

Research paper

Pre-colonial Africa as the Source of Europe's Development in Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* and *KMT: in the House of Life*

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The paper strives to deconstruct the distorted Eurocentric views of pre-colonial Africa through a reading of Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* and *KMT: in the House of Life*. It permitted to discover that black Africans founded Ancient Egypt and Africa is the cradle of humankind. The findings clearly proved that the first forms of writing, government, social and religious organizations were all the work of pre-colonial African people who either handed down their expertise and knowledge in all the domains to the western world, or through plagiarism done by Ancient Greeks to re-appropriate African invented sciences and way of living. The paper finally revealed that pre-colonial Africa as defined and represented by Eurocentrists is actually the converse of the historical reality because she helped Europe to find the way to development and civilization.

Key words: Barbarism, Civilized, Civilization, Eurocentrists, pre-colonial Africa.

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INTRODUCTION

For many years, Africa has been the subject of different derogatory portrayals and in the deep psychological disposition of the postcolonial African and non-African ones, it is Europe and the Arab world that have permitted Africa to embrace civilization. It means that Africa did not know civilization and was the land of darkness before the arrival of Arabs and Europeans. Such a belief is still unfortunately disseminated through diverse ways to ensure the hegemony of the West and the white race over the black one. However, what history actually teaches us about the reality of precolonial Africa is the total converse of the Eurocentrists' depictions of that period. It is in view of the foregoing that the main objective of the paper is to deconstruct the different Eurocentric clichés and stereotypes about precolonial

Africa through Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* and *KMT: in the House of Life* and in any other relevant historical or scientific work. By doing so, the focus is placed on the organization of precolonial life across different areas of human activities as underscored in the selected works.

We opted to investigate the socio-cultural, economic and political organization of precolonial Africa in African Literature for many reasons. The first reason is that the pre-colonial period in African history lasted gloriously many centuries before the arrival of Europeans, and many contemporary Africans and non-Africans are still unaware of its glorious contributions to the development of the modern world. The second one is that some African societies (mainly in West and North African

societies) had even existed for millenniums before the birth of Jesus Christ. Since that time social organization, in all the domains, in Africa has been carried out and has evolved with time and according to the needs of those different societies. Another reason is that wherever we talk about organization, it implies order, stability and progress. The precolonial African people (Ancient Egypt and Ghana, Mali and Songhay Empires) were aware of this reality and organized their societies accordingly at all the levels: social, economic, spiritual, judiciary, cultural, defense and education during the three great periods of the precolonial time of Ancient Egypt : during Egyptian ruling, after Arab penetration and before Western colonization. The last reason is that can permit a systematic step-by-step decolonization of the europeanized contemporary Africans because it was the same channel utilized by the colonizer to mentally alienate and enslave the colonial African mentally and culturally.

In order to attain the main objective of the study, the literary approach that is used to collect and analyze the research's data is socio-historical and postcolonial at the same time. In other words, this approach is the literary theory within which the study's data are collected and interpreted with a focus on deconstructing the Eurocentric views of a disorganized and uncivilized precolonial Africa in two works of Armah. It entails that terms like ideology, binarism, hegemony, the center and the periphery, the civilized and the uncivilized, writing back, anti-colonial discourse, the South and the North or the West and the Orient from postcolonial and cultural studies are to be the major tools adopted to account for the binary relationships between Africa and Europe. The sum total of all this culminates in a call for true African historical facts proven by African and non-African scholars as well as their popularization for the sake of ensuring a consciously mental decolonization of the europeanized Africans.

In terms of the paper's organization, it first talks about the organization of life in Ancient Egypt during the Egyptian ruling and Africa as the cradle of humanity. Hereafter, it moves on describing the changes brought about in the life of black Egypt in the social, economic, and political domains after Arabs' penetration and before western colonization in contrast with Eurocentric views on Africa.

Organization of Ancient Egypt under the Black Egyptian ruling

Africa as the cradle of Humankind and Civilization

Before Cheikh Anta Diop, Chancellor Williams, Rudolph R. Windsor and Chinua Achebe, Africa had always been denied as the cradle of humanity and civilization by

Eurocentrist scholars such Hegel and the likes. That is why, the Ghanaian novelist wrote: *Two Thousand Seasons* and *KMT: in the House of Life* as a counter discourse to colonial and Eurocentric discourses to emphasize the importance of pre-colonial Africa in the world history. It was also an artistic and clever way to rehabilitate the history of Africa through literature. We could read from the selected works that native Egyptian ruling is regarded as the first key period during which one of the first greatest civilizations was established before the arrival of western colonizers. It is a very ancient period evidencing the idea that Africa is not only the cradle of civilization, but also that of humanity. Ayi Kwei Armah confirms this in *Two Thousand Seasons* as follows:

We are not a people of yesterday. Do they ask how many single seasons we have flowed from our beginnings till now? We shall point them to the proper beginning of their counting. (...)

After that beginning they will be ready for the sand. Let them seek the sealine. They will not have to ponder where to start. Have them count the sand. Let them count it grain from single grain.

And after they have reached the end of that counting we shall not ask them to number the raindrops in the ocean. But with the wisdom of the aftermath have them ask us again how many seasons have flowed by since our people were unborn. (Armah, 1973, P.1).

This passage demonstrates that Africa is a very old place, which existed many centuries before its visit by foreigners. Then, it interrogates the relevance of certain Eurocentrist scholars' claims concerning the beginning of humankind and Africans as uncivilized beings. However, the excerpt implicitly reminds Europeans of their African and black origin through the words: "the proper beginning of their counting." In addition, ancient Egyptians used to refer to the place where they were living as Kemet meaning the black world or the land of black people. This is key evidence that black Africans civilized the world through the diffusion of their civilization and sciences starting in the Ancient World.

Social, Economic and Spiritual Organization of Life under Black Egyptian Ruling

Social Life in Ancient Egypt

The management of the society occupied a central place in pre-colonial African societies' organization, especially in Kemet. The leadership was well settled and everybody had a responsibility to play in the development of the family and the community. The responsibility of

people varied from one individual to another depending on the role he was supposed to perform in the development of the family and the community. The community was not a disorganized place. The progress and stability of any society depend on its organization.

Aware of that, Ancient Egyptians organized their society accordingly and became famous due to the good organization of their social life. Under the leadership of Pharaohs that social organization started many centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ with the establishment of village communities and the domestication of plants and animals for food. In the Egyptian society, each person occupied a very specific place. The majority of the population worked as farmers, craftsmen and scribes. A small group of people were nobles. An important aspect of social life in Ancient Egypt was the existence of castes. The castes were also divided into different categories: "There are seven Egyptian classes called the priests, warriors, cowherds or swine keepers, the merchants, the interpreters, pilots". (p.18). The latter is substantiated by Cheikh Anta Diop in *Precolonial Africa* (1987).

Another important characteristic of that social life was leadership. There existed a very strong system of government. Egypt was the first greatest civilization in the Ancient World to establish a centralized monarchical state. The country first developed into two kingdoms, Lower Egypt and Upper Egypt. Lower Egypt was established in the Delta area. Its king wore a red crown while the king of the Upper Egypt wore a white crown. Around 3100 B.C Pharaoh Menes, the king of Upper Egypt, inaugurated the first dynasty of a united Egypt by conquering and annexing the Delta area. Menes was known as Narmer and he was a black pharaoh. That idea of blackness of the Egyptian populations before the arrival of Arabs is backed up in *KMT: in the House of Life*. It therefore deconstructs a preconceived European idea according to which the Egyptian population has always been white, and explicates that black Egypt permitted Europe to be what it is today. Armah well corroborates this historical fact when he writes:

Egypt is where the European consciousness gets confronted with the mirror of history. If Europe looks open-eyed into the mirror, it will see its own face, made up with lies. The most ancient European texts say that Egypt was African. Crack. They say the Egyptian population was black, before succeeding waves of nomads, immigrants and pillagers came. Crack. Crack.

It must have seemed expedient for Europeans to bury the truth about Egypt under the structure of white supremacy. No doubt they felt so powerful at the time they couldn't imagine such a highly convenient rearrangement of history ever coming apart. But it was a mistake; it will prove fatal to European supremacy. On one condition: that

Africans claim what's been taken from us (Armah, 2002, pp.112-113.).

In the government of Egypt the pharaoh was the most important individual. He occupied different functions: he was the chief of state, the chief priest, the chief judge, the commander in chief of the army and the supreme property owner. With all those functions Egyptian people showed great respect to their different pharaohs. That same system of political organization or governance was copied and reproduced by Ancient Greece and the modern world of today.

The next in command on the political ladder was the vizier. He was the prime Minister and in charge of non-spiritual matters in the kingdom. He carried politics from the pharaoh to the provincial governors. In the central government, there were also administrative officials. These officials or ministers were in charge of Egypt's agriculture, mining, trade, public works and security among other things. There were also scribes in the pharaoh's government. There were military and civilian scribes, who had spent years receiving training in writing and in the art of government to qualify them as skillful administrators before they took up their position as future substitutes. In view of the latter, we strongly believe that this first form of political governance was handed down to the rest of the world from Africa, especially in Ancient Egypt.

Economic Life in Ancient Egypt

As history teaches us, economy occupies a leading place in the development of any society. The Egyptian society was not an exception to that rule. Agriculture was the backbone of the ancient Egyptian economy. As a desert land, cultivable lands were found only in the Nile valley. Even at this place intensive farming required regular and adequate supply of water from the Nile. Usually, in the month of July the land was flooded by the Nile and farmers would plough using oxen. Wheat, barley, vegetable, flax, cotton and olive trees were then cultivated after ploughing.

The daily life of most Ancient Egyptians revolved around the Nile and the fertile land along its banks. They grew most of the food they consumed and traded and imported what they could not produce. Most ancient Egyptians worked as farmers and craftsmen. Most craftsmen worked in workshops with other craftsmen. Likewise, objects for temples and for the pharaohs were made in temples and palace workshops. Objects for ordinary people were made by local craftsmen in small workshops¹.

¹ See Williams Chancellor's *The Destruction of Black Civilization* (1971) and Cheikh Anta Diop's *Civilization or Barbarism* (1991)

Spiritual Life and the Uniqueness of God in Ancient Egypt

Religion has always been important in Africa. So, it signifies that Africans have not known religion with the penetration of Arabs with Islam and Europeans with Christianity. Africans had their religious beliefs and their messengers, known as worldly gods, millennia before the introduction of those two foreign faiths in Africa. They were as well aware of the existence of a Supreme Creator responsible for the creation and end of everything on earth. The sum total of all the foregoing is confirmed in *KMT: in the House of Life* in the like words:

In fear we have looked on, unable to utter the truth in our hearts, as religions so bloody they have room for slaves and masters were imposed on us. What were the slavers from Europe but Christens? Yet our memory is deadened by taboos, our people still seek salvation from Christianity, this religion of slavers. When we wake, we shall send the Europeans back their religion of ceaseless violence. What were the slave raiders from the desert but Muslims? Yet today millions of our people still grope truth in Islam, the slave raiders' religion. When shall we wake our deaden memory? When shall we remember that thousands of years before the coming of Europeans, we had outlived hundreds of saviors? When shall we know again that millennia before any prophet rose in Arabia, we had outgrown prophecy into shared vision? (Armah, *KMT: in the House of Life* pp.191-192).

The word "saviors" in the excerpt stands for the African worldly gods as messengers between the world of human beings and that of spirits after death. The use of the sentence "When shall we know again that millennia before any prophet rose in Arabia, we had outgrown prophecy into shared vision" elucidates that precolonial Africans were aware of the existence of a unique Creator as preached by European and Arab religions.

Although history teaches us that Ancient Egyptians were polytheist, they were also aware of the uniqueness of God referred to as the national God that is omnipresent and omnipotent. Amon-Re was actually the national god. It was believed to be two gods in one. Re, the sun god, god of universe and creator of everything living in the sky and Amon, god of air were two gods in one called Amon-Re (The unique God). In spite of the fact that they believed in, served and worshipped several gods apart from the national god: Amon-Re, all the worldly gods like things, animals and human beings were

to better understand the kind of Agriculture practiced by Ancient Egyptians.

all considered as the messengers of the Supreme God on earth. They served as go-betweens or prophets as we had prophets in Christianity and Islam. For instance as in the case of the pharaoh, he was recognized as the link between the gods and the people. Thus, he was acting as a messenger or a prophet rather than a truly god. However, from misunderstandings of the precolonial Africans' conception of religion and the Supreme Being to misinterpretations of African ancient religious reality, many Eurocentrists have considered and portrayed precolonial Africa as a pagan land unconscious of the Supreme Creator, ignorant and without any sense of religion.

In addition, Egyptians did everything they could to ensure that their bodies were preserved upon death to provide a suitable dwelling place for Ka (the sinning spirit) which existed in everyone. They strongly believed that the Ka or the soul would re-occupy the body for the life after death. This belief is a testimony, which proves that Ancient Egyptians knew and believed in the existence of hell and heaven. Accordingly, those who lived good life on earth were rewarded with happiness and immortality:

In return for this bounty the priesthood shall devote itself to the constant care and purity of the soul of the royal lord, ministering unto his every need here on earth until that great ka returns to its place among the blessed souls of the king's relatives in the bark of heaven, in the blessed fields of reeds, or in the cool mansions of the Black One in the gardens of eternity hidden in the most intimate reaches of earth, and beyond that return, for ever and ever. (Armah, *KMT: in the House of Life*, p.311).

The Egyptian traditional religion to all intents and purpose has shown that even in their ancient lives the people had moral standards that they could be proud of. Conquerors were impressed by what they saw in Egypt. Visitors to the land admired the faith that had survived for millennia. The Egyptian deities and conception of religion were transported to Europe, mainly in Ancient Greece, known today as the cradle of European civilization. This historical fact and link between Egypt and Europe has made Ancient Egypt as the undeniable cradle of world's civilization.

Education, Cultural Life, Justice and Defense in Ancient Egypt

Education in Ancient Egypt

Like any conscious nation aspiring to ensure its sustainable development across different areas, black Egyptians granted much importance to education

considering its importance in the development of the society. First, the traditional education, which was informal, was carried out in the family and the community through some sorts of initiation, storytelling, proverbs and certain social symbols like in most part of Africa. Aware of the safeguard of knowledge, its expansion, its easy sharing with and mastery by everyone, some Egyptians thought about a new tool, a tool capable of preserving knowledge. The idea of writing emerged since then with some symbols representing concepts. After the invention of an efficient writing system all the areas and types of knowledge were integrated into it. Henceforth the written knowledge occupied the focus on education.

By 2430 B.C they had devised the first system of writing known as hieroglyphs. A man was thought to be educated if he could copy this system of writing really well. Taken as a whole very few could afford the time for this complicated writing system, so a quicker version called Hieratic (priest writing) was developed. Busy traders later produced yet a simpler version called Demotic (popular script) for everyday purposes. Egyptian scholars taught mathematics, physics and astronomy as well as writing. They made the first calendar of the world. Scholars of medicine were established at Sais, Thebes and Heliopolis.

In addition, the mystery system was taught at school. As a result, students from around the world came to study the mystery system, science, medicine, astronomy, mathematic and other subjects taught by African master teachers. Moses, Plato, Aristotle, Thales, Pythagoras and other ancient Greek scholars studied in Egypt. The temple university (the home of the mystery system) was conducted by an elite faculty called Hersehta or teachers of mysteries who taught different disciplines. It is this mystery system, which was re-appropriated by the Greeks and then they changed its name from mystery system to Philosophia, known today as philosophy. The Kemetic education required students to master the seven liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric, logic, geometry, arithmetic, music and astronomy. The study also required ten virtues. The ten virtues are illustrated in *Stolen Legacy: Greek Philosophy is Stolen Egyptian Philosophy* by George G. M. James as follows:

- 1- The control of thought, 2- The control of action, 3- The steady fastness of purpose, 4- Identity with spiritual life to higher ideals, 5- Evidence of a mission in life, 6- Evidence of a spiritual call to orders, 7- Freedom of resentment when under persecution, 8- Confidence in the power of the master teacher, 9- Confidence in one's ability to learn; and 10- readiness or preparedness of initiation. (James, 1992, pp.30-31).

As a learning center, and to ensure the transmission of

knowledge, a good system for organizing books and learning materials was set in every learning center known today as university. We mean that every university was equipped with libraries. Contrary to what is generally believed and propagated by some Europeans, the library system did not begin with the Greeks, but with the Ancient Egyptians. Ancient Greeks learned what they knew about libraries from Ancient Egyptians and later claimed to the world as their creation. The idea that Egypt was the wellspring of knowledge is confirmed in *KMT: in the House of Life*. "I saw one passage in which he said the Egyptians were philosophers and teachers of philosophers" (Armah, *KMT: in the House of Life* p.50).

Cultural and Judiciary Life and Defense in Ancient Egypt

Egyptians were fine artisans. They turned pottery on wheels and baked their clay in enclosed furnace instead of open furnace. They also made objects in copper, gold, bronze, silver and iron before the arrival of Arabs and Europeans. Apart from the craft of wood carving, Egyptian craftsmen also produced items of precious stones. Historians were quite certain that black Egyptians were also responsible for the invention of the glass. Indeed their glassware was admired and copied all over the Ancient World. Egyptian art form showed the Egyptian way of worship, daily life, agricultural activities, rural crafts and entertainment. Like any society they had their specific ceremonies about their happiness and misfortune.

For the well-being of any society, a fair and just judicial system is necessary and this was true of Egypt. In fact, all the fields of the society beginning with the social life, economic life, spiritual life, educational life, judiciary life, defense and cultural life, they were all regulated by some specific laws ensuring the prosperity and stability of the land. After the invention of writing, the different laws were integrated into the writing system and people learned them at school. Those laws were also taught by people through qualified officials in each field. Laws in Ancient Egypt were administered by lawyer-priests who served Maat (the goddess of justice). The trial of accused persons was well organized, with judge and a clerk who made notes of what was said. Accused persons were allowed to speak in their own defense. Serious punishments were decided and inflicted usually by the pharaoh. They ranged from death to loss of limbs or hands, and beating for lesser crimes.

Egyptians had granted much importance to security. They were especially strong people and had a powerful army. A passage in *Two Thousand Seasons* backs up that idea. "To return: the roots of schism grew in neglected soil. Who would have thought in times of the way or even in the fertile time, who would have thought

the infirmity of individual cripples could ever carry danger against our entire people?" (Armah, *Two Thousand Seasons*, p.27).

Organization of Life in Egypt after Arab Penetration

After the penetration of foreigners into African societies, the social organization continued although it underwent some changes. The introduction of Islam was the greatest innovation in terms of religious organization. The other social layers also underwent some changes due to the needs of the society and sometimes due to foreigners' influence. The Egyptian society was the first African society to be affected by Arab penetration and invasion. Most other African societies were created by the persecuted Egyptians who fled to new places in the continent. Some of those new African societies were not spared from Arab penetration and influence. In this way the social life, economy, justice, religion, defense, education and cultural life were organized in all the societies depending on the realities of each society.

Social, Economic, and Spiritual Life after Arab Penetration

Social Life after Arab Penetration

The social life of African societies underwent some changes after Arab penetration into the continent. The peaceful social order which existed before their arrival disappeared. The first society to be affected by the penetration of Arabs was the Egyptian society which was regarded as the first African society. With the influence of Arab presence and the incapacity to bear the social hardships many Africans tried new adventures in new places. During those adventures they were impelled to undertake the building of new villages. Those makeshift dwellings were also part of the unstable social life after Arab penetration.

When we had gone as many day's journey behind the mountain range as we had gone before it we began to move in a more scattered way. We built a line of villages each talking to the next, built them easy to defend, able to survive for seasons, for a long time if necessary. Together they made a net of safety awaiting those we had left to protect our escape. If there were any left they would not fail to pass this way. We had another for building there: we had enough grain for a season but the next season would be hard unless we planted and had good harvests. (Armah, *Two Thousand Seasons*, p.49).

The penetration of Arabs into the Egyptian society was peaceful at its beginning. The first Arabs entered the society as workers. Later with the will of the Egyptian leaders some beautiful Arab women were accepted in the

society. Those women were used as sexual properties by the leaders. As the society was prosperous more and more Arabs came. Being numerous and powerful in the society they decided to control the society and take over the leadership from native leaders with the complicity of other Arabs from their home country. This confiscation of leadership from the natives affected the Egyptian society considerably. Natives were persecuted and finally fled to find refuge in new places. The birth of many African societies generated from that forced migration. Evidence of that forced migration is substantiated in *KMT: in the House of Life*:

Aristocrats having survived the carnage of their peers have been negotiating to be awarded the peace of servants, auxiliaries and allies of the new thieves and murderers alias conquerors. We know now that this time no Ahmose will rise to drive away the foreign murderers. For those unwilling to sink from acquiescent fidelity to brutal slavery, flight is the remaining issue. The time for forced wandering is here. (...)

Some are for going down the Hapi to the delta, turning left along the shore into the lands of the Tjehenw. Some are for taking the land route west, oasis giving them to oasis. (Armah, *KMT: in the House of Life*, pp.341-342).

The presence of Arabs among the Africans affected considerably the social life of the African societies apart from Egypt. The other African societies did not remain unaffected with the presence of Arabs and their religion. The social order became unstable. Some native people found themselves excluded from the society. They were no longer full citizens since their minds and their bodies were completely destroyed by the new message of the Arab religion. The members of the community belonging to that new religion were complete parasites, no longer playing a true role in the development of their communities. A passage in *Two Thousand Seasons* illustrates the point:

But they were not by themselves. The first attack of the predators from the desert had produced among us another breed of hangers-on. At any time these would have been lazy, aimless ones, the kind of people whose indolence is not the wisdom of a weakened body seeking rest but a matter of their innate character, the set of their minds being committedly away from any useful work. (Armah, *Two Thousand Seasons*, p.29).

The presence of Arabs into the new African societies many centuries after their penetration into the Egyptian society did not go without consequences. Their presence destabilizes the social order established before their

arrival. Similarly, some Arabs destroyed the first great Empire of West Africa, the Empire of Ghana later after many of them have entered the society.

Economic Life after Arab Penetration

Economy is the spine of any society and this was also true in pre-colonial African societies after Arab penetration. A well-organized and diversified economy is the leading thread to prosperity. Economic activities vary from one moment to another according to the evolution of the society. They also vary from one society to another depending on the opportunities and natural realities of every area. As a whole, economic activities in that period of African history was dominated by the usual activities such as farming, fishing, hunting, handicraft and especially slave trade which was too much valued with the presence of Arabs.

Trade was one of the main activities of African societies after Arab penetration. But with the instability in many societies caused by Arab presence the practice of trade encountered a lot of difficulties. The massive migration of the populations made trade difficult in many areas. This stance is illustrated in *Two Thousand Seasons* in the like words:

Turning left we moved along a new route. After eight days we saw no more destroyed villages. But the communities we passed among were hostile, living in fortified places on hilltops. How they hated strangers! They refused to give us any help. Nothing would they trade. Whenever they caught us vulnerable, themselves in an impregnable position, they assaulted us. We fled them, fled their inhospitable land. When we reached the mountain foothills we found a people less stricken with suspicion. These traded freely, though for every thing they drove a bargain without mercy. (Armah, *Two Thousand Seasons*, p.48).

Another type of economic activity dominant in this period was slave trade. The exchange of human being for profit was widespread among the populations. People were sold to unknown people mainly Arabs. So human beings were exchanged as wares and many individuals lost their lives and roots:

But the other ignored her words. It was no accident. He was sold again. This time they almost killed him out right. He talked a little when he was brought back, the first night. He said it was no use going back home. There was no home, just disaster waiting. He wanted something, not home, not this place either" (Armah, *Two Thousand Seasons*, p.16).

Arabs introduced the institutionalization of an economy based on slavery in Egypt as implicitly revealed in the

excerpt. This was the beginning of the exploitation of man by man as in capitalism. This does not mean that slavery did not exist in Egypt, but it was institutionalized to marginalize and exploit non-Arabs, mainly Africans. Once again, we clearly see a difference at this level too.

Spiritual Life after Arab Penetration

After Arab penetration, the most noticeable deed in the religious realm was the introduction of Islam in most African societies by the Arabs. As the first African society penetrated by Arabs, the Egyptian society was the first society affected religiously. The worship dedicated to pharaohs and the other gods was reduced. The introduction of Islam did not put an end to the practice of African beliefs, but threatened them. In places where Islam was introduced, the practice of African beliefs was seen as sinful and needless by the harbingers of the new religion. According to Armah, that new religion was imposed on Africans by violence and it was developed by fraud. The position put forward by Armah totally contradicts the beautiful landscape generally portrayed by the forerunners of that religion: religion of peace and love; faith in one God, Allah and recognition of Muhammad as his messenger; the five daily prayers; one month of fast, giving of alms to the needy people; pilgrimage to Mecca to visit the saint places of Allah,

This is how it happened; this is how it has been perpetuated: traditionalists, on pain of death, searched in the narrative of the Arabs, Al Quran, until they found names to substitute for those of our real ancestors, until each of our families came to answer to a fictitious name. Anyone among us refusing to do this was killed. That is how the religion of Arabs was imposed on us. It is not a universal religion, appealing the informed spirit through love. Its power was born on violence. In fraud it has developed. Take away its violence, and among us on this continent that religion will die. Reveal this fraud, and among us on this continent the best ways of murdered ancestors will live again, and life here will no longer be one long dirge. (Armah, *KMT: in the House of Life*, pp.189-190).

That new religion which is Islam, in many ways was opposed to the religious beliefs of Africans. That is why many problems arose in African societies with its introduction. Africans underwent much suffering from the harbingers of that new faith. The behavior of the harbingers of that new faith could do nothing but make Africans suffer and destroy everything that made their existence beautiful: force instead of goodness, fraud instead of intelligence, no respect in their communion, reduction of women into simple things, use of violence, practice of robbery, cheating. What the advocates of Islam said and what was implemented on ground were diametrically two different things.

Justice, Defense, Education and Cultural Life in Pre-colonial Africa after Arab Penetration

As far as justice is concerned it was implemented, although; it was sometimes biased. The presence of foreigners mainly Arabs with their religion impinged on the implementation of a fair justice in many areas. The practice of slavery boosted with the presence of Arabs and it also impacted on the good implementation of justice. In the communities dominated by Islam justice was rendered according to the Muslim religious laws, but this was not always the case. There was a certain lack of understanding of the founding principles of Islam by many people. There was also a rejection of the new religion by many adepts of African beliefs. It created tensions and instability in many communities. In the areas where the presence of Arabs had little influence, justice was given according to the customs established. Those customs were decided according to the needs and realities of the communities.

After the penetration of Arabs into the African continent, there was a lot of tension. After their penetration into the Egyptian society and their desire to control the society, the Arab invaders faced resistance from native Egyptians. They defended their territory by all means although they were finally defeated. Apart from Egypt, Africans defended themselves against the Arabs in the other societies they penetrated later. During the slave trade, Africans sometimes fought against the Arab slave traders in many cases. During that period the military organization was reinforced in order to face Arab onslaught. This military organization to face the enemy is evidenced in *Two Thousand Seasons* p 44. Defense was not neglected because the survival and the stability of the society depended on it. The means of defense included mostly technical and physical training. The technical and physical training evolved in the end and varied from one society to another.

An outstanding element of that military organization was the strict compliance with the orders and advice given by the military leaders. Through the foregoing many military campaigns were successful. The careful compliance with those orders and advice show that discipline was granted a great importance in the military organization of the pre-colonial African societies after Arab penetration.

After the penetration and invasion of African societies by Arabs the educational framework established before their arrival was somewhat hampered. That educational disturbance started with the Egyptian society and later spread to the other societies visited and dominated by Arab ideology. The traditional education acquired through storytelling, naming, initiation and certain daily practices continued, but became much influenced by Arab presence. The hieroglyphics which were the main mediums of formal knowledge were transformed into the

Arab script. In the Egyptian society, the African scribes were replaced by Arab scribes. In other African societies founded by persecuted Egyptians, with the influence of Arabs, the Arab script became the main medium of transmission of written knowledge. That is why apart from the period of Egyptian ruling and the Egyptian society particularly none of African countries made use of the hieroglyphic symbols.

It is also important to know that the presence of Arabs was influential on African societies in regard to both formal and informal education, but it did not put an end to African educational practices and their means started since the period of Egyptian ruling. For example, storytelling, naming and initiation started long ago in African societies before Arabs' arrival, survived Arab domination and continued up to today in most African societies.

During any time of African existence, culture has existed and was given substantial consideration. But after Arab penetration, because of the religious, social and economic pressures on natives, the cultural life was also threatened. Despite that unstable situation Africans did not lose their culture but it was considerably affected by that of the Arabs, which was portrayed as good and pure. African art (music, dance, drawing), cultural events (feasts and ceremonies), craftsmanship (pottery and other inventions) would not know much progress in areas mostly influenced by Arab culture and religion.

CONCLUSION

In short, it appears evident that the preconceived views and Eurocentric representations of a *darkened* precolonial Africa are merely ideological. The truth is that precolonial Africa was glorious and represents the golden ages of black civilization contrary to Europe. In addition to Ancient Egypt as demonstrated in the paper, there were many other societies in West Africa such as the Igbo society as seen in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and the Ghana, Mali and Songhay Empires, which were well organized and developed in all the domains of human activities. Based on the findings obtained, we absolutely recommend contemporary Africans to read about African literature and the true history of Africa, not the partisan and distorted European history of Africa by Eurocentrists. Hence, people should understand that Africa is the first greatest cradle of human civilizations, which have then revolutionized and permitted Europe to be what she is today. We mean that precolonial Africa constitute the roots and the trunk of European development across all the domains of human activity.

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