

Pre- colonial Africa! African traditional systems. The Art of Initiation, Mastery of self and the 5 domains.

The vision for true African unity remains a dream after almost 70 years since Kwame Nkrumah became the first independent leader in Ghana.

The term black Africa is sometimes used by some scholars to indicate the racial politics that exist on the continent. The term was used by Chiek Anta Diop in his book titled “Pre Colonial black Africa”. This was to make the point that the continent is in fact racially and ethnically divided.

The North is called the Islamic Maghreb. Countries like Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt occupy this area.

The Parts below the Sahara is the Sahel, and this includes the nations along the Sudanic belt, like Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Everything below the Sahel is called Sub-Saharan Africa. Today the continent is divided into east, west, north, south and central. The African diaspora in the Caribbean has been designated by the A U as the 6th region.

Here are the six common regional groupings of Africa according to the African Union.

The countries that border the Mediterranean in the North, like Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, together form the Islamic Maghreb.

West Africa is home to ECOWAS; it is the economic community of West African states. It includes nations like Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Mali.

The Central African bloc includes countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Chad, and they are classified with the E-C-C-A-S, the Economic Community of Central African States.

The Southern Africa region includes South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, and often this is called SADIC, the Southern African Development Community.

The East African Countries block includes Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia (and the countries in the Horn of Africa are part of the E-A-C).

The Caribbean region was more recently designated as the 6th region in the African Diaspora: this was recognized by the UN because of the political and cultural connections. This recognition acknowledges the fact that the Caribbean is home to millions of people who are of African descent.

The more political and religious we get, we tend to forget Africa; we forget its story, ourselves, and its people. Today we recognize that the only thing that pieces these stories together and can place things in context is culture.

How do we define culture, and in particular AFRICAN CULTURE?. It has become clear enough for us to see that Unity is not necessarily based on geography and cannot be achieved by politics alone. But instead, unity and progress in a society is based on shared

cultural identity.

The question then becomes, how do we embrace culture in the modern world? This question should be equally explored on every path to national development.

The General History of Africa volume 1 shares that in West Africa, for example in Mali and in Senegal, most people knew their family history going back at least 10 generations.

Having proof of this history and genealogy enables a special kind of confidence in a people, and also it establishes the kind of knowledge system that can serve as evidence in case of dispute. This historical and ancestral memory might be used in litigation over land and kingship.

What we consider ancestral memory for the most part has been replaced by basic instinct and general assumption. Corporations and modern government systems must preserve what they call institutional memory. This historical memory is an important aspect of unity and development in a society.

It is often a debate, or at least it is a discussion in the West, about what part of the continent is home. There are treasures all over the continent; the most precious diamonds are in the south. Historians and explorers are often fixated on the northeast; this is usually because of the literature and architecture that goes back thousands of years. Genetic testing will place most Africans in the diaspora in West Africa.

There, the traditional practices and ideas were preserved in the arts and in spoken and ritual form.

The main difference is that in the east we have indigenous writing systems and inscriptions that date to more than 5000 years ago.

In the north, Berbers took control around the 11th century, and by then they had learned the Arabic language.

But they still used their traditional ancestral knowledge to explain Islam. Except for the citation and praises of the Quran, they taught in their traditional tongues.

As a result, by the time of the introduction of the Europeans to West Africa in the 15th century, the history, practices, and traditions were preserved in Arabic.

There were several wars that were fought between the traditional rulers of West Africa and the Muslims in North Africa. By the 11th century, this would set the stage for the decline in the Ghanaian Empire.

By then, the metaphysical interpretations of the African spiritual system would have been lost to most of the population. This was except for where it was being preserved in secret.

An example of a West African secret society is the Ekpe or leopard Society; they preserved the Nisibidi language after 5000 years. There were in fact, more than one written ancient language system in West Africa, but these do not appear to have been widespread.

Because of the climate and weathering, these would have been destroyed, and also it would have been the policy of the new colonial states to destroy any such literature.

These were not written in stone, as was the practice in northeast Africa.

In West Africa, the word was written down primarily in Arabic, starting around the 10th century of the common era.

For years, instead, there seemed to be a sophisticated oral tradition system; also, dance, weaving, and pottery served as means of communication.

The General History volume 1 talks about the initiation process and the role of the Diala, the Njelle, and the griot. The word Griot sounds synonymous with the word great.

The General History of Africa is an African encyclopedia.

Volume one was the 1st in a series of 11 volumes. The work began in this series in 1964 and was revisited, expanded, and revised in 2025. It is a project sponsored by UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It had originally involved over 200 African Scholars; Volume one gives good detail on the initiation process.

Initiation was education in Africa; this was the case in the east, west, north, and south.

It provides the opportunity for the initiate to become master of destiny of knowledge, and mastery of self.

It involves several stages of discipline, and it is purposely preserved by Tradition.

This system, even when it is preserved in oral form, would ensure continuity and successorship in the crafts. The development process continues from one generation to the next until it is perfected. This seems to be the main reason that the advent of writing was invented in Africa thousands of years ago.

Statecraft, Musical craft, the arts and sciences in general were developed under this system. The art of divination enshrines spiritual rituals within the system of development. Ancient healing techniques are

involved, the knowledge of the healing herbs, anatomy, and physiology.

The Grandmaster of the African martial arts and Author of the best-selling book *Spiritual Warriors Are Healers*, Mfundishi Jhutym, has developed a program that breaks this knowledge system into five domains.

These represent levels of mastery. The 5 domains are. 1 the Mineral domain, 2nd the Plant domain, 3rd the Animal domain. 4th the Human domain, and the 5th is the realm of the Spirit.

The universe is made up of minerals.

The sun is assessed to be made up of 73 percent hydrogen, 25 percent helium, and 2 percent oxygen, carbon, and other minerals.

Man is made up of these minerals, and technically this means that everything in the universe is made up of the same stuff.

The minerals derived from the earth can be used to make plastic, steel, and computer chips. These minerals are also vital for maintaining health and vitality.

Plants and vegetables transmit energy directly from the sun; they create a synthesis between the earth and the Sun. In this process, animals, including human beings, are sustained on the planet.

The process is governed through spirit. To place this in context, we can attribute all this to forces like gravity and photosynthesis in modern scientific terms.

But in terms of African philosophy, this has to be understood from an above perspective. The above perspective takes primarily into account universal principles and purpose. It is energy that controls matter. This approach can be called metaphysical philosophy or quantum physics in science.

The point is that it is the mastery of self and the mental discipline that comes out of these systems that allows us to enjoy the inventions in the world today.

The concept of the workers' guild was developed thousands of years in Africa before any outside contact.

The ability to preserve information through writing is one of the singular events that changed the course of humanity.

In West Africa, the Dialey is an active agent; he is authorized to speak on behalf of the community and the King and Queen. The role of the Dialey is similar to the role of a diplomat today.

Also, he is trained to gather and communicate information. The role has the responsibility to resolve conflicts. This rite is granted by custom.

They often create unique ways to resolve conflicts. This might include a song that strokes the ego of the king or Queen they intend to charm or strike a deal with.

In some instances, we see that instead of going to war, the ruler would organize sporting matches and other means to resolve the dispute.

Sometimes even poetry was used to resolve minor disputes. In these battle raps, the poetry often takes on a violent tone.

This may be the roots of dancehall and hip hop music. The artists were the griots in West Africa.

If they had remained on the continent, they might have been neighbors or from the same clan.

The Dialey often accompanied the king on the battlefield in order to document the victory and make it into a song, adding to the legend of the king. If the battle is not in the king's favor, then the role is to decorate the story; he is responsible for the PR campaign.

The Doma Dialey has undergone special initiation, and therefore he has a higher degree of expectation and credibility. He might serve in other communities as well.

The Dialey system of knowledge preservation has assisted with the recording of West African history in modern times. For example, many of the stories about the Mali Empire were initially preserved via this tradition.

The Empires of Nubia, Ghana, Mali, and Songhai were built on this system. The University of Sankore in Timbuktu became a repository of this ancient system.

The Njelle is a kind of griot who often uses song and dance. He is a master of the spoken word. Often music and poetry are his tools. The modern tradition of Reggae, Hip hop, jazz, and blues, and other genres of music are born out of this culture. Some families have maintained this tradition for hundreds of years.

Sometimes it appears that similar terms are used by the different cultures in the region, and additional titles are added at the higher stages in the initiation process.

An interesting note is that in order to be able to represent or hold positions that are at the helm of the society, one has to be an initiate.

The Universities of the modern world represent a development of this old system, but excluding the mastery of self-discipline and proper interpretation of the universal principles.

Initiation involves knowledge of the five domains and not just what we can see and hear. In fact, the modern educational system is an initiation process in European culture and its customs. Indeed, within it is the Eurocentric worldview.

The Se-ba or Ba-ba is versed in hidden knowledge, and they are the generational teachers in the system. This process constitutes the basis for modern secular and religious systems.

The 19th-century Eurocentric writers explained these high degrees in African science, simply as witchcraft; this has caused many misunderstandings.

While the methods and techniques would vary across the continent, the general idea would remain the same. This is except where it borrowed too much from Western ideology. This is better explained in Cheikh Anta Diop's work "The Cultural Unity of Africa". Therefore, the programs and culture in the West would be somewhat similar to the systems in the East and likewise in the South. This is because at one point they had shared the same rivers, where they had established the blueprint. After migration from the east, the Nok culture is said to have been established around 1500 BC in the area of modern Nigeria. Yoruba is estimated to be a more recent preservation of that system. The Ashanti in modern-day Ghana were part of the Akan group. The Zulu are related to the Nguni. Here we might be reminded that humanity originated in or around the Great Lakes region of south equatorial East Africa.

The main difference is that the names of the ancestors will often differ in the different regions, but the principle that it represents will remain the same. These principles have to do with functions in society.

For example, Shango in the Akan system is often compared with Heru in ancient Kemet.

In Kemet they are the Neteru, in Nigeria they are the Orisha, and in Akan the Obosum.

The Initiation process was open in some societies and more restricted in others.

Regardless of whether the initiated master in his or her field was able to sit on the social councils of different clans or extended families, he or she was not restricted to one clan.

These systems were a part of the social and political structure.

A High degree of general and esoteric Knowledge was esteemed, and this confirmed nobility. African education was not systematic in the same way as it is in European educational systems. It was developed over time, and it is dispensed in all walks of life.

Life itself was education. From age 7, the young child would be allowed to shadow his father if he or she is the child of a nobleman. The child would sit in the council meetings of the king or Queen and hear the grievances and stories of the people; then he or she would be asked to recite what was heard in order to determine and communicate the issues that were raised.

As a rule, the young initiate destined for rulership does not go abroad or away for extended periods; the expectation is that the young ruler will govern and protect his nation.

Children are expected to learn primarily from their mother and father. For example, if the parents are skilled shoemakers, it is likely that the parents will, within a system or structure, transmit that knowledge and skill to their offspring.

The child hears stories about local heroes and is brought up within a particular cultural ambiance. His or Her days are marked by stories, proverbs, fables and Maxims.

A higher degree of initiation was entered into at age 21.

At age 42, the initiate would gain the official title of Seba, and upon completion, they gained the right to speak in public meetings and become a teacher.

At this point he or she was expected to impart the knowledge that was gained during the initiation process.

The seba or griot would continue to learn from life itself and continue to solicit advice from the council of elders. Therefore, education was expected to last a whole lifetime. The initiate, being a seeker of knowledge, never ceases to be one. He or she may then embark upon travels from village to village, learning from new masters and imparting information as he or she sojourns. He will document new information and compare similar information that may be in a neighboring cultural context.

If good manners and purpose is displayed in his encounters with other family clans, they will likely reveal some of their secrets as well as the knowledge of their ancestors. The other clans are seen as extended African families.

This kind of knowledge is not bought with money; it is transmitted through culture.

With good manners. By the time one becomes of old, the trained initiate becomes the living book and is vital for the preservation of culture and community, and wherever he or she goes, the treatment is one of respect. The initiated griot is held in high regard.

The training is in fact very detailed, and it is intended to be precise. The griot, or the Dialey or the Ngelle, do not summarize events. Except when they are creating stories for children.

They instead take the position that life can not be summarized; the message lies within the details. The elder is often repetitive because He or she knows that It is expected that the accounts given will be considered history for generations to come.

The rigorous cultural discipline that must be observed under African traditional systems renders these accounts just as important as written history, especially when it can be observed that the tendency for Eurocentric and Arabic scholars in their writings is to dismiss or undermine all achievements and contributions to society that were made by Africans. Whether in the Diaspora or on the continent.

Modern governments, instead of embracing African tradition and culture. They seek to extinguish many of its old customs and traditions in favor of dogma and foreign customs.

For example, the legal codes that were adopted and worked by African scholars fresh out of French Universities during the independence era were versions of French codes of ethics. They borrowed Napoleonic codes.

A funny and embarrassing African moment occurred when the President of the newly independent Central African Republic, General Jean Bedel Bokassa, invited several heads of state from all over the world to attend the coronation of himself as the next Napoleon of Africa.

It is documented that his costume alone caused some of the guests to retreat to the restroom for a burst of laughter.

He had converted to Islam for about six months to gain financial support from Muammar Gaddafi in Libya for his event.

Today the biggest church in the world is in the Ivory Coast. Some argue that it could have served as a cultural institution on the continent or as a university or hospital.

In the Areas that were subject to British rule, the rules were derived from British customs.

Thus, ensuring that African societies would not be governed by the sacred inherited knowledge systems that created social cohesion and had stimulated competitive growth. The Western education process also ensures that the new leaders may not know the fundamental reasons why the continent is being disparaged, as they will assume the

mindset of the foreigners who are arrayed against all cultures that are foreign to them.

During the colonial era, the sons of important men were mandated to go abroad to study in white schools. Then they returned to manage local affairs. This was more so intended to cut them off from tradition.

This sets up the situation that we see today, whereby the continent and the African diaspora is being governed by an intellectual minority.

Most leaders have departed from African traditional ways and no longer identify with the principles of Tradition.

Clearly, today we can see that these designs were imposed to maintain the colonizers' indefinite rule.

The Europeanized way of seeing the world automatically encourages slander of African cultural concepts. For example, ancient zoomorphic images that are depicted on pottery, on the pyramid walls, and in rock art are seen simply as animal worship.

Sundiatta Keita was the founder and the Lion King of Mali. The Lion is a famous totem of the king, and there is the title Lion of Judah.

Identifying with the characteristics of an animal is one of the things that is considered in the martial arts.

We can also still see in Ghana after 5000 years the Sankofa bird, which represents looking back into history, to rediscover, cleanse, and develop.

Where the African cultural system depicts human beings in animal form, it is designed to convey to the initiate deep cultural ideas and the metaphysical thoughts that embed the wisdom of our Ancestors.

The king depicted as a falcon represents the ability to fly high; this represents higher consciousness and confidence. The analogy is that the falcon flies higher than other birds, so it gets closer to the heavens. Therefore, the king has a bird's-eye view of the situation. African art is especially designed to convey these kinds of ideas.

These concepts and ideas are oversimplified or outright criticized by modern liberal and conservative viewpoints.

Today, the younger generation seeks to depart from the colonial perspective and its mechanisms. Sankofa means to go back to fetch. It usually refers to the values and lessons that can be learnt from African history and culture.

Generally, the ongoing and polarized views were instituted via religion. These were initially the divergences in opinion between Europeans and Arabs upon conquest.

The reality is that both Christianity and Islam were enriched by centuries of interaction with the cultures that had existed in Africa.

By the late 18th century, reformers like Othman Dan Fodio would implement a new version of Islam in the area that is now northern Nigeria. In his efforts, Othman Dan Fodio helped to remove many elements of African tradition from the minds of the Africans under his rule.

Today, modern political systems seek to carefully remove the deep conceptual ideas from the minds of the public in general, while at the same time, these ideas are adopted in private by the conquerors themselves.

The modern political dynamic has also to do with the two major governing systems, socialism and capitalism. An important distinction is that Socialism does not pretend to have a spiritual component; it deals primarily with the pocketbook issues and the economic and practical aspects of governance. Socialists often accuse the Capitalist of using the religious narrative for power and domination.

These kinds of shifts in ideology and thought is tantamount to the shift in power dynamics that led to the breakdown of African traditional society. This breakdown paved the way for the advent of the slave trade in the 15th century. The forced conversions of African people has forced the succeeding generation to think outside of their natural mind. This out of mind experience has tilted the balance of global power to those who have clarity, and to those who will fight to maintain this clarity and authority.

See page 168, Volume One, The General History of Africa. Edited by. Joseph Ki-Zerbo from Burkina Faso.

. Here is a quote from The General History of Africa, volume one.

‘One cannot live without memory; neither can a person live in the memory of someone else.’