the survival of the society was taken as necessary for the survival of the individual. As such, the individual was allowed to develop morally in conformity to laid down standards. Thus, the moral development of the individual was central to the development of his personality which, consequently, was important for the development of the society. This moral development determines the way the society viewed individuals and the responsibilities they commit to them.

Succinctly Mahmood Mamdani (1996: pp. 145-150), observed that British indirect rule policies in Africa were more prevalent in Nigeria and Kenya because of Frederick Lord Lugard's activities and writings on indirect rule (Mamdani, 2000: pp. 43-45).

Taking Nigeria as a case study, the problems created by indirect rule system remain a negative colonial structure and an undeserved legacy the nation has been unable to free herself from since decades of independence.

This article agrees with these scholars but further maintains that mental de-alienation with good governance will have no positive effect on Africa. This is because poor political leadership in Africa has arguably caused more damage to Africans than slave trade and colonialism combined. Hence, any mental de-alienation needed in Africa must begin from de-alienating the African political elites from their tendency toward exploitation, abuse of political power, corruption, etc.

This having been said, to achieve mental de-alienation, there are two possible alternatives. First, to completely reject all foreign ideas. This will be difficult and could cause more crises than imagined. It has been debated that colonial domination gave rise to escalated moral deficiencies in Africa, although it cannot be denied that moral problems are part of the existence of every society, since humans are naturally fallible. There was delinquent, moral and corrupt Africans before European colonialism but the societies had mechanisms for dealing with the problems such that they were able to promote moral sanctity in the communities, though in modern parlance, some of the approaches may be considered primitive and barbaric. In some African societies of the past, people who stole were subjected to varying types of punishments. Some were ostracized or banished while heavy fines were imposed on others. For instance, those who slept with other peoples wives or husbands were paraded naked. On most occasions, the punishments were enforced to expose culprits to shame and deter others from engaging in such immoral acts. In some cases where they could not locate a perpetrator, they invoked curses believing that their gods would punish the culprit. This recourse to metaphysical forces further instills fear in the hearts of the people.

With the ethos of liberty that came with colonialism there has been a strong check against the Africa traditional modes of dealing with moral problems. On the continent today are people who embezzle funds belonging to their nations and take advantage of legal loopholes to win court cases and keep what they stole to the detriment of millions of others. In cases where some of the individuals fail to escape through legal loopholes, plea bargaining or out of court settlements see them releasing part of their national loots while they keep the rest. These practices reveal the extent of the corruption on the continent. However, despite these modern moral problems, Africans cannot completely reject all foreign western ideas. There are aspects that are useful for our growth and development.

The second option is to consider an integration of western and African ideas. This is what John Kwameh Nkrumah tried to achieve via his postulation of philosophical consciencism. Obviously, if it has been accepted that western

cultures have certain good aspects, it would be unreasonable to conclude that a merger of Africa and western ideas is unreasonable. For decades, post-colonial African leaders adopted this option, but to the detriment of African ideas necessary for the continent's growth. In cases where they succeeded in merging these ideals, as deducible from Biney's observation of Nkrumah, personal moral failures water down the strength of the messages they were trying to pass across to other Africans and cause the people to be further alienated as they turn to other alien ideas for consolation (Biney 129-135). Inasmuch as Africans allow foreign ideas, it is necessary to always look inwards to develop. One obvious reason for the moral decline in Africa is the abandonment of the African ideals necessary for African growth. An increasing concentration on African ideals will help in the process of mental de-alienation. The lack of this has made Africa only colonially independent in principle but not in reality. Mental de-alienation will help Africa to assert her true independence and growth.

To mentally de-alienate properly, this article suggests Kwame Nkrumah's idea of Consciencism as the way forward. Adesoye affirms that Consciencism is both a philosophy and an ideology, the goal of which is the de-enslavement and decolonization of Africa (26). According to Anyarogbu, Nkrumah's basic assumption in his postulations on philosophical consciencism is that African countries united with one another needed to adopt a political structure that is socialist and consistent with traditional African values founded on egalitarianism (31). As Anyarogbu expatiates, Nkrumah argues that the three segments of African society- African Traditional religion, Islam and Christianity co-exist uneasily; the principles animating them are often in conflict with one another. He emphasizes that the two other segments (Christianity (Western) and Islam), in order to be rightfully practiced or digested in Africa, must be accommodated only as experiences of the traditional African society. Nkrumah warns that "If we fail to do this our society will be racked by the most malignant schizophrenia" (78). To achieve the task of harmonizing usefully the values of the Western (Christian) religion, and Islam with those of African Traditional Religion, Nkrumah proposes a revolution in the African worldview that will involve a change of attitude to the Western and Islamic experiences. He notes, "Our attitude to the Western and the Islamic experience must be purposeful. It must also be guided by thought. For practice without thought is blind" (Nkrumah 78). Nkrumah, thus, identifies Philosophical Consciencism as the philosophy that must stand behind this social revolution. He describes philosophical consciencism as the map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest the Western and the Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality" (79). Put differently, Philosophical consciencism is that philosophical standpoint which, taking its start from the present content of the African conscience, indicates the way in which progress is forged out of the conflict in that conscience" (79).

It is pertinent to note that while mental de-alienation is pivotal for the restoring of African humanity, resolving the crisis of identity in Africa and enhancing the development of the continent; good governance is equally indispensable. The manner of mental de-alienation projected in this work is the kind that must begin with the political leadership in Africa. It must be the kind that should heal the average African political elite of the cankerworm of exploitation, greed, power abuse, etc that have characterized bourgeoisie behaviour in Africa even in the precolonial Africa.

Conclusion

It is necessary to note that there was intra-African slave trade before Africa-European slave trade emerged. In fact, it was the strength of the slave trade market and economy in Africa within the 15th-16th centuries that attracted the Europeans to Africa in search of slave labourers to work in the expanding industries in Europe. However, the invasion of Africa by the Europeans took the slave trading to an unprecedented height. This is why, as has been established, the trans-Atlantic slave trade became the toast and the greatest instantiation of the era of human enslavement in history.

This history of the rise of slave trade in Africa raises concern about the disposition of the Africa elite class to the other ordinary Africans. It does appear that from time immemorial the bourgeois Africans have always been exploitative of the poor and ordinary citizens. It is this exploitative disposition among the elites that was exploited by the Europeans which eventually amounted to the radical enslavement and denigration of the entire continent. Colonialism became the means set out by the European to restore the humanity of Africans after the onslaught of enslavement. All these happened because of the greed, exploitation and inconsiderate spirit of the most privileged Africans from the earliest times of African history.

Unfortunately, today, this avaricious and rapacious tendencies are still rife among the African elites. In fact, it can be argued that African political elites of this era are more rapacious than those of the precolonial era and those of the immediate postcolonial era. The evidence of this claim is seen in the backwardness of the continent, the disintegration, intertribal and religious wars, civil unrest, mass abuse of citizenship rights, escalating migration

crisis, etc that have become synonymous with the identity of almost every nation in Africa (especially those in the sub-Sahara). This article is therefore of the opinion that while slave trade and colonialism are causative factors in the African identity crisis and underdevelopment, inept and corrupt political leadership in Africa has seemingly exacerbated the problem. Hence, while mental de-alienation and epistemic freedom may be useful in addressing the identity crisis in Africa; the most pragmatic solution to the problem of Africa is a better political leadership that can provide good governance for nation-states in Africa. With good governance, development is possible, the standard of living of the average African will improve. The African will regain his lost sense of dignity and pride as an African. Since, this would imply that the African will then be exposed to most of the privileges enjoyed by the European here in his continent, he will have the mental disposition to consider himself equal with the White even as a Black. Black would become a colour of pride, no longer one of denigration, barbarism and demonization.

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