

‘Down But Not Out’: Critical Insights in Traditional Shona Metaphysics

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Abstract

The paper provides a corrective to the Western gaze that modern medicine; science and Christianity are familiar parts of Western imagination. It shows the beauty of African indigenous science, medicine and worship. Colonialism transformed most African parts as a way of “modernizing traditional political, economic and social practices” as many scholars think. The paper is concerned with the socio-political and cultural dimensions of the new hegemonic tendencies in the world’s global affairs, which pose serious challenges to African social sciences.

It further discusses how the Shona perceive African metaphysics in the face of modernity global challenges and how they represent the interface of the three traditions namely: science, Christianity and African traditional culture. The Shona people being Africans represent the voice of Africans as a whole and Shona culture in particular. The paper brings out how Shona cultural beliefs specifically those that are metaphysical have demonstrated their resilience in the face of demonization and the onslaught from the West. This refraction of the new hegemonism into African culture and social sciences “still bears the methodological and epistemological hallmarks of the hegemonic dynamics” of the African colonial era that characterizes and continues to shape the discourses about Africa. The paper seeks to resist, dismantle and critique the inherited colonial social science research legacies, which have injured African social scientists’ consciousness.

Introduction

In his preface to *Images of Africa: Stereotypes and Realities* edited by Daniel M. Mengara (2001:xiii) Molefe Kete Asante, a renowned Africologist remarks:

At the top of the twentieth century Africa remains the most misunderstood of continents, crippled in our imagination by images rooted in the minds of imperial Europeans who attempted to shape and invent an Africa useful to their political ambitions.

By linking science, Christianity and a resilient traditional Shona metaphysics, this paper seeks to provide a more rounded and objective view of the African continent. It clearly reiterates that “Europe’s intervention in Africa [was] the beginning of the most nefarious images. An African invented for European purposes could no longer serve the interests of its own people” (Asante in Mengara, 2001:xiv) The paper further rekindles and explicates the African philosophy debate as an African response to demonization inherent in the western discourses on Africa. It is a rationality debate”, a deconstructionist effort reminiscent of the many aspects of the African people’s struggles to control their own identity. Masolo (1995:2) states that:

Historically, the call for a ‘return to the native land’ was only one of the many revolutionary expressions of the then rising black militantism, nationalism and Africanism...For many black people...Solidarity was their strength and a weapon with which to counter Westernism’s arrogant and aggressive Eurocentric culture.