

A Diopian Analysis of the Symbolisms of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa

by

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Abstract

This paper probes two major research questions: First, what does the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) symbolize to its members; and second, what do CODESRIA's symbols represent? In order to answer these questions, the Diopian Methodology is employed. Three sources were utilized to collect the necessary data for the study. One of the sources is an E-mail questionnaire sent to a sample of 299 non-randomly/non-probability selected CODESRIA members asking them to answer the following question: What does CODESRIA symbolize to you? The other two sources comprised CODESRIA's Charter and its Emblem. The substantive findings generated after the data collected were systematically analyzed by using the qualitative descriptive and linguistic semantic techniques within the context of the generality of the African presence in the world. Results suggest that CODESRIA symbolizes Abrahamic connections (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), African Nationalism, essential dignity, gnoseology, and *Ubuntu*. It is therefore suggested that CODESRIA develop an *ambassadorship* approach through which its members in various countries might be encouraged to get their governments and young scholars to know more about the institution's ethos and work. Such an initiative is vital because it will give the institution more visibility and penetration comparable to those of foreign institutions of similar stature with presence on the African continent, as many of these institutions undermine CODESRIA's commitment to an alternative narrative on Africa's potential and prospects.

Introduction

That the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), “a pan-African institution established by African researchers in 1973 out of a desire to build an autonomous scientific community that is capable of interpreting social realities in Africa and contributing to debates on global issues” (Sall, 2012), has emerged as a major symbol of development in the African continent and its Diaspora is hardly a matter of dispute (Cobb and Elder, 1983). This assertion is confirmed by the fact that in 2013, CODESRIA was given the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Integration Award by the Latin American Social Science Council in recognition of the work that the organization has contributed over the years in promotion of regional integration through research and South-South cooperation (CODESRIA, 2013). Also, in 2014, the Think Tank and Civil Societies Program at the University of Pennsylvania in the United States, which ranked approximately 6,600 think tanks in 182 countries, designated CODESRIA as the 4th think tank in Africa south of the Sahara, 120th in the world, 27th in international development, 38th for the most significant impact on public policy in the world, 39th with the best trans-disciplinary research program in the world, and the 45th for the best advocacy campaign in the world (McGann, 2015).

Furthermore, a Google Internet search with the name Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa on December 16, 2015 yielded about 19,300,000 results in 0.55 seconds. Compare CODESRIA’s record with those of the other four among the top five think tanks in Africa, and one finds that (1) Kenya Institute for International Affairs, established in 1997 and ranked first, with approximately 1,690,000 results in 0.72 seconds; (2) IMANI Center for Policy and Education, launched in 2004 and ranked second, with around 178,000 results in 0.55 seconds; (3) South African Institute of International Affairs, founded in 1934 and ranked third, with roughly 15,100,000 results in 0.52 seconds; and (4) Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis, set up in 1995 and ranked fifth, with circa 804,000 results in 0.49 seconds. In essence, the lengths of existence of these organizations do not seem to correlate with their Internet results. Despite the abundant recognition and attention CODESRIA has been receiving, however, no systematic work exists on the symbolisms of the organization, which has emerged as one of the major symbols of development in Africa and its Diaspora. This study therefore attempts to fill this void. To do so, the paper probes the following two major research questions: (1) What does CODESRIA symbolize to its members? (2) What do CODESRIA’s symbols represent? In order to systematically address these questions, the rest of the paper is divided into four interrelated sections: (1) Diopian Methodology, (2) Data Collection Techniques and Sources, (3) Data Analysis, and (4) a Conclusion. Additionally, a brief discussion on the import of symbols is warranted, since they are the crux topic of this paper.

Symbols, as some scholars have observed, are critical in promoting social integration, fostering legitimacy, inducing loyalty, gaining compliance, and providing citizens with security and hope (e.g., Edelman, 1964; Jones, 1964, Merelman, 1966, Cobb and Elder, 1976; Elder and Cobb, 1983). As I have also pointed out, symbols yield deeper dyadic, triadic and polyadic meanings because they convey not only surface contents, but a great deal of auxiliary information as well (Bangura, 2002a & 2002b). Thus, the major thesis in this paper is that analyses of symbols that fail to account for pragmatic features—i.e. “the choices language users make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interactions, and the effects their uses of language have on other participants in an act of communication” (Morris, 1938:301; also cited in Bangura, 2015a)—risk ignoring relevant contents that may be central to the symbols’ meanings.

Diopian Methodology

Diopian Methodology, more commonly known as Pluridisciplinary Methodology, can be generally defined as the systematic utilization of two or more disciplines or branches of learning to investigate a phenomenon, thereby in turn contributing to those disciplines. Noting that Cheikh Anta Diop had called on African-centered researchers to become pluridisciplinarians, Clyde Ahmed Winters (1998) states that the Pluridisciplinary specialist is a person who is qualified to employ more than one discipline—for example, history, linguistics, etc. The history of Pluridisciplinary Methodology can be traced back to the mid-1950s with the work of Diop. The approach was concretized by Jean Vercoutter, Alain Anselin, and Clyde Ahmad Winters in the late 1950s, 1980s and early 1990s. More details on the history, pioneers, and formal praxis of the methodology appear in some of my works listed in the references: Bangura, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, and 2015c.

According to William D. Wright, Africentricity

... (and not Afrocentric Perspective) speaks to, with historical evidentiary support, the generality of the African Presence in the world...Africentric and Blackcentric perspectives are the way Third-Wave Black historians see the limits of an African Perspective to analyze Black history...and the reasons why the Blackcentric perspectives, in interaction, and working through the general White over Black structures and general system framework look at the way that Black people have related to Africa and the African identity in their history, both of which have always been retrospective acceptances, even when Black people did not know it (Wright, 2001:119).

Thus, as I recount in my article titled “From Diop to Asante: Conceptualizing and Contextualizing the Afrocentric Paradigm” in the *Journal of Pan African Studies* (5, 1, 2012:103-125), Cheikh Anta Diop was an example of Africentricity, i.e., the generality of the African presence in the world incarnate as the realization of the potential of the human mind in an African intellectual context, by “placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior” (Asante, 1987:6). The life of this intellectual giant would represent a leap forward in the overall evolution of the human collective consciousness, spanning from his birth on December 23, 1923 to his period of transition on February 7, 1986. Like W.E.B. Du Bois, Diop would make his contributions to African liberation through both activism and scholarship. Born to peasant parents in Dioubel, Senegal, Diop was one of the many pioneers of Africentricity who was born in Africa.

Diop’s work would seek to explain and liberate the African being. He reclaimed the ancient aspects of Africa in order to put the present Africa into its proper context. Using African social and political constructs as points of reference, he would come with a format for liberation by using the African people’s own particular history as a guide. His work, as stated before, would include activism, particularly in the form of founding political parties in his native Senegal. Diop founded the Block of the Masses of Senegal in 1960, the Senegalese National Front in 1964, and the National Democratic Rally. His pioneering role in Africentricity through use of science would continue as well. In 1966, Diop helped to make the creation of the radiocarbon laboratory at IFAN in Dakar. This “Pharaoh,” as Ivan Van Sertima would call him, would also become President of the World Black Researchers Association in 1976. The major works that represented the materialization of Diop’s thought were *The Cultural Unity of Africa, Pre-Colonial Black Africa, The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality?*, *Civilization or Barbarism: An Authentic Anthropology*, and many others listed in the references. These works house the very foundation upon which Africentricity rests. His new conception of history would unify Africa and African people throughout the Diaspora by demonstrating the continuity that would transcend the ethnic and ideological differences while still imparting a sense of pride among the people.

Data Collection Techniques and Sources

Three sources were utilized to collect the data for this study. One of them is a non-random/non-probability survey of a sample of 299 CODESRIA members across the globe, with the majority of them living in Africa. Respondents were asked to answer the following question: What does CODESRIA symbolize to you? The question was sent to the respondents via their E-mail addresses gleaned from CODESRIA’s *Book of Abstracts and Program* for its 14th General Assembly convened in Dakar, Senegal from June 8 to 12, 2015. Like any survey, the instrument used sought to solicit answers that reflected respondents’ views, perceptions, attitudes, etc. at a particular point in time.

The survey, which constituted a one group post-test only design, was administered from December 12 to 14, 2015. A total of 45 (15.05%) of the population surveyed responded to the question from December 13, 2015 to January 10, 2016. The response rate is within a suitable range, since generally an E-mail open rate is 15-20% (Benchmark Internet Group, 2015). Finally, two respondents declined to answer the question.

The other two data collection sources employed comprised CODESRIA's Charter with its Amendments and its Emblem. These sources were retrieved from the organization's website by using the document analysis technique. This procedure, as I have stated elsewhere (Bangura, 2011:166), involves a researcher relying on the record keeping activities of government agencies, private institutions, interest groups, media organizations, and even private citizens. The data are reported in summary, or in aggregate form. What distinguishes the document analysis technique from other data collection approaches is that the researcher is usually not the original collector of the data, and the original reason for the collection of the data may not have been to conduct a scientific research project. The data collectors may be unaware of how the data they collect will ultimately be used, and the phenomena they record are not generally personal beliefs and attitudes, which are more typically collected through interviews (see also Johnson and Reynolds, 2005:185).

Data Analysis

For this study, the qualitative descriptive and linguistic semantic techniques are employed within the framework of Africentricism, i.e., an ideology focused on the generality of the African presence in the world. The qualitative descriptive technique involves asking and answering the question "What?" and emphasizes words instead of numerical values. It can serve many purposes, "such as presenting a rarely encountered situation or one not normally accessible to researchers, whether the subjects of study are individuals, small groups, organizations, or more abstract entities such as decisions" (Yin, 2014:215, 217). Morris (1938 & 1946) labeled sign-world relations as *semantics*. Thus, the linguistic semantic technique deals with meaning as "a triadic relation between conventionality, language and the phenomena to which it refers" (Bangura, 2002a:20; 2002b:17).

The results generated after the systematic analysis of the collected data are presented in the following three subsections, homologous to their sources. In the fourth subsection, the findings are synthesized in terms of their African-centered thematic meanings for the sake of coherence.

Survey Results

In this subsection, I present the precise descriptions of the major concepts gleaned from the survey responses and then place them into African-centered semantic categories as warranted. I discuss these categories in the fourth subsection (synthesis of findings) in terms of their African-centered thematic meanings. The following are the major concepts with their definitions, mostly from the *Google Online Dictionary*, unless stated otherwise. The concepts are presented in the order that they were first received from the survey respondents:

Self-pride: one having a feeling or deep pleasure or satisfaction derived from his/her own achievements, abilities, status, possessions, etc. that are widely admired.

Independence: the fact or state of being self-reliant.

Freedom: the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint.

Liberation: freedom from limits on thought or behavior.

Powerful: having great ability to do something or act in a particular way, especially as a faculty or quality, and/or to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events.

Critical: expressing or involving an analysis of the merits and faults of a work of literature, etc.

Academic excellence: outstanding or extremely good education and scholarship.

Academic autonomy: education and scholarship free from external control or influence.

Intellectual dynamism: the faculty of reasoning and understanding objectively, especially with regard to abstract or academic matters, characterized by vigorous activity and progress.

Intellectual unity: joined faculties of reasoning and understanding objectively, especially with regard to abstract or academic matters.

Democratic future: time regarded as still to come relating to or supporting democracy (a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives) or its principles.

Connection point: the position of a relationship in which a person, thing, or idea is linked or associated with other persons, things, or ideas.

School for social science research methodology: an institution at which instruction is given in the systematic, theoretical analysis of established forms of procedures for accomplishing or approaching the scientific study of human society and social relationships.

Uncensored knowledge: facts, information, and skills acquired by a person through experience or education that are not suppressed, considered obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security.

African-centered/

Afrocentric knowledge: facts, information, and skills “placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior” (Asante, 1987:6) acquired by a person through experience or education.

Correct unevenness in North-South knowledge production: to put right the unbalanced establishment of facts, information, and skills by the Global North (North America, Western Europe and the developed parts of East Asia) and the Global South (Africa, Latin America, and developing Asia including the Middle East).

Groom young talents: prepare or train individuals who have lived for only a relatively short time to develop their natural aptitudes or skills.

Alternative views to African libraries: other possibilities of considering or regarding buildings or rooms containing collections of books, periodicals, and sometimes films and recorded music for people to read, borrow, or refer to in Africa and the Diaspora.

Transdisciplinary platform: the declared policy for research efforts involving investigators from different disciplines working together to develop novel conceptual, methodological, theoretical and translational breakthroughs that amalgamate and transcend discipline-specific techniques to tackle typical problems.

Space for the voiceless: area or expanse that is free, available, or unoccupied for a person or group lacking the power or right to express an opinion or exert control over affairs.

Space for Empowerment: area or expanse that is free, available, or unoccupied to gain power or authority.

Hope: a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.

Most important institution in Africa: an organization of great significance in the continent of Africa.

Most successful institution in Africa: an organization that has achieved great distinction in the continent of Africa.

Pan-Africanism: an ideology and movement that motivates Africans by birth and descent across the globe to unite and uplift themselves. It hinges on the credence that unity is imperative to their economic, social and political advancement (Bangura, 2015a:54).

The best social science research institution in Africa: the most excellent, effective, or desirable organization in the continent of Africa accomplishing or approaching the scientific study of human society and social relationships.

Place for activists: a particular point in space for those who advocate for some kinds of social change.

Mental decolonization: getting rid of the dominating thought processes, mostly Western, of the mind (Thiong'o, 1986).

Inspiration: the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, especially to do something creative.

Humane relations: ways people having or showing compassion or benevolence are connected.

Africa's future: time regarded as still to come for Africa.

Tools kit: a personal set of resources, abilities, or skills.

Tools box: a set of programs or functions accessible from a single menu.

Brain box: having above-average intelligence.

Knowledge luminaries: persons who inspire or influence others in the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject.

Strength: a good or beneficial quality or attribute of a person or thing, or the quality or state of being strong, in particular.

Promoter and booster of social science in Africa: one that furthers the progress and helps to increase or improve the scientific study of human society and social relationships in the African continent.

Integrated scientific community: a group of people having a particular interest in the methods and principles of science engaging in equal participation in or membership of a social group or institution.

Think tank of African and international vocation: a professional body of experts providing advice and ideas on specific political or economic problems existing, occurring, or carried on in Africa and between two or more nations.

Advisory institution: an organization having the power to make recommendations but not to take action enforcing them.

Bridge between Africa and Asia, Pacific, Latin America and the Arab world: a structure that connects the non-Arabic-speaking African countries and the Asian continent, countries bordering the Pacific Ocean, Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking nations south of the United States, and 22 countries in the Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

Supporter of many generations of African scholars: one that approves of and encourages a large number of age groups of specialists in a particular branch of study.

Linguistic inclusiveness: embracing all (official) languages (used in Africa) as parts of a whole.

Policy incubator: a place, especially with support staff and equipment, to pursue an adopted or proposed course or principle of action.

Peace promoter: one that furthers not only the absence of disturbance or violence but also advances social justice (Bangura, 2008:17).

Intellectual cornerstone: a foundation relating to the intellect.

Rallying point for research: a place where scattered groups come together to engage in the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions.

Wellspring for knowledge production: an original and bountiful source of the creation of the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject.

Funding institution: an organization that provides money for a particular purpose.

Premier social science institute: a leading organization for accomplishing or approaching the scientific study of human society and social relationships.

Leading organization for knowledge production: most important organized body for the creation of the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject.

In the preceding pages, I have provided precise and concise definitions of the major concepts delineated from the survey responses to give the reader a more accurate understanding of these concepts. One way to facilitate the greater comprehension of these concepts from an African-centered perspective is to categorize and discuss them in terms of African-centered thematic meanings. At the most basic level, a simple tabulation can identify the undergirding African-centered themes in the survey responses. A focused analysis may reveal a discernible pattern.

As Table 1 reveals, the results from the survey yielded a broad range of major concepts. These seemingly diverse concepts, however, mask the fact that they reflect a relatively small number of African-centered themes: Namely, (1) Gnoseology—i.e. positive intuitive thinking; (2) African Nationalism—i.e. all people of African birth and descent share a common interest and should work together in their liberation struggle; (3) *Ubuntu*—i.e. African humanness which rests on religiosity, consensus building, and dialogue; and (4) Essential Dignity—i.e. return to the source and identity in the context of national liberation. An interesting aspect of these themes is that they seem to have been shared by other leading Black thinkers in Africa and its Diaspora and also pointed out by other researchers, albeit not holistically by any one author as I have done in the synthesis subsection.

Table 1 also shows that the theme Essential Dignity has the most diverse major concepts, followed by African Nationalism and *Ubuntu*. This is not to say that these categories have the most number of major concepts, since each of the concepts in all of the categories appears many times in the survey responses, an analysis of which would call for a Content Analysis—i.e. a quantitative analysis of the frequency of the concepts. It is noteworthy, however, to mention that a “connection point” for young and experienced scholars and researchers was frequently cited by respondents as what CODESRIA symbolizes to them. So, the ultimate question is the following: What are the underlying African-centered meanings of these concepts? The discussion in the synthesis subsections seeks to provide an answer.

Table 1: Major Concepts by Themes

Theme	Major Concepts
Gnoseology	Self-pride, Independence, Freedom, Liberation, Strength, Peace promoter, Wellspring for knowledge production
African Nationalism	Democratic future, African-centered/Afrocentric knowledge, Alternative views to African libraries, Pan-Africanism, Place for activists, mental decolonization, Africa's future, Promoter and booster of social science in Africa, Bridge between Africa and Asia, Pacific, Latin America and the Arab world
<i>Ubuntu</i>	Intellectual unity, Connection point, Groom young talents, Transdisciplinary platform, Humane relations, Integrated scientific community, Advisory institution, Linguistic inclusiveness, Rallying point for research
Essential Dignity	Powerful, Critical, Academic excellence, Academic autonomy, Intellectual dynamism, School for social science research methodology, Uncensored knowledge, Correct unevenness in North-South knowledge production, Space for the voiceless, Hope, Most important institution in Africa, Most successful institution in Africa, The best social science research institution in Africa, Inspiration, Tools kit, Tools box, Brain box, Knowledge luminaries, Think tank of African and international vocation, Supporter of many generations of African scholars, Policy incubator, Intellectual cornerstone, Funding institution, Premier social science institute, Leading organization for knowledge production

Source: Author-generated from the Survey Responses

(It should be mentioned here that a couple of respondents offered important suggestions. One respondent advised that CODESRIA be cautious of those non-governmental organizations and foreign industries that advance their own agendas and not those of Africa. The other respondent recommended that CODESRIA disseminates its publications more widely.)

The CODESRIA Charter

Here, I present in alphabetical order the African-centered concepts in the 2005 CODESRIA Charter and the 2015 Charter Amendments (CODESRIA, 2005 & 2015) with their precise descriptions and then place them into African-centered semantic categories. As I did for the preceding subsection (survey results), I discuss these categories in the fourth subsection (synthesis of findings) in terms of their African-centered thematic meanings. The following are the African-centered concepts with their definitions, as in the previous subsection mostly from the *Google Online Dictionary*, unless stated otherwise:

Africa: The famous North African historian from what is today known as Tunisia, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406 CE), stated that the name *Ifriqiya* was given after Ifriqos bin Qais bin Saifi, one of the kings of Yemen. The boundaries of *Ifriqiya* stretched from Barga on the East to Tangier on the West; this means that in addition to Africa proper of the Romans, *Ifriqiya* included Tripolitania, Numidia and Mauritania. Today, when the word *Ifriqiya* or Africa is used, it means the entire African continent which includes North Africa (including the Maghreb), East Africa, Central Africa, West Africa and Southern Africa (Bangura, 2010:106).

African governments: the governing bodies of countries in Africa.

African languages: methods of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in structured and conventional ways in Africa and the Diaspora.

African network: a group or system of interconnected Africans by birth and descent in the continent and the Diaspora.

African people: the men, women, and children of Africa by birth and descent in the continent and the Diaspora.

African research institutes: societies or organizations in Africa and the Diaspora having particular objects or common factors, especially scientific, educational, or social ones, that are engaged in systematic investigations into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions.

African scholars: specialists of African birth and descent in the continent and the Diaspora in particular branches of study.

African social science community: a group of people in Africa and the Diaspora sharing a feeling of fellowship, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals, engaged in the scientific study of human society and social relationships.

African universities: educational institutions in Africa and the Diaspora designed for instruction, examination, or both, of students in many branches of advanced learning, conferring degrees in various faculties, and often embodying colleges and similar institutions.

Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA): as defined earlier, “a pan-African institution established by African researchers in 1973 out of a desire to build an autonomous scientific community that is capable of interpreting social realities in Africa and contributing to debates on global issues” (Sall, 2012).

Dakar: the capital of Senegal. According to Dr. Y, the name Dakar could be the French variation of *Ndakaarou* (*Ndakaaru*) derived from the wolof *deuk raw*, which means “whoever settles here will be in peace,” or *dekk-raw* from *dekk* (“country”), and *raw* (“to escape”) due to the flow of people from the Cayor and Baol regions after the Lebous settled there. It could also have been derived from the Wolof *dakhar*, the name for the tamarind tree. It is narrated that upon their arrival in the area, the Lebou were impressed by the immense number of tamarind trees they saw and decided to name the area *dakhar* (Dr. Y, 2015).

Pan-African organization: an organized body of people of African birth and descent with a particular purpose, especially a business, society, association, etc.

Regions of Central Africa, Eastern Africa, North Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa: areas or divisions of the African continent having definable characteristics but not always fixed boundaries.

Senegal: a Republic in western Africa, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west, Mauritania to the north, Mali to the east, and Guinea and Guinea-Bissau to the south. The name Senegal is derived from the Wolof *Sunuu Gaal*, meaning “Our Boat” (*Countryside*, 2015).

Similar to what I did in the preceding subsection, I have provided in the preceding paragraphs precise and concise descriptions of the African-centered concepts delineated from the CODESRIA Charter and Amendments in order to give the reader a more accurate understanding of these concepts. Also, a way to facilitate the greater comprehension of these concepts from an African-centered perspective is to categorize and discuss them in terms of African-centered thematic meanings. Likewise, at the most basic level, a simple tabulation can identify the undergirding African-centered themes in the CODESRIA Charter and Amendments. A focused analysis may reveal a discernible pattern.

Table 2 reveals that the CODESRIA Charter and Amendments, like the survey responses, contain a wide span of African-centered concepts. These seemingly diverse concepts also conceal the fact that they mirror the relatively small number of African-centered themes identified earlier: (1) Gnoseology, (2) African Nationalism, (3) *Ubuntu*, and (4) Essential Dignity. Like for those in the previous subsection, an interesting aspect about these themes is that they seem to have been shared by other leading Black thinkers in Africa and the Diaspora.

Table 2 also shows that the theme *Ubuntu* has the most diverse major concepts, followed closely by Essential Dignity and African Nationalism. So, the ultimate question here again is the following: What are the underlying African-centered meanings of these concepts?

Table 2: African-centered Concepts by Themes

Theme	African-centered Concepts (14 or 100%)
Gnoseology	Dakar (1 or 7%)
African Nationalism	Africa, African people, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), Pan-African organization (4 or 29%)
<i>Ubuntu</i>	African languages; African network; African social science community; Regions of Central Africa, Eastern Africa, North Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa; Senegal (5 or 35%)
Essential Dignity	African governments, African research institutes, African scholars, African universities (4 or 29%)

Source: Author-generated from the CODESRIA Charter and Amendments

The CODESRIA Emblem

As shown in Figure 1, the CODESRIA Emblem—a symbolic object representing the organization—is composed of a black background and a white circle within which is a white map of Africa and white olive leaves on the right and left of the map. At the bottom is the acronym of the organization: CODESRIA. In the rest of this subsection, I offer an African-centered analysis of the colors, the map, and the olive leaves, respectively.



Figure 1: The CODESRIA Emblem

As I discuss in my essays titled, “Bo School Symbols: A Deep African-centered Analysis” in *The Patriotic Vanguard* (September 14, 2015), and “The Colors of the Flag of Sierra Leone: An African Centric Analysis” in *The Journal of Sierra Leone Studies* (October 2015), such an analysis is vital because different colors have conveyed different meanings to African people since antiquity. Also, as April McDevitt points out,

In Ancient Egypt, color (*iwen*) was an integral part of the substance and being of everything in life. The color of something was a clue to the substance or heart of the matter. When it was said that one could not know the color of the gods, it meant that they themselves were unknowable, and could never be completely understood. In art, colors were clues to the nature of the beings depicted in the work. For instance, when Amon was portrayed with blue skin, it alluded to his cosmic aspect. Osiris' green skin was a reference to his power over vegetation and to his own resurrection (McDevitt, 2014).

Another example is the *Kente* cloth. As the Midwest Global Group, Inc. notes,

[The *Kente* cloth] has its roots in a long tradition of weaving in Africa dating back to about 3000 B.C. The origin of *Kente* is explained with both a legend and historical accounts. A legend has it that a man named Ota Karaban and his friend Kwaku Ameyaw from the town of Bonwire (now the leading *Kente* weaving center in Ashanti), learned the art of weaving by observing a spider weaving its web. Taking a cue from the spider, they wove a strip of raffia fabric and later improved upon their skill. They reported their discovery to their chief Nana Bobie, who in turn reported it to the Asantehene (the Ashanti Chief) at that time. The Asantehene adopted it as a royal cloth and encouraged its development as a cloth of prestige reserved for special occasions (Midwest Global Group, Inc., 2014).

The Midwest Global Group, Inc. adds that,

Kente is used not only for its beauty but also for its symbolic significance. Each cloth has a name and a meaning; and each of the numerous patterns and motifs has a name and a meaning. Names and meanings are derived from historical events, individual achievements, proverbs, philosophical concepts, oral literature, moral values, social code of conduct, human behavior and certain attributes of plant and animal life. Patterns and motifs are rendered in geometric abstractions of objects associated with the intended meaning (Midwest Global Group, Inc., 2014).

Each of the colors on the CODESRIA emblem is discussed separately for the sake of clarity. The discussion of each color begins with its spectral coordinates and then the Africentric, i.e., a process concerning the generality of the African presence in the world in historical development and in the characteristics of the color. It should be mentioned here that Ancient Egyptians must have been well learned in spectral analytical techniques, since such tools were critical in the consistent development of the Egyptian blue, polychromic funerary figurines, and chromotherapy. As Philip McCouat states,

First developed some 4,500 years ago, Egyptian blue—a bright blue crystalline substance—is believed to be the earliest artificial pigment in human history. The pigment is a synthetic form of the rare mineral cuprorivaite, and commonly also contains quantities of glass or quartz. It is made by heating to around 850-950C a mixture of a calcium compound (typically calcium carbonate), a copper-containing compound (metal filings or malachite), silica sand and soda or potash as a flux...Egyptian blue was widely used in ancient times as a pigment in painting, such as in wall paintings, tombs and mummies' coffins, and also as a ceramic glaze known as Egyptian faience. The fact that it was not available naturally meant that its presence indicated a work that had considerable prestige. Its use spread throughout Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, and the far reaches of the Roman Empire. It was often used as a substitute for lapis lazuli, an extremely expensive and rare mineral sourced in Afghanistan (2014:1).

From Lynn Swartz Dodd et al., we also learn that,

A polychrome painted wooden funerary figurine has been radiocarbon dated to 1220–1050 BC and is painted with a white pigment that includes gypsum, huntite, and tridymite. This is the first discovery of the use of tridymite as a pigment in Ancient Egypt. This unusual white pigment yields an exceptionally bright white paint...Egyptian artisans engaged in a sophisticated, deliberate manipulation of mineral-based pigments to achieve specific desired sacral effects (2009:94).

We further glean from the work of Samina T. Yousuf Azeemi and Mohsin Raza that,

Ancient observation chromotherapy is a centuries-old concept. The history of color medicine is as old as that of any other medicine. Phototherapy (light therapy) was practiced in Ancient Egypt...The Egyptians utilized sunlight as well as color for healing. Color has been investigated as medicine since 2000 BC. They used primary colors (i.e. red, blue and yellow) for healing as they were unaware of the mixing up of two colors. According to Ancient Egyptian mythology, the art of chromotherapy was discovered by the god Thoth (2005:482).

Finally, it is appropriate for me to also state here that Graciela Gestoso Singer's excellent article titled "Color in Ancient Egypt" (2014) was extremely helpful for the analysis of the colors that follows.

Color Analysis

Black: According to the Google online dictionary, black is “the very darkest color owing to the absence of or complete absorption of light; the opposite of white” (www.google.com, 2014). Also, as Charles Moffat points out, black was one of the first colors employed by Neolithic artists in their cave paintings (2007:1). And according to Singer, black was referred to in Ancient Egypt as *km* and was made from “carbon compounds such as soot, ground charcoal or burnt animal bones” (2014:9). She also mentions that the color stood for death and night, and Osiris, the god of the afterlife, was named “the black one” as a reference to his role in the underworld and resurrection after his murder. And additionally, she adds that Anubis—the god of embalming—was depicted as a black dog or jackal, although the color of these animals tends to be brown (2014:9).

Nonetheless, according to Singer, even though black was depicted as a symbol of death, it also symbolized life and fertility among Ancient Egyptians because of the abundance of the dark black silt from the floods of the Nile. As she puts it, “The color of silt became emblematic of Egypt itself and the country was called the ‘Black Land’ (*Kmt*) from early antiquity” (2014:10). She further points out that black stones were used for statues with magical healing powers during the Ptolemaic period—i.e. 323-30 BC (2014:10).

Also, named after the black color inside its mouth, the black mamba endemic in Africa is one of the most venomous, feared and fastest-moving snakes in the world. Its venom can cause instant death or paralysis. Because of its ability to strike in any direction, even when moving very fast, not many predators dare to challenge the adult black mamba (Bangura, 2015d).

Furthermore, at the height of the American Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power Movement popularized the “Black Is Beautiful” slogan in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The statement symbolized the African American struggle for political equality (Bangura, 2015d). This era also saw the emergence of the revolutionary Black Nationalist and Socialist organization called the Black Panther Party which from 1966 until 1982 monitored the behavior of police officers and challenged their brutality. The organization made the promotion of community social programs, especially Free Breakfast for Children, its principal activity from 1969 until 1982. The organization inspired the births of the Black Panther Party (*HaPanterim HaShhorim*) of Israel in 1971 and the Dalit Panther Party of India in 1972 (Bangura, 2015d).

In Sierra Leone, the symbolic eminence of black is evident in many cultural artifacts and activities. During the Sande or Bondo ceremony, newly-initiated girls are led back to the community by a dancer who dons a glossy black mask and covered by a black costume from head to toe. The mask portrays the feminine ideal of beauty. Also, the *fetenke* dance is done by two young males waving black scarves while moving heel to toe. In addition, black dye is the most prominent in the making of the internationally famous Sierra Leonean *gara*, a traditional tie-dye cloth (Bangura, 2015d).

White: is the result of all the wavelengths of the visible spectrum (Madigan and Chambers, 2014; Nave, 2014; Optoplex Corporation, 2014). Singer describes white as a color that represents pureness, innocence, peace, happiness, joy, death, and mourning. In Ancient Egypt, the people believed that white clothes were linked to the goddess, and so the druid priest wore white. Also in Ancient Egypt, white suggested omnipotence and purity. The symbol of the god Nefertem was the white lotus flower. Singer also explains that sacred objects were made from white alabaster. The white color was created from chalk and gypsum (Singer, 2014). Singer also explains how white sandals were worn for religious ceremonies and that white bowls were used for libations. She further reveals that the expression “wearing white sandals” is used to describe being a priest (Singer, 2014).

According to Linda Alchin, the color white conveyed a range of silent messages to everyone who lived in Ancient Egypt. She says that white was evident in numerous wall paintings in the tombs, temples, and monuments of the Ancient Egyptians. She also states that there were two shades of white: chalk white and lead white. She confirms that white was a sacred color often representing purity, cleanliness, and simplicity. Lastly, she shares the fact that white was a symbol for Upper Egypt and was used to represent Nekhbet who was the protector of Upper Egypt (Alchin, 2014).

John Watson provides new and interesting information by stating that the color white could sometimes be used in place of yellow. He explains that this was possible because of the somewhat different classifications of the colors used by the Egyptians. He also cites the principle of equivalence as a cause for this (Watson, n.d.).

As Ann Varichon (2005) points out, for the Bedouin in North Africa and other pastoral cultures across the continent, milk is associated with white as a color of esteem, fertility, good fortune and gratitude. Also, the Everson Museum of Art (2007) mentions that in Yoruba religion white is used to represent the deity orisha Obatala in the Ifá tradition, associating him with purity, old age, calmness, and morality.

In Sierra Leone, initiates of the secret female society, *Bondo* or *Sande*, are marked with animal fat and pure white clay called *Hojo* or *Wojeh*, which Mende women also use to demarcate their territory. Like many other aspects of the secret society, the clay is retrieved from beneath the depths of water. It is eye catching because its smooth and shiny surface reflects light. For members of *Sande*, white represents purity, cleanliness, perfection, and harmlessness. They consider the color to be positive and helpful, free of evil things, symbolic of the spirit world, and represents the secret parts of society where the goal is to achieve the highest standards. The judge of the *Sande* women called *Sowei* wears white as a symbol of her clear thinking and impartiality (Bangura, 2015e).

The African Map, the African geographer Iheanyi Osondu tells us, represents the fact that this second largest continent in the world (with 55 countries recognized by the African Union and the United Nations and two de facto but not recognized: Somaliland and Western Sahara) covers approximately 11.8 million square miles; accounts for 20.2 percent of the total land area on earth, which places it at the heart of the land hemisphere; and lies across the Equator, bisecting it into almost two equal halves. Osondu points out that Africa is the only continent that is traversed by both the Equator and the Prime Meridian. He adds that Africa also encompasses “the islands of Madagascar, one of the world’s largest islands that is separated from the mainland by the Mozambique channel, and other relatively small islands such as Mauritius, Reunion and the Seychelles, Comoros, São Tomé and Príncipe, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, and the Canary Islands which is still colonized by Spain” (Osondu, 2011:18-19), despite its declaration of statute of autonomy on August 16 in 1982.

The last point is very important from an Africentric point of view because even a quick search on the Internet with the words “map of Africa” will reveal that, unlike the one on the CODESRIA emblem, many other emblems with the map are missing Madagascar. This sort of misrepresentation of Africa on maps is nothing new. As James Wan (2014) points out, Africa has been misrepresented on maps since the European cartographers of the 19th century to the present Google Maps makers because of their subjective ideological, imperial and corporate interests.

Olive Leaves: (the Latin variation *Olea europaea*) are first green in color and then turn black as they mature. They come in different sizes that range between 1.5 to 3.0 centimeters (Artesano, 2015). They thrive far better in dry, rocky soil (Holt, 2011). They have remained the symbol of peace and prosperity from time immemorial (*Urban Dictionary*, 2010; Holt, 2011)—thus, the age-old aphorism “to extend an olive branch.”

From an Africentric perspective, it should be noted that olive leaves were first used medicinally in Ancient Egypt over 6,000 years ago (Didea, 2014; herbswisdom.com, 2015), and this fact was later referenced by Hippocrates, c. 460 – c. 370 BC (Barlean’s Organic Oils, LLC, 2015), while also being used as symbols of heavenly power in the tombs of the pharaohs and to mummify them (Holt, 2011; Kilham, 2013; Hoffman, 2013). In Algeria, the leaves are masticated to reduce the severity or seriousness of tooth ache (Holt, 2011) and widely used in Morocco to treat hypertension, stabilize blood sugar, and control diabetes (Ziyyart et al., 1997; Kilham, 2013). Also, researchers in Tunisia discovered that “aqueous extract of olive leaves reduced hypertension, blood sugar, and the level of uric acid in rodents” (Sweet and Sweet, 2015). In addition, the Olive Leaf Foundation based in South Africa is a sustainable development organization established in 1989 to partner with communities in their development efforts. In addition to South Africa, the organization has operations in Botswana, Côte d’Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, and Zambia. Its major purpose is to facilitate “sustainable economic development across Africa” (Olive Leaf Foundation, 2008).

In terms of Abrahamic connections, one would be hard-pressed to avoid the supposition that olive leaves are very special. For one thing, the olive leaf is the first botanical mentioned in the Holy Torah, the Holy Bible, and the Holy Qur'an. In the Holy Torah, we read:

Bereishis (Genesis) 8:11: And the dove returns to him at evening time, and behold, an olive leaf was grasped in its mouth.

In the Holy Bible (King James Version), it is stated:

Genesis 8:11: And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off; so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

And in the Holy Qur'an, we find:

Surah An-Nahl (The Bee), 16:10-11: It is He Who sends down water from the sky. From it you drink and from it come the shrubs among which you graze your herds. And by it He makes crops grow for you and olives and dates and grapes and fruit of every kind. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who reflect.

The passages from the Holy Torah and the Holy Bible are referring to the story that after 40 days and 40 nights of the Great Flood that destroyed the entire world "because it had become completely physical, focused exclusively on promiscuity, greed and self-gratification" (Reich, 2006), Noah opened the windows of the ark, which he had built for his family and selected pairs of animals, and sent a dove to find a sign of dry land. The bird returned with an olive leaf in its mouth, signaling a new world and a new future. The story is retold by the scholars of the Hadith that "on the subsidence of Toofan-E-Nooh, when water level came down, the first thing on the earth that was seen, was the olive plant" (Khan, 2000).

Concerning benefits, olive leaves have been shown to be effective in fighting a number of viruses: influenza-3, herpes, colds, EBOLA, meningitis, cold sores, and AIDS (*Urban Dictionary*, 2010; Holt, 2011; Hoffman, 2013; Didea, 2014; Sweet and Sweet, 2015). They have also been determined to be effective against antibiotic-resistant fungi and yeast strains; to possess strong anti-inflammatory traits that relieve inflammatory arthritis and fight heart diseases; to be an astringent and antibacterial that fight diarrheal diseases; to reduce fever and fight infections, speed wound healing, soothe rashes, and cleanse the liver; to support the cardiovascular system and the immune system; to burn fat more efficiently; and to reduce hypertension, high blood pressure, high blood sugar and anxiety (*Urban Dictionary*, 2010; Holt, 2011; Kilham, 2013; Hoffman, 2013; Didea, 2014; Sweet and Sweet, 2015; herbwisdom.com, 2015). Furthermore, they have been shown to be highly anti-microbial and have high levels of antioxidants that can protect people against environmental stressors (Didea, 2014; Barlean's Organic Oils, LLC, 2015).

Synthesis of Findings

As I state several times in the preceding subsections, the objective here is to discuss the categories delineated for the numerous concepts presented in terms of their African-centered thematic meanings: Abrahamic connections (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), African Nationalism, essential dignity, gnoseology, and *Ubuntu*. The purpose here is to provide a deeper understanding of and coherence for the findings.

Abrahamic connections (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam): I discuss in three of my essays (Bangura, 2010, 2015d, & 2015f) that as we may recall, in one way, all Muslims understand Islam to begin with Adam (PBUH): that is, with creation of humanity, the descendants of Adam (PBUH) are traced through Noah (PBUH), to the son of Noah (PBUH)—Shem (from whom we get the term *Semite*, referring to his descendants, including both Jews and Arabs), on through the generations to Abraham (PBUH), who was the first to believe in a monotheistic God, and then on to the sons of Abraham (PBUH)—Ishmael and Isaac (PBUT). It is at this point that we find two narratives which become cornerstones of Islam. The first begins in the Qur'an with the story of the birth of Abraham's (*Ibrahim's*) two sons, Ishmael (*Ismail'il*) and Isaac (*Ishaq*) (PBUT), telling the expulsion of Ishmael (PBUH) and his Egyptian mother Hagar (MGBPWH) from the home of Abraham (PBUH) and their subsequent residence in Mecca where Abraham built them the Kaaba in which to worship. It continues with the descent of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) from the biological line of Ishmael (PBUH). The second involves the Qur'anic story of Abraham (PBUH) and his attempted holy sacrifice of his son, which demonstrated the submission of Abraham (PBUH) to God's will, from which we get the word *Islam*.

It is widely believed that Ishmael (PBUH) is associated with the Arab population, and particularly with Arab Muslims. Historical records do link ancient northern Arabians to Ishmael (PBUH) (Bangura, 2010 and 2015d). According to Genesis, Ishmael's (PBUH) wife was an Egyptian (21:21). However, Jewish *midrash* expands on this story. It says that Ishmael (PBUH) chose his own first wife, a Moabite. Abraham (PBUH) disapproved. So Hagar (MGBPWH) sent for a wife from Egypt, of whom Abraham (PBUH) approved on his next visit. This is the wife represented in Genesis 21:21 (Bangura, 2010 and 2015d).

Also, as Mwalimu (Honorable Teacher) Yosef A. A. ben-Jochannan (1970/1991) reminds us, Bilal ibn Rabah or Bilal al-Habashi, who had been an enslaved African in Arabia when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) got the revelations from Allah (SWT) through Archangel Gabriel, was the very first *Muezzin* (High Priest, or Caller of the Faithful to prayer) and treasurer of the Islamic Empire. He was also the first "soul" (i.e. man) Muhammad (PBUH) reverted to Islam, while the Prophet (PBUH) himself was a camel driver and hardly anyone else wanted to listen to him and his teachings (ben-Jochannan, 1970/1991:199). Is it therefore not only fitting that the Imam of the Grand Mosque of Mecca today is the African/Black Saudi Arabian Sheikh Adil Kalbani? (Bangura, 2010 and 2015d)

In Sierra Leone, like in the overwhelming majority of the other African countries, one of the most striking things one observes is the degree to which religious tolerance is a deeply held value. Christians and Muslims live side by side, they celebrate and work together, they intermarry, and they elect political leaders of all faith traditions. In fact, even though there are an estimated 4,050,000 (71% of the total population) Sierra Leonean Muslims, about 20% Christians, and the rest belong to other foreign and indigenous religions, ten of the 11 heads of state that have ruled Sierra Leone since its independence in 1961 have been Christians (Bangura, 2012e and 2015d).

Going back to the era of British colonialism, some of the leading Christian clergy were among the strongest advocates of Muslims, who suffered more oppression from British colonial administrators. One of these Christian clergy was John Augustus Abayomi-Cole (1848-July 1943), a talented and versatile Creole who, in the course of his long career, made his mark as priest, politician, author, agriculturalist, herbalist, and administrator. He contributed regularly to the *Sierra Leone Weekly News*, a leading West African newspaper, and also wrote a news summary in Arabic that was published in *Saturday Ho*, a magazine-like publication that appeared from 1891 to 1896. He was known to be sympathetic to Islam, and it was said that his father was an imam: i.e. the spiritual head of an Islamic community (Wyse, 1979:35; Bangura, 2012e and 2015d).

African Nationalism: In several of my essays (Bangura, 2012b, 2012c and 2015a), I point out that the concept of African Nationalism, sometimes referred to as Black Nationalism, was best expressed by Malcolm X in a speech delivered in New York City in 1964 when he asserted that:

I'm still a Muslim but I am also a nationalist, meaning that my political philosophy is Black nationalism, my economic philosophy is Black nationalism, my social philosophy is Black nationalism. And when I say that this philosophy is Black Nationalism, to me this means that the political philosophy of Black nationalism is that which is designed to encourage our people, the Black people, to gain complete control over politics and the politicians of our own community. Our economic philosophy is that we should gain economic control over the economy of our own community, the businesses and the other things which create employment so that we can provide jobs for our own people instead of having to picket and boycott and beg someone else for a job. And, in short, our social philosophy means that we feel that it is time to get together among our own kind and eliminate the evils that are destroying the moral fiber of our society....(Malcolm X, 1965:10).

It is in the field of Pan-Africanism (the philosophy that all people of African descent shared common interests and should work together in their liberation struggle) that President Gamal Abdel Nasser made his most significant mark. In his book, *Philosophy of the Revolution* (1959), he wrote of Egypt as an African as well as an Arab State, and with the assistance of Dr. Fouad Galal, his adviser on African affairs, he engaged increasingly in the struggle for the emancipation and the unity of Africa, providing facilities for opposition movements from the colonies and White-dominated territories and vigorously espousing their cause on international platforms (Bangura, 2012b, 2012c, and 2015a).

For W. E. B. Du Bois, as the *Encyclopedia Britanica* states, his African Nationalism comprised several strands. The first and most pioneering strand is his pioneering advocacy of Pan-Africanism. He was one of the major organizers of the first Pan-African Conference convened in London in 1900 and orchestrated four Pan-African Congresses convened between 1919 and 1927. The second strand is Du Bois' articulation of cultural nationalism as editor of *The Crisis*, a Black political magazine, through which he encouraged Blacks to develop their own literature and art, and also urged them to see the "Beauty in Black." The third strand is Du Bois' belief that Blacks must develop a separate "group economy" of producers' and consumers' cooperatives in order to combat economic discrimination and Black poverty (for example, see <http://www.britanica.com/EBchecked/topic/172481/W-E-B-Du-Bois>).

Essential dignity: As I recount elsewhere (Bangura, 2012b, 2012c, and 2015a), the notion of essential dignity is captured quite well by Anna Julia Cooper in her "Womanhood: A Vital Element in the Regeneration and Progress of a Race" when she says that "The race is just twenty-one years removed from the conception and experience of a chattel, just at the age of ruddy manhood. It is well enough to pause a moment for retrospection, introspection, and prospectation. We look back, not to become inflated with conceit because of the depths from which we have arisen, but that we may learn wisdom from experience. We look within that we may gather together once more our forces and, by improved and more practical methods, address ourselves to the tasks before us (Cooper, 1995:233-234)."

A similar sentiment is echoed by Guinea-Bissauan political leader Amilcar Cabral in his “Identity and Dignity in the Context of National Liberation Struggle” when he asserts that one of the essential characteristics of contemporary history is the people’s struggle for national liberation and independence from imperialist rule. This struggle, he contends, hinges upon ‘returning to the source’ and of identity and dignity in the context of the national liberation movement (Cabral, 1995:73-74).

From South African Chief Albert John Luthuli, the President-General of the African National Congress from 1952 to 1957, we also get the following:

Who will deny that thirty years of my life have been spent knocking in vain, patiently, moderately, and modestly as a closed and barred door? What have been the fruits of moderation? The past thirty years have seen the greatest number of laws restricting our rights and progress, until today we have reached a stage where we have almost no rights at all. It is with this background and with a full sense of responsibility that, under the auspices of the African National Congress, I have joined my people in the new spirit that moves them today, the spirit that revolts openly and boldly against injustice and expresses itself in a determined and non-violent manner. What the future has in store for me I do not know. It might be ridicule, imprisonment, concentration camp, flogging, banishment, and even death. I only pray to the Almighty to strengthen my resolve so that none of these grim possibilities may deter me from striving, for the sake of the good name of our beloved country, the Union of South Africa, to make it a true democracy and a true nation, in form and spirit, of all the communities in the land (Luthuli Museum 1952 speech: <http://www.luthulimuseum.org.za/luthulis-life-/speeches>).

Essential dignity of African people is also expressed in poetic forms such as in the President of Senegal and father of *Negritude* President Senghor’s “For Khalan” (a guitar with three strings):

We delighted, my friend, in an African presence:
Furniture, from Guinea and the Congo, heavy and polished, dark and light.
Primitive and pure masks on distant walls yet so near.
Tabourets of honour for the hereditary hosts, the princes from the High-country.
Wild and proud perfumes from the thick tresses of silence,
Cushions of shadow and leisure like quiet well running.
Eternal words and the distant alternating chant as in the loin-cloths from the Sudan.
But then the friendly light of your blue kindness will soften the obsession of this presence in
Black, white and red, O red like the soil of Africa
(www.disa.ukzn.ac.za/webpages/DC/asjul58.22/asjul58.22.pdf).

Gnoseology: In several essays (Bangura, 2012b, 2012c, and 2015a), I narrate that according to late Guinean President Ahmed Sékou Touré, in his essay, “A Dialectical Approach to Culture,” *Gnoseology* refers to the positive-intuitive thinking that is driven by the African’s spiritual mind (1989:7). Indeed, what many of the findings in this study show is that throughout history, the African, whether in Africa or in the Diaspora, has appeared to consistently maintain a positive mental attitude about dealing with rather challenging situations while disregarding the opposing negative form of thinking. In both Africa and the Diaspora, this form of positive reinforcement was seen among colonized and enslaved African people during the early stages of colonial and Diaspora life when they sang positive songs repeatedly to help them soothe their pains.

Also, as Dickson Bruce, Jr. points out, Du Bois’ double consciousness philosophy, an outgrowth of a distinctively African heritage, was geared towards helping to provide a definition to the positive sense of the racial distinctiveness of African people on the Motherland and in the Diaspora. Bruce also argues that Du Bois was trying to develop and offer the “African” a kind of alternative to American materialism, which was being proffered by Booker T. Washington (<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~UG03/souls/brucepg.html>).

Ubuntu: The notion of *Ubuntu* exists in all societies in Africa and the Diaspora (Bangura, 2005:31; Bangura, 2008:201; Bangura, 2011b:237; Bangura, 2015a:196; Sigger et al., 2010:10). For example, the word *Ubuntu* itself is from the Southern African Nguni language family comprising IsiNdebele, IsiSwati/IsiSwazi, IsiXhosa, and IsiZulu; in Sesotho, it is *Botho*; in Akan (Ghana), *Biakoye*; in Yoruba, *Ajobi*; in Shangaan, *Numunhu*; in Venda, *Vhuthu*; in Tsonga, *Bunhu*; in Shona (Zimbabwe), *Nunhu*; in Swahili (Kenya), *Utu*; in Kiswahili (Tanzania), *Ujamaa*; in Ugandan, *Abantu*; in Cape Afrikaans, *Menslikgeit*; in the Diaspora, Unity through Universal Confraternity popularized by Marcus Mosiah Garvey (Bangura, 2008:201; Bangura, 2011b:237; Sigger et al., 2010:47).

To restate what I have narrated elsewhere, drawing from many works that have dealt with the concept of *Ubuntu* and similar African thoughts, it can be deduced that *Ubuntu* serves as the spiritual foundation of African societies. It is a unifying vision or world view enshrined in the maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*: i.e. “a person is a person through other persons.” This traditional African aphorism articulates a basic respect and compassion for others. It can be interpreted as both a factual description and a rule of conduct or social ethic. It both describes the human being as “being-with-others” and prescribes what that should be (Bangura, 2005, 2008, 2011b & 2015a).

Also, from those works, at least three major tenets of *Ubuntu* can be delineated. The first major tenet of *Ubuntu* rests upon its religiosity. While Western Humanism tends to underestimate or even deny the importance of religious beliefs, *Ubuntu* is decidedly religious. For the Westerner, the maxim, “A person is a person through other persons,” has no obvious religious connotations. S/he will probably think it is nothing more than a general appeal to treat others with respect and decency.

However, in African tradition, this maxim has a deeply religious meaning. The person one is to become “through other persons” is, ultimately, an ancestor. By the same token, these “other persons” include ancestors, who are extended family. Dying is an ultimate homecoming. Not only must the living and the dead share with and care for one another, but the living and the dead depend on one another (Bangura, 2005, 2008, 2011b & 2015a).

This religious tenet is congruent with the daily experience of most African people. For example, at a *calabash*—an African ritual that involves drinking of African beer—a little bit of it is poured on the ground for consumption by ancestors. Many African people also employ ancestors as mediators between them and God. In African societies, there is an inextricable bond between humans, ancestors and the Supreme Being. Therefore, *Ubuntu* inevitably implies a deep respect and regard for religious beliefs and practices (Bangura, 2005, 2008, 2011b & 2015a).

The second major tenet of *Ubuntu* hinges upon its consensus building. African traditional culture has an almost infinite capacity for the pursuit of consensus and reconciliation. African style democracy operates in the form of (sometimes extremely lengthy) discussions. Although there may be a hierarchy of importance among the speakers, every person gets an equal chance to speak up until some kind of an agreement, consensus, or group cohesion is reached. This important aim is expressed by words like *simunye* (“we are one”: i.e. “unity is strength”) and slogans like “an injury to one is an injury to all” (Bangura, 2005, 2008, 2011b & 2015a).

The desire to agree within the context of *Ubuntu* safeguards the rights and opinions of individuals and minorities to enforce group solidarity. In essence, *Ubuntu* requires an authentic respect for human/individual rights and related values, and an honest appreciation of differences (Bangura, 2005, 2008, 2011b & 2015a).

The third major tenet of *Ubuntu* rests upon dialogue, with its particularity, individuality and historicity. *Ubuntu* inspires us to expose ourselves to others, to encounter the differences of their humanness in order to inform and enrich our own. Thus understood, *umuntu ngumentu ngabantu* translates as “To be human is to affirm one’s humanity by recognizing the humanity of others in its infinite variety of content and form.” This translation of *Ubuntu* highlights the respect for particularity, individuality and historicity, without which a true African society cannot reemerge (Bangura, 2005, 2008, 2011b & 2015a).

The *Ubuntu* respect for the *particularities* of the beliefs and practices of others is especially emphasized by the following striking translation of *umuntu ngumentu ngabantu*: “A human being through (the otherness of) other human beings.” *Ubuntu* dictates that, if we were to be human, we need to recognize the genuine otherness of our fellow humans. In other words, we need to acknowledge the diversity of languages, histories, values and customs, all of which make up a society (Bangura, 2005, 2008, 2011b & 2015a).

Ubuntu's respect for the particularity of the other is closely aligned to its respect for *individuality*. But the individuality which *Ubuntu* respects is not the Cartesian type. Instead, *Ubuntu* directly contradicts the Cartesian conception of individuality in terms of which the individual or self can be conceived without thereby necessarily conceiving the other. The Cartesian individual exists prior to, or separately and independently from, the rest of the community or society. The rest of society is nothing but an added extra to a preexistent and self-sufficient being. This “modernistic” and “atomistic” conception of individuality underscores both individualism and collectivism. Individualism exaggerates the seemingly solitary aspects of human existence to the detriment of communal aspects. Collectivism makes the same mistake on a larger scale. For the collectivist, society comprises a bunch of separately existing, solitary (i.e. detached) individuals (Bangura, 2005, 2008, 2011b & 2015a).

The emphasis on the “ongoing-ness” of the contact and interaction with others on which the African subjectivity feeds suggests a final important ingredient of the “mutual exposure” mandated by *Ubuntu*: i.e. respecting the *historicality* of the other. This means respecting his/her dynamic nature or process nature. The flexibility of the other is well noted in *Ubuntu*. In other words, for the African humanist, life is without absolutes. An *Ubuntu* perception of the other is never fixed or rigidly closed; rather, it is adjustable or open-ended. It allows the other to be, to become. It acknowledges the irreducibility of the other: i.e. it never reduces the other to any specific characteristic, conduct or function. This underscores the concept of *Ubuntu* which denotes both a state of being and one of becoming. As a process of self-realization *through* others, it simultaneously enriches the self-realization *of* others (Bangura, 2005, 2008, 2011b & 2015a).

Conclusion

Indeed, the findings of this study suggest that CODESRIA symbolizes Abrahamic connections (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), African Nationalism, essential dignity, gnoseology, and *Ubuntu*. These findings have a number of important implications not only for members of CODESRIA, but also for those of other African research and academic institutions as well. For instance, we first ought to consider CODESRIA as having a dual nature: (1) As a social scientific human experience, which not only gives pleasure but also teaches life in varying degrees of intensity; and (2) As the object of study, or of our intellectual curiosity. One might well ask a CODESRIA member whether in his/her teaching and research, does s/he recognize the inseparable nature of these aspects of the organization?

Second, CODESRIA can no longer be considered merely an adventitious or decorative object in life or in culture; it must be seen rather as one of the deepest expressions of the ethos of a people. Members of CODESRIA cannot ignore this reality: CODESRIA is *life*, readily available to its members, and full of humanizing tension.

Third, we might propose as a starting point that all studies of CODESRIA, and other African institutions, even on the most elementary levels, begin with stressing the uniqueness of the institutional experience in an act of institutionalizing per se. Fourth, we should give CODESRIA members such scholarly assistance (historical, philosophical, sociological, political, and linguistic contexts, etc.) as may be necessary to illustrate and help him/her understand and place the institution in the ‘then’ and ‘there’ in which it was conceived.’ However, all efforts along these lines ought to be subordinate to the first one: i.e. the social scientific purpose.

Fifth, we should orient CODESRIA members to the organization’s Charter and Amendments in the search for ethical implications, which all works pose. The moral responsibility (or irresponsibility) of a member is inseparable from his/her social scientific vision. In this way, the member would examine the value of the Charter and Amendments in a dual perspective—ethical and social scientific—and new dimensions would be added to the traditional historical-philosophical analysis.

Sixth, to study African institutions in this way as a deeply-rooted manifestation of life would lead to a better understanding of their customs and individual historical events. The institutions would also provide an approach to the visual arts (e.g., the CODESRIA emblem), whose deeper meanings often escape the eye of the uninitiated observer because of his/her tendency to isolate cultural phenomena from their context in order to judge them in the context of his/her own culture where these phenomena may have little or no meaning, or a totally mistaken one.

Finally, we ought never to falsify the cultural reality (e.g., life, art, literature, etc.), which is the goal of CODESRIA members’ study. We would, thus, have to oppose all sorts of simplified analyses and stress instead the methods that will achieve the best possible access to real life, language and philosophy.

It is therefore suggested that CODESRIA develop an *ambassadorship* approach through which its members in various countries can be encouraged to get their governments to know more about the institution’s ethos and work. Such an initiative is vital because it will give the institution more visibility and penetration comparable to those of foreign institutions of similar stature in Africa, many of which undermine CODESRIA’s commitment to an alternative narrative on the potential and prospects of the various nations involved. Indeed, steady progress in representative governance and institution building signals the dawn of a paradigmatic shift. CODESRIA should thus be more audacious in its outreach and mobilization, far-reaching in policy options on inclusive growth, and tailor a specific development agenda while leveraging on more patronage from intra- and inter-state stakeholders in policy, governance and administration.

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