

CULTURAL MOTIVATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFRICA.

By Rigobert MINANI S.J.

Social Apostolate Coordinator and

Jesuit Africa Social Centers Network (JASCNET) Director.



Introduction

- ❖ The topic we will try to address is very challenging
- ❖ Speaking about culture and tradition for Africa is not so obvious.

Culture corrosion

African societies, like many others, are dynamics.

- ❖ Indigenous processes of change were disrupted, some places accelerated by four centuries of slavery and colonial rule.
- ❖ Christianity, capitalism, industrialization and urbanization have all had a corrosive effect on ties of African culture.

Hybrid culture

- ❖ It is not possible to find a « pure » African culture.
- ❖ African who wrote about African culture were already hybrid because of the Western curriculum in school
- ❖ But it is also true that even for the African who lives in Westernized African city it is far from true that their worldview is now Western (see marriage rites, funerals, etc).
- ❖ For these people the communal lifestyle with its responsibilities and entitlements has great meaning and value

Human right and culture

- ❖ Despite an increase in the discussion of human rights and culture very little exists in the form of literature that approaches the idea of human rights from an African perspective.
- ❖ A survey of the literature leaves one with the impression that scholars proceed on the assumption that although traditional concepts on the enhancement of human dignity are present in African culture, African societies have become modernized to a point where a discussion of these traditional concepts has become exotic...

A pretext not to commeeet in Human right

- ❖ This is many place also a pretext by Africans to avoid the hard questions about human rights violations in the continent...
- ❖ Condition of women...
- ❖ Child labour
- ❖ Forced mariage...

The spread of human right liberal approach

- ❖ Through colonialism, Western concepts of individual rights and law have found a place in many non-Western parts of the world.
- ❖ In December 1948, at a time when most of the population of Africa south of the Sahara was still under colonial domination, a General Assembly dominated by the Western world adopted a Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the United Nations. This today is a customary international law that bind people of all cultures.

Values and cultural motivation for Human rights

- ❖ For the African, a philosophy of existence can be summed up as: "I am because we are, and because we are therefore I am."
- ❖ The cohesiveness of African society and the importance of kinship to the African lifestyle is more important than in western societies.

Values and cultural motivation for Human rights

- ❖ Africans family operate within a broader arena of the extended family.
- ❖ The African worldview is tempered with the general guiding principle of the survival of the entire community and a sense of cooperation, interdependence, and collective responsibility.
- ❖ The extended family unit assigns each family member a social role that permits the family to operate as a reproductive, economic, and socialization unit.



Human Rights and African Values

- ❖ The African sense of community obligation that goes beyond charity may be necessary to foster economic rights.
- ❖ More pressing is the fact that with increasing immigration from the Third World to the Western world, no one can expect that non-Western peoples will always simply forget or throw away their traditional worldviews and take on the predominant worldview.



❖ In Africa society rights and duties are organized around principle of : **respect, restraint, responsibility, and reciprocity.**

❖ **Respect** governs the behavior of family members toward the elders in the family.

It is manifested in greetings, curtsies, and other gestures that signal recognition of seniority.

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- ❖ **Restraint** :This simply means that a person does not have complete freedom. He is responsible for the life of community.
 - ❖ **Responsibility** : is a much broader concept for African families than Western families, given their larger size.

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- ❖ Another difference between African and Western cultures is that of the ownership of land. While private ownership of land is considered an inalienable right within Western society, land in African society is communally held.



The questions that we should seek to link culture and human Right in Africa are whether Africans need to "modernize" to become individuals in the Western sense and whether the modern liberal state with its Western traditions should be allowed to break up African traditional value systems.

Way forward : Toward a mutual learning experience

- ❖ To facilitate cross-cultural discussion and understanding of the ways by which different societies guarantee the dignity of their members we need to abandon conceptualizations that have as their starting point a view that Western culture is indisputably more important when it comes to human rights.

Conclusion:

The possibilities for cross-cultural understanding

- ❖ Today the perspective of Western scholars are increasingly analyzing the human rights abuses of the African woman, the African child, etc. In that frame.
- ❖ To correct injustices within different cultural systems of the world it is not necessary to turn all people into Westerners.
- ❖ The problem today is that the discussion is still Western and the African voices are still those of the Western educated political and academic elites who are trapped in their unquestioning acceptance of the Western concept in the name of modernization and images of a global.

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- ❖ The debate should be on whether western and African cultural values provide to human beings with human dignity.
 - ❖ We should pose the problem in this light.
 - ❖ If we do this then we can really begin to formulate authentic international human rights norms.



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