

APAS AT TEN:

HISTORY, IMPACT AND INTELLECTUAL TRAJECTORIES



EDITORS

Ejikemeuwa J. O. NDUBISI, PhD
Nkechinyere NWOKOYE, PhD
Kanayo L. NWADIALOR, PhD
Jude I. ONEBUNNE, PhD

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First Published in 2026

A Publication of the Association for the Promotion of African
Studies

COYWRIGHT @ 2026 by The Association for the Promotion
of African Studies

ISBN: 978-8252-36-28

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DEDICATION

To

The Founder of APAS:

Professor Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, OSA

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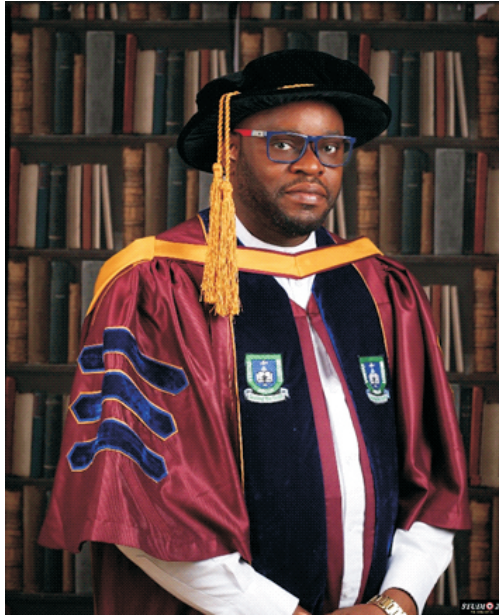
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THE FOUNDER OF APAS



Professor Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, OSA

Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, OSA, a Catholic Priest of the Order of Saint Augustine, Province of Nigeria, is the founder of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies and the first president of APAS from 2016 to 2024. He is a Professor of African Philosophy and Religious Traditions, Department of Philosophy, Veritas University, Abuja. At Veritas, he was a member of the Governing Council and the Director of Research and Linkages. He currently serves the university as the Provost of the College of Postgraduate Studies. He is also a tenured professor of African Theology and Orthodox Studies at the University of America, Temecula, California; a visiting professor of Philosophy to Tansian

University, Umuaya; the University of Jos; the Augustinian Institute, Makurdi; Saint Augustine's Major Seminary, Jos; and Saint Albert the Great Major Seminary, Abeokuta.

Professor Kanu has a PhD in African Philosophy from Selinus University, London; a PhD in African Traditional Religion from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; a PhD in Climate Change and Sustainable Development from Selinus University, London; an MA in Metaphysics from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; and a second MA in African Traditional Religion from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. He also has a Master's in Theology and Orthodox Studies and in Higher Institution Administration, both from The University of America, Temecula, California. Added to these are a Bachelor's of Philosophy from the Pontifical Urban University, Rome; a Bachelor's of Theology from the University of Jos; and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Education from the National Open University of Nigeria.

He has to his credit more than 400 articles published in national and international peer-reviewed journals and chapters in books; he has written and edited more than 100 books and presented more than 350 academic papers at national and international conferences. He is currently the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies.

Kanu is the recipient of several awards, notable among them are,

1. 2018 Patron of the Arts, by the Faculty of Arts, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka;
2. 2018 Distinguished Academic of the Year, by the Society for Research and Academic Excellence, University of Nigeria Nsukka;
3. 2018 Oracle of Wisdom Award, by the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University, Umuaya;
4. The Louis Althusser Golden Award in 2021 by the Eudoxia Research Institute, India;

5. The 2020 Kwame Nkrumah Transformational Leadership Medal by the African Institute for Public Administration, Ghana.

The Professor has been certified in:

1. E-Learning, by UNESCO; certified in *New Trends in Education*, by London Graduate School;
2. *Advanced Negotiation Strategies* by Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts;
3. *Creative Writing* by Wesleyan University, Middletown, USA;
4. Leadership by the Business School of the University of Michigan, USA;
5. Leadership by HEC International Business School, Paris, France;
6. Leadership by the College of Business, University of Illinois, Chicago, USA.

Professor Kanu is a Fellow of the Association of Professional Philosophers of Nigeria and the Nigerian Academy of Letters. He is the proponent of IGWEBUIKE Philosophy, which he holds to be the operative condition of the thermodynamics of African Philosophy, Religion, and Culture. He hails from Arondizuogu, an eastern ancestral homeland and a center of ancient civilization.

PREFACE

This book marks a significant milestone in the life and journey of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS). Founded in 2016 by Professor Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, *OSA*, APAS emerged from a compelling vision: to create a formidable intellectual platform dedicated to the promotion, preservation, and advancement of African thought, culture, and identity. Guided by its enduring motto, *Coalition for African Pride*, the Association has, within a decade, grown from an idea into a vibrant scholarly movement with far-reaching influence across Africa and the diaspora.

This book in your hand is both a celebration and a reflection. It celebrates ten years of committed scholarship, institutional resilience, and intellectual camaraderie. At the same time, it reflects critically on the trajectories that have defined APAS: its origins, philosophical foundations, scholarly interventions, and future prospects. The contributions assembled in this book, written by distinguished members of the Association, offer a rich tapestry of perspectives that underscore the dynamism and interdisciplinarity that characterize APAS discourse.

Organized into six thematic sections, this book captures the multifaceted identity of APAS. The first section, *Origins, Vision, and Institutional Foundations*, revisits the historical emergence of the Association, illuminating the motivations, struggles, and strategic frameworks that have sustained its growth. It foregrounds the intellectual vision of its founder and examines the leadership patterns and institutional structures that have ensured continuity and relevance.

The second section, *Philosophical Foundations and African Worldviews in APAS Discourse*, delves into the conceptual

underpinnings of APAS scholarship. Here, contributors engage deeply with African metaphysics, ontology, ethics, and epistemology, reaffirming the centrality of indigenous knowledge systems in global intellectual conversations. These chapters collectively demonstrate how APAS has become a fertile ground for rearticulating African philosophical traditions in contemporary contexts.

In the third section, *Culture, Identity, and the Reclamation of African Thought*, attention shifts to the cultural and existential dimensions of African studies. The chapters explore the reconstruction of African identity, the decolonization of knowledge, and the resurgence of African-centred scholarship. They highlight the role of APAS in fostering a renewed confidence in African intellectual heritage and in projecting African thought onto the global stage.

The fourth section, *Interdisciplinarity, Knowledge Production, and Academic Networking*, emphasizes the collaborative and integrative ethos of APAS. It showcases the Association's commitment to bridging disciplinary boundaries and building scholarly networks that transcend geographical limitations. Through conferences, publications, and partnerships, APAS has cultivated a community of scholars united by a shared commitment to African studies.

The fifth section, *Society, Politics, Gender, and Developmental Trajectories*, reflects the practical implications of APAS scholarship for contemporary African realities. The contributions interrogate issues of governance, social transformation, gender inclusivity, and ethical leadership, demonstrating the relevance of African studies to policy, development, and societal well-being. This section also signals the Association's responsiveness

to emerging questions and its readiness to engage the complexities of modern African life.

Finally, the sixth section, *Digital Futures, Technology, and Knowledge Preservation*, looks ahead. It examines the intersection of African studies with digital innovation, artificial intelligence, and knowledge preservation. These chapters envision the future of APAS in an increasingly technological world, proposing strategies for sustaining its mission while adapting to new intellectual and institutional challenges.

Beyond its thematic richness, this book stands as a testament to the collective effort of scholars who have contributed to the APAS vision over the past decade. It reflects a shared commitment to intellectual excellence, cultural affirmation, and the re-centering of Africa in global knowledge production. The diversity of voices represented herein is indicative of the inclusive and collaborative spirit that defines APAS.

As we commemorate this tenth anniversary, it is important to acknowledge that the journey of APAS is far from complete. Rather, this milestone serves as a point of departure for new explorations, deeper engagements, and broader horizons. The challenges confronting African studies, ranging from epistemic marginalization to the pressures of globalization, remain formidable. Yet, the achievements of APAS over the past ten years inspire confidence in its capacity to navigate these challenges with creativity and resolve.

It is our hope that this book will serve not only as a record of past accomplishments but also as a catalyst for future scholarship. Scholars, students, and readers alike are invited to engage with

the ideas presented herein, to interrogate them, and to build upon them in the ongoing quest for an authentic and transformative African intellectual tradition.

In this regard, as the President of the association, I warmly commend this book to a wide audience of readers: scholars, researchers, students, policymakers, and all who are committed to the advancement of African studies. The chapters contained herein are not only intellectually stimulating but also profoundly relevant to contemporary debates about identity, development, and knowledge production in Africa and beyond. Readers will find in these pages both inspiration and critical insight, as well as a renewed appreciation for the richness and resilience of African thought.

I particularly encourage emerging scholars to see in this work a call to intellectual responsibility and creative engagement. The legacy of Distinguished Professor Ikehukwu Anthony Kanu and the achievements of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies over the past decade stand as an enduring invitation to participate in the ongoing project of redefining and advancing African knowledge systems.

In celebrating ten years of APAS, we celebrate more than an institution; we celebrate a movement, one rooted in the conviction that Africa must speak for itself, define itself, and shape its own intellectual destiny.

Professor Ejikemeuwa J. O. NDUBISI

President, APAS

11 April, 2026

SECTION I:

Origins, Vision, and Institutional Foundations of APAS

1

FROM IDEA TO MOVEMENT: THE GENESIS, MOTIVATIONS, AND EARLY HURDLES OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF AFRICAN STUDIES

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Introduction

The story of any great institution begins with an idea, often a quiet but persistent vision that seeks to reshape thought, inspire action, and address gaps in society. In 2016, such a vision gave birth to APAS, an organization founded on the principles of intellectual growth, collaboration, and purposeful engagement. What started as a conceptual framework soon evolved into a structured movement, driven by individuals committed to fostering critical thinking and advancing knowledge across disciplines (APAS 2020).

The founding of APAS did not occur in isolation; it was a response to an increasing need for platforms that nurture intellectual discourse and innovation. At a time when information was abundant but meaningful engagement was scarce, the founders recognized the importance of creating a space where ideas could be rigorously examined and refined (APAS 2021). Their goal was not merely to establish another organization but to ignite a culture of inquiry that would empower individuals to think deeply and act thoughtfully.

Central to this vision was the belief that intellectual development thrives in communities that encourage dialogue, diversity of thought, and shared learning. From its inception, APAS was designed to bring together like-minded individuals from various backgrounds, creating an environment where perspectives could intersect and new ideas could emerge (APAS 2022). This

collaborative spirit became the foundation upon which the organization began to build its identity and extend its influence.

As APAS took its first steps in 2016, it marked the beginning of a journey defined by ambition, resilience, and a commitment to excellence. The early days were characterized by both challenges and opportunities, each contributing to the shaping of its mission and values. Understanding the origins of APAS provides not only insight into its growth but also highlights the enduring power of a well-conceived intellectual vision brought to life.

Emergence and Trajectory of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS)

The idea to form the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) emerged in January 2016, when Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, OSA, recognized a research gap in African studies. Initially, he discussed his thoughts with friends and colleagues, seeking to better articulate his vision.

Between 2016 and 2018, discussions about the association began with a small group of scholars interested in promoting African studies. These scholars included Prof. Ejikemeuwa J. O. Ndubisi from Tansian University, Dr. Kanayor Nwadiakor from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Dr. Chiugo Kanu from the University of Nigeria Nsukka, and Dr. Uchenna Kanu from Modibbo Adama University Yola. Recognizing the significant contributions of Prof. Nkechinyere Nwokoye towards African studies, she was invited to join the group in 2018. Consequently, the major part of this group now constitutes the Board of Trustees of the Association.

In 2018, the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) was officially registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The registration, completed on January 15, 2018, bore the number CAC/IT/NO

105112 and was accompanied by a constitution approved by the Federal Government of Nigeria (APAS 2023).

With APAS officially established, the organization aimed to foster broader discussions among African scholars on key issues. The newly formed Board of Trustees decided to hold the first international conference from June 13th to 15th, 2018. Additionally, 2018 saw the launch of the association's first journal, the *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*. The date for future conferences was adjusted to May 25th, aligning with Africa Day, a significant date instituted by the African Union. Since then, the association has consistently held its conferences on May 25th, except when the date falls on a day that makes it difficult to gather scholars for academic discussions (APAS 2018).

On June 13, 2018, APAS held its first international conference themed “African Ideologies in a World of Change” at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. This event was organized in collaboration with the Alternative Perspectives and Global Concerns (APGC), Canada. At the conference, 66 papers were presented by scholars from 31 different universities, and 36 APAS members were registered. Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, OSA, the founder and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, served as President of the Association, while Prof. Ejikemeuwa Ndubisi, the Secretary of the Board, served as Secretary of the Association (APAS 2018). They held these positions until May 2024.

In 2019, APAS organized its second conference in collaboration with the Civil Society Organization Network on Migration and Development (CSOnetMADE), focusing on “African Identity and Migration Question in our Contemporary World.” This conference was also held at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, from June 12

to 14. During the event, 90 papers were presented by scholars from various universities (APAS 2019).

Towards the end of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, fundamentally changing the nature of APAS conferences from purely physical gatherings to hybrid events that included virtual presentations. In 2020, APAS held its third and fourth conferences in the same year. The third conference took place from June 10 to 12 via Zoom due to pandemic-related restrictions, with the theme “African Ideologies, Human Security, and Peace-Building.” Despite the challenges of that year, 98 papers were presented by scholars from different institutions (APAS 2020).

Reflecting on the impact of COVID-19 on Africa, APAS organized another conference on September 17, 2020, in collaboration with Feedback Hall. The theme was “The Impact of COVID-19 on Africa and the Quest for Afrocentric Perspectives,” and 68 papers were presented by scholars from across the continent (APAS 2020). In 2020, APAS also launched two new journals: OCHENDO: *An African Journal of Innovative Studies* (OAAJIS) and AKU: *An African Journal of Contemporary Research* (AAAJCR). These journals were established in memory of Emmanuel Nwafor Kanu, also known as Ochendo, and Joy Akuekwesi Chinegwu, known as Aku, both of whom significantly contributed to APAS in various ways.

In 2021, APAS held its fifth conference via Zoom due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. This event, organized in collaboration with UNESCO Inclusive Lab, marked a significant change: the conference date was moved from June to May to honor Africa Day on May 25th. The theme was “African Ideologies and Innovative Trends and Advances: Honoring the Past and Shaping the Future,” and 71 papers were presented by scholars from across Africa (APAS 2021).

By 2022, as the impact of COVID-19 lessened, APAS expanded its annual conference beyond Nigeria. The sixth conference was held in Kenya in collaboration with Tangaza University College, Nairobi. The theme was “A Global Dialogue on African Philosophy, Religion, and Culture: Prospects for Development,” and 111 papers were presented by scholars from various African countries (APAS 2022).

In 2023, APAS organized its seventh annual conference at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The theme, “Africa in the Global Community: Landmark Achievements, Setbacks, and Future Developments,” was supported by collaborations with the Faculty of the Social Sciences, UNN, Alternative Perspectives and Global Concerns (APGC), Canada, and Tangaza Maryknoll Centre for African Studies, Tangaza University College, Kenya. Ninety-four papers were presented at this event (APAS 2023).

In 2024, APAS held its eighth annual conference at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, with the theme “African Heritage and Sustainability in the Global Future.” This conference was organized in collaboration with the Emmanuel Kanu Educational Foundation, the Centre for Arts, Culture and Humanities at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, APGC Canada, and Tangaza Maryknoll Centre for African Studies, Tangaza University College, Kenya (APAS 2024). At this conference, 146 papers were presented by scholars from across Africa.

From 2018 to 2026, APAS organized eight international conferences, with over 900 papers presented. The association has published 25 books of proceedings from these conferences and now oversees three journals, which have produced more than 20 volumes and 60 issues between 2018 and 2026. Starting with 36 registered members in 2018, APAS has grown to 240 registered

Table 1: APAS Conferences

S/N	Theme	Venue	Date
1	African Ideologies in a World of Change	Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria	13– 15 June 2018
2	African Identity and Migration Question in our Contemporary World	Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria	12 - 14 June, 2019
3	African Ideologies, Human Security and Peace-Building	Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria	10 - 12 June, 2020
4	The Impact of Covid-19 on Africa and the Quest for Afrocentric Perspectives	ZOOM (ONLINE)	17 September, 2020
5	African Ideologies and Innovative Trends and Advances: Honoring the Past and Shaping the Future	ZOOM (ONLINE)	25 May, 2021
6	A Global Dialogue on African Philosophy, Religion, and Culture: Prospects for Development	Tangaza University College, Nairobi, Kenya	25-26 May, 2022
7	Africa in the Global Community: Landmark Achievements, Setbacks, and Future Development	University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria	25-26 May, 2023
8	African Heritage and Sustainability in the Global Future	Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria	23-24 May, 2024

9	Shaping Africa's Future: The Impacts of Artificial Intelligence and Entrepreneurship in a Globalized Society	Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria	27- 29 May, 2025
	Biodiversity, Conservation, and Public Health in Africa: Challenges and Prospects	Veritas University, Abuja, Nigeria	27-28 May, 2026

On February 5, 2024, Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, OSA, the founder of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS), addressed a letter to the members of the association. In this letter, he emphasized the need to conduct an election to appoint an executive team to steer the association's affairs. He wrote:

Eight years after, the Association is strong enough to organize an election for the positions of President, Vice-President, General Secretary, Asst. General Secretary, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, and Public Relations Officer as contained in our constitution. I and the members of the Trustees are, therefore, calling for an election. This will go a long way in helping APAS keep to basic requirements and structure, foster good governance, and ensure effective leadership in steering the association towards its mission and goals (Kanu 2024).

He added:

As we prepare for the Annual General Assembly/International Conference on May 22-25, 2024, I request of you look out for members of the Association to whom you can entrust the future of this academic body (Kanu 2024).

Following the letter of 5th February, during the 2024 conference and first annual general assembly, an election was organized by the founder, resulting in the following new executive team for APAS: President: Prof. Ejikemeuwa J. O. Ndubisi; Vice President: Prof. Nkechinyere Nwokoye; Secretary: Dr. Jude I. Onebunne; Assistant Secretary: Dr. Ngozi Dora Ulogu; Treasurer: Dr. Ebele Uba; Financial Secretary: Dr. Winifred Eche, DMMM; Public Relations Officer: Dr. Ogochukwu Okpokwasili; Ex-Officio Member: Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, OSA.

Contexts for Founding APAS

The **context for founding the Association for the Promotion of African Studies** is rooted in a mix of historical, intellectual, and political developments, especially during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This was driven by the need to **systematically study, preserve, and accurately represent Africa**, especially in response to colonial expansion, cultural threats, and emerging African intellectual movements (APAS 2018).

1. Colonial Expansion and European Interest in Africa: During the period of the Scramble for Africa, European powers rapidly colonized African territories. This created a strong demand among scholars, missionaries, and administrators for systematic knowledge about African societies, languages, cultures, and resources. Academic bodies were formed to organize and promote such studies.

2. Need for Structured Academic Study: Before the association was founded, knowledge about Africa was scattered and often biased or incomplete. There was a growing realization among scholars that Africa should be studied in a more **organized, scientific, and interdisciplinary way**, covering anthropology, history, linguistics, and sociology.

3. Preservation of African Cultures and Languages: Many African traditions and languages were under threat due to colonial influence and Westernization. The association aimed to document African languages and oral traditions, preserve indigenous knowledge systems, and promote respect for African cultural heritage.

4. Rise of African Nationalism and Intellectual Movements: In the early 20th century, educated Africans and members of the African diaspora began to challenge colonial narratives. Movements such as Pan-Africanism emphasized pride in African identity and history. This intellectual climate encouraged the creation of institutions dedicated to African studies.

5. Correcting Misrepresentation of Africa: Africa had long been portrayed in European writings as “primitive” or “uncivilized.” The association sought to promote accurate and balanced research, encourage scholarly publications about Africa, and provide a platform for both African and non-African researchers.

6. Collaboration Among Scholars: The Association for the Promotion of African Studies was meant to serve the context of providing a forum where researchers could share findings, conferences and journals could be organized and international cooperation in African studies could grow.

Motivations for Founding APAS

The **Association for the Promotion of African Studies** (often linked historically to early Africanist movements and later organizations like the African Studies Association) was founded out of several key motivations tied to intellectual, cultural, and political needs (APAS 2019). Here are the main drivers:

1. Correcting Misrepresentation of Africa: For a long time, Africa was misunderstood or misrepresented in Western scholarship, often portrayed as lacking history or civilization. The association aimed to promote accurate, evidence-based knowledge

about African societies and challenge stereotypes and colonial narratives.

2. Promoting Scholarly Research: There was a need to encourage serious academic study of Africa across disciplines such as history, anthropology, linguistics, political science, and others. The association created a platform for researchers to collaborate, publish, and share findings.

3. Preserving African Culture and Heritage: Rapid colonial influence and modernization threatened many indigenous traditions. The association sought to document African languages, customs, and oral histories and preserve cultural identity for future generations.

4. Supporting African Independence and Identity: During the 20th century, especially around the time of decolonization, there was a growing push for African self-definition. The association contributed by encouraging African-centered perspectives and supporting intellectual foundations for nationalism and independence movements.

5. Creating a Network of Scholars and Institutions: Before such organizations existed, African studies were scattered and uncoordinated. The association helped bring together scholars from Africa, Europe, and the Americas and organize conferences and academic exchanges.

6. Influencing Policy and Education: Research generated by the association helped shape educational curricula about Africa and government and institutional policies related to African development and international relations.

7. Encouraging Interdisciplinary Approaches: Africa's complexity required insights from multiple fields. The association was meant to promote cross-disciplinary collaboration and broader, more holistic understanding of African societies.

The founding motivation was essentially to **reclaim Africa's narrative**, promote rigorous scholarship, and ensure that African histories, cultures, and perspectives were studied and represented with accuracy and respect.

Early Challenges Founding APAS

Some of the early challenges encountered while founding APAS, especially between 2016 and 2024 include:

- 1. Lack of Funding and Resources:** The association struggled with limited financial support and inadequate research materials on African history and culture. The founder had to rely on personal funds to run the run association.
- 2. Low Public Awareness and Interest:** Many people initially did not see the importance of African studies as a discipline. The association had to educate the public on African heritage and encourage participation in cultural and academic activities.
- 3. Publishing Difficulties:** There were very few platforms for publishing African-centered research. Early members struggled to print journals and books and distribute their work widely.

Conclusion

The founding of APAS in 2016 marked more than the establishment of an organization; it signaled the emergence of a bold intellectual vision grounded in purpose, collaboration, and forward-thinking ideals. What began as a response to existing gaps in academic and social engagement quickly evolved into a platform that nurtured critical thought, innovation, and leadership. The vision behind APAS was not merely to exist but to inspire a generation capable of shaping ideas into meaningful impact.

Over the years, the principles that guided its creation have remained central to its growth. APAS has stood as a testament to the power of collective intellect, where diverse perspectives converge

to challenge norms and redefine possibilities. Its foundation in 2016 laid the groundwork for a culture of inquiry, resilience, and excellence, fostering an environment where ideas are not only shared but refined and actualized.

Moreover, the journey of APAS highlights the importance of intentional beginnings. The foresight and determination of its founders demonstrate how a clear vision, when paired with commitment, can transcend initial limitations. Each milestone achieved since its inception reflects a continuous dedication to its core mission—empowering individuals and promoting intellectual advancement in meaningful and lasting ways.

In conclusion, the birth of APAS in 2016 represents a defining moment in the pursuit of intellectual growth and collective progress. It stands as a reminder that every great movement begins with a vision, and with the right foundation, that vision can inspire change far beyond its origins. As APAS continues to evolve, its founding ideals remain a guiding force, ensuring that its legacy endures for generations to come.

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APAS (2023). Conference Brochure and Book of Abstracts on “Africa in the Global Community: Landmark Achievements, Setbacks, and Future Development”. APAS: Nigeria

APAS (2024). Conference Brochure and Book of Abstracts on “African Heritage and Sustainability in the Global Future”. APAS: Nigeria

APAS (2025). Conference Brochure and Book of Abstracts on “Shaping Africa's Future: The Impacts of Artificial Intelligence and Entrepreneurship in a Globalized Society”. APAS: Nigeria

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2

IKECHUKWU ANTHONY KANU AND THE IDEA OF AFRICAN STUDIES: THOUGHT AND PRAXIS

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence and consolidation of African Studies as a distinct academic field have been deeply intertwined with the intellectual, cultural, and political history of the African continent. From its early formation within Western epistemological frameworks to its gradual reorientation towards Afrocentric perspectives, African Studies has remained a contested yet fertile ground for scholarly engagement. Central to contemporary debates within this field is the question of intellectual ownership, methodological autonomy, and the role of African scholars in redefining the contours of knowledge production about Africa. It is within this evolving discourse that the contributions of Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu become particularly significant.

African Studies, as an interdisciplinary enterprise, encompasses the systematic study of African history, philosophy, culture, politics, religion, and socio-economic systems. However, early iterations of the discipline were largely shaped by colonial and Eurocentric paradigms that often marginalized indigenous epistemologies and misrepresented African realities.¹ In response, African scholars such as Valentin-Yves Mudimbe and Kwame Nkrumah have called for a radical rethinking of the epistemic foundations of African Studies, emphasizing the need for

¹Philip D. Curtin, *Africa and the West: Intellectual Responses to European Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972).

intellectual decolonization and the recovery of African agency in knowledge production.² This intellectual trajectory has paved the way for a new generation of scholars committed to reconstructing African identity through culturally grounded and philosophically robust frameworks.

Within this context, Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu emerges as a leading voice whose work straddles philosophy, theology, and African cultural studies. His scholarship is characterized by a sustained engagement with questions of African ontology, identity, and the decolonization of knowledge. Beyond his theoretical contributions, Kanu's significance lies in his practical commitment to institutionalizing African Studies through scholarly collaboration and leadership. Notably, he is the founder of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS), an academic body established in 2016 to address gaps in African-centered research and to foster interdisciplinary dialogue among scholars.³

The founding of APAS represents a critical intervention in the landscape of African Studies. Conceived as a platform for advancing African perspectives, the association has, within a relatively short period, organized multiple international conferences, facilitated scholarly exchanges, and established reputable academic journals dedicated to African thought and development. These initiatives reflect a deliberate effort to create institutional structures that support the production and dissemination of knowledge rooted in African realities. In this regard, Kanu's leadership transcends conventional academic engagement, positioning him as both a thought leader and a builder of intellectual communities.

²Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Kwame Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonization* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964).

³Ikechukwu A. Kanu, "History of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS)." (Unpublished document)

This paper, therefore, examines the idea of African Studies as articulated in the thought and leadership of Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu. It argues that his contribution is twofold: first, as a theorist who advances an Afrocentric philosophical framework for understanding African identity and knowledge; and second, as an institutional leader who has actively shaped the direction of African Studies through the establishment and growth of APAS. This study seeks to highlight the enduring relevance of Kanu's ideas for contemporary scholarship and the future of African Studies.

AFRICAN STUDIES: SCOPE AND INTELLECTUAL TRAJECTORIES

African Studies is best understood as an interdisciplinary field concerned with the systematic study of Africa's histories, cultures, languages, philosophies, religions, and socio-political systems. While its institutionalization gained prominence in the mid-twentieth century, particularly in Europe and North America, its epistemological foundations have been the subject of sustained critique. Early Africanist scholarship often reflected colonial biases, framing Africa as an object of study rather than as a subject of knowledge production.⁴ In response to this epistemic imbalance, African scholars began to advocate for a reconfiguration of the discipline. Valentin-Yves Mudimbe famously interrogates the “invention” of Africa as a construct shaped by Western epistemology, arguing that African knowledge systems were systematically marginalized in the production of academic discourse.⁵ Similarly, Paulin Hountondji criticizes what he terms “extraversion” in African scholarship, the dependence on external theoretical frameworks that undermine intellectual autonomy.⁶ These critiques collectively underscore the need for an African-

⁴ Philip D. Curtin, *Africa and the West: Intellectual Responses to European Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972).

⁵ Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

⁶ Paulin Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

centered approach to African Studies, one that privileges indigenous perspectives and methodologies. It is within this evolving intellectual trajectory that the work of Ikechukwu Kanu can be situated. His approach aligns with the broader movement towards reclaiming African epistemic agency, while also emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary integration in addressing the complexities of African realities.

A defining feature of African Studies is its inherently interdisciplinary nature. The complexities of African societies necessitate an approach that transcends disciplinary boundaries, integrating insights from philosophy, anthropology, history, sociology, religious studies, political science and in fact other empirical sciences with African lens. Ali Mazrui highlights the importance of such interdisciplinarity in capturing the multifaceted realities of Africa, arguing that no single discipline can adequately account for the continent's diversity and dynamism.⁷ In this regard, Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu advances a holistic vision of African Studies. His scholarship bridges philosophy and theology while engaging with broader cultural and social questions. More significantly, his leadership in founding the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) institutionalizes this interdisciplinary vision. The association's conferences and publications bring together scholars from diverse fields, fostering a collaborative environment that reflects the integrative ethos of African Studies.⁸

Beyond theoretical contributions, the development of African Studies has depended significantly on intellectual leadership and institutional innovation. Scholars have not only produced knowledge but have also established platforms for its dissemination and critique. Kanu's contribution is particularly

⁷Ali A. Mazrui, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1986).

⁸I. A. Kanu, "History of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies"

noteworthy in this regard. His leadership extends beyond the classroom and the written text to the creation of sustainable academic structures. Through APAS, he has facilitated international conferences, established scholarly journals, and fostered networks of collaboration among African scholars. This year, 2026, APAS celebrates her 10th International Conference and also boasts of three reputable journals and many Book Chapters, among other academic and scholarly outputs. These efforts reflect an understanding of African Studies not merely as an academic discipline but as a dynamic and evolving intellectual movement requiring both visionary thought and practical leadership.

From the foregoing analysis, it becomes evident that the thought of Ikechukwu Kanu is deeply embedded within the central concerns of African Studies. His work engages with the critical themes of decolonization, epistemological autonomy, interdisciplinarity, and intellectual leadership. However, what distinguishes his contribution is the synthesis of these elements into a coherent framework that combines philosophical reflection with institutional praxis.

KANU'S IDEA OF AFRICAN STUDIES: THOUGHT AND PRAXIS

The idea of African Studies as articulated in the intellectual and institutional engagements of Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu reflects a deliberate synthesis of philosophical reflection, cultural reclamation, and scholarly activism. Moving beyond abstract theorization, Kanu advances a vision of African Studies that is at once epistemological, interdisciplinary, and institutionally grounded. His thought is best understood through three interrelated dimensions: African-centered epistemology, the philosophy of *Igwebuike*, and the institutionalization of African knowledge through his founding of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies.

At the core of Kanu's conception of African Studies lies the imperative of epistemic reclamation. African knowledge, long subjected to distortion within colonial and postcolonial academic frameworks, must be rearticulated from within its own cultural and philosophical categories. This position aligns with broader contemporary efforts to reposition Africa not merely as an object of study but as a locus of knowledge production. APAS publications underscore this orientation.⁹ Kanu's stance reinforces the argument that African Studies must prioritize indigenous perspectives, narratives, and interpretive frameworks. In this regard, African Studies becomes not merely descriptive but reconstructive: a field tasked with recovering suppressed traditions, reinterpreting African realities, and projecting future possibilities grounded in African worldviews.

A distinctive feature of Kanu's contribution to African Studies is his development and application of the philosophy of *Igwebuike*. This concept, deeply rooted in Igbo-African thought, emphasizes relationality, complementarity, and the interconnectedness of being. Within the framework of African Studies, *Igwebuike* functions as both a philosophical principle and a methodological tool. Kanu employs this framework to bridge disciplinary divides and to articulate a holistic understanding of African reality.¹⁰ The concept thus provides a unifying lens through which diverse

⁹ APAS, "Books", www.apas.africa/books.php

¹⁰ **Ikechukwu A. Kanu**, "Igwebuike as an Igbo-African hermeneutic of globalization" *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol 2, No.1, (2016) 1–6; Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, "Igwebuike as an Igbo-African Hermeneutic of Globalization," *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* 2, no. 1 (2016); Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, "Igwebuike as an Igbo-African Ethic of Reciprocity," *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* 3, no. 5 (2019): 1–8; Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, "The Dimensions of Igwebuike Philosophy," *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* 7, no. 6 (2020): 1–8; Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, "Igwebuike as the Key to Understanding African Philosophy and Religion," *AMAMIHE Journal of Applied Philosophy* 8, no. 18 (2020): 41–50; Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, "Igwebuike Epistemology: Towards a Decolonized Theory of Knowledge," *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development* 6, no. 2 (2023), 1–17; Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, "The Dimensions of Igwebuike Philosophy," *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol 7, No. 6 (2020), 1–8; E. J. O. Ndubisi, "Igwebuike Philosophy in I. A. Kanu vis-à-vis the Validity of Truth-Claim in African Epistemology" *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (2019), 166 – 174; E. J. O. Ndubisi, "Kanu's Igwebuike Ideology and Martin Buber's I-Thou Theory: Towards A Model for Authentic Existence" *TOLLE LEGGE: Augustinian Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, Vol. 2, No. 4, (2020), 1 – 10

aspects of African life can be interpreted in a coherent and integrative manner. Importantly, *Igwebuike* also serves as a critique of fragmented and reductionist approaches to knowledge.¹¹

Kanu's idea of African Studies is inherently interdisciplinary, reflecting the complexity of the African experience. His scholarship consistently engages philosophy, theology, sociology, and cultural studies, thereby illustrating the necessity of cross-disciplinary dialogue in addressing African issues. This interdisciplinary orientation is institutionalized through the activities of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies. The association's journals¹² such as *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development (JASSD)*, *AKU: An African Journal of Contemporary Research* and *OCHENDO: An African Journal of Innovative Studies*, publish works spanning diverse academic fields, from philosophy and religion to environmental studies, political analysis, education and empirical scientific studies. These publications demonstrate that African Studies, as envisioned by Kanu, is not confined to a single discipline but is a broad intellectual enterprise aimed at understanding and transforming African realities. Furthermore, the thematic focus of APAS conferences, ranging from African identity and migration to sustainability and global engagement, reflects a deliberate attempt to address contemporary challenges through interdisciplinary scholarship.¹³ This reinforces the view that African Studies must remain responsive to the dynamic and evolving conditions of the continent.

Perhaps the most significant dimension of Kanu's contribution is his role in institutionalizing African Studies through the founding

¹¹ Ikechukwu A. Kanu, "Igwebuike Metaphysics: A Complementary Perspective", *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2023), 1-21

¹² APAS, "Journals", <http://www.apas.africa/journals.php>

¹³ APAS, "Events", <http://www.apas.africa/events.php>

of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS). The association represents a concrete realization of his vision for a collaborative and African-centered scholarly community. APAS has, within a relatively short period of ten years, established itself as a vibrant intellectual hub. Its activities include the organization of international conferences, the publication of peer-reviewed journals, and the dissemination of scholarly works addressing critical issues in African development. These initiatives are not merely academic exercises but deliberate efforts to create sustainable structures for the production and circulation of African knowledge. Moreover, APAS embodies a participatory model of scholarship. Through constantly bringing together scholars from across Africa and the diaspora, it fosters dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas. This reflects Kanu's broader vision of African Studies as a collective enterprise, one that transcends individual scholarship and is rooted in communal intellectual engagement.

A defining characteristic of Kanu's idea of African Studies is its practical orientation. For him, scholarship is not an end in itself but a means towards social transformation. African Studies, in this sense, becomes a form of praxis, an intellectual activity aimed at addressing real-world challenges and contributing to the advancement of African societies. Kanu's work thus bridges the gap between theory and practice, emphasizing the relevance of academic inquiry to societal development.

CONCLUDING REFLECTION

The foregoing analysis of reveals that the contribution of Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu to the development of African Studies is both conceptually profound and institutionally transformative. His works stand at the intersection of theory and praxis, offering not only a philosophical rearticulation of African epistemology but

also a practical framework for sustaining and advancing the discipline within contemporary academic discourse. No doubt, Kanu's intervention in African Studies may be understood as a continuation and consolidation of the broader decolonial project initiated by earlier African scholars. However, what distinguishes his contribution is the clarity with which he integrates epistemological reclamation, methodological interdisciplinarity, and institutional development into a unified vision. His insistence on African-centered knowledge production directly challenges the lingering dominance of Eurocentric paradigms, while avoiding the pitfalls of intellectual isolationism. Instead, his approach promotes a dialogical engagement that is rooted in African realities yet open to global intellectual exchange.

A critical strength of Kanu's thought lies in the philosophy of *Igwebuike*, which functions not merely as a cultural concept but as a rigorous intellectual framework. Its emphasis on relationality and complementarity provides a viable methodological alternative to fragmented and reductionist approaches that have historically limited the scope of African Studies. Equally important is Kanu's role as an institutional innovator. The establishment and growth of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies demonstrate that the sustainability of any academic field depends not only on ideas but also on structures that facilitate their dissemination and critique. Through conferences, journals, and collaborative networks, APAS has effectively created a vibrant intellectual community that embodies the ideals of African-centered scholarship. This achievement underscores a crucial insight: that the future of African Studies will be determined as much by institutional capacity as by theoretical sophistication.

Nevertheless, a balanced evaluation must also acknowledge certain challenges and areas for further development. The project of epistemic decolonization, while commendable, remains an ongoing and complex task. It requires continuous critical reflection to ensure that the emphasis on African perspectives does not inadvertently lead to essentialism or the uncritical valorization of tradition. Furthermore, the expansion of African Studies demands increased engagement with emerging global issues such as technology, climate change, and geopolitical shifts, areas that require even broader interdisciplinary integration. In addition, while APAS represents a significant milestone, the long-term impact of such institutions will depend on their ability to maintain academic rigor, inclusivity, and global visibility. Sustained funding, international collaboration, and digital dissemination of research outputs will be critical factors in ensuring that the gains made are not only preserved but also expanded.

In sum, Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu's idea of African Studies constitutes a compelling synthesis of thought and action. His work reaffirms the necessity of reclaiming African intellectual agency while simultaneously building the institutional frameworks required for its expression. His style of bridging philosophy, culture, and scholarly activism, offers a model of engaged scholarship that is both contextually grounded and forward-looking. The enduring significance of his contribution lies in its capacity to inspire a new generation of scholars to view African Studies not merely as an academic discipline, but as a dynamic and transformative enterprise committed to the holistic advancement of Africa and its people.

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3

FROM VISION TO INSTITUTION: ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH, STRUCTURES, AND GOVERNANCE OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF AFRICAN STUDIES (APAS)

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Introduction

Transforming or turning a vision into an institution is not an easy task. It requires deliberate structure, disciplined system and leadership. The main objective of this chapter is to explore how the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) became an institution from the vision of the founder, Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, O.S.A, a decade ago. This chapter will also examine the organizational growth, structures, and governance of APAS since its inception in 2016 till date as this year marks its ten years of existence.

About APAS

The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) is a contemporary scholarly body founded in 2016 by Rev. Fr. Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, O.S.A. The association emerged from a Pan-African intellectual vision aimed at organizing international conferences and publication of journals. It is a network of scholars, researchers and academics. The association has successfully organized over 9 international conferences and online webinars.

About the Founder and First President of APAS

Rev. Fr. Prof. Kanu Anthony Ikechukwu, O.S.A (born on 20th of November, 1981 in Arondizuogu, Imo State, Nigeria) is a Catholic

Augustinian friar and Professor of African Religion and Cultural Studies. He was formally the head of the department of philosophy, Tansian University, Umunya, and a visiting professor to the University of Jos. He is currently in Varitas University, Abuja. He is the Global president of the world Cultural Studies Research Association, based in India. He is the director of Igwebuiké Research Institute and the Editor-in-Chief of IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities (IAAJAH); Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development (JASSD); Villanova Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and AMAMIHE: Journal of philosophy. He founded the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) in 2016 and served as the global president from 2016 to 2024. Prof. Ikehukwu Anthony Kanu is known for developing “Igwebuiké” philosophy – a communal-complementarity framework which focuses on the thermodynamic dimension of the African transformative ontology. He convened the early APAS international conferences and set the vision a decade ago.

About The Foundational Vision of APAS

Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) is a learned society dedicated to transforming how African history and culture are understood and represented. APAS has the vision of putting Africa and African scholars on the global map. The vision for founding APAS is to create a platform where academicians explore themselves, promote and encourage research and scholarship on African Philosophy, religion, history, culture, social movements, linguistic, literary and artistic expressions, science and technology. The vision is also to forge intellectual links and network with scholars, policy makers, and activists in Africa and beyond. (Vanguard News) APAS achieves these successes through scholarly publications and organizing annual international conferences where some critical contemporary issues bordering

Africa and the possible ways to sustainability and African development are discussed. As a Learned society and professional association of teachers and research scholars, APAS has over 300 members both within and beyond Africa who teach in higher institutions in Africa and beyond.

APAS from Vision to Institution

In his presidential address during the 2019 annual conference of APAS, Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu who was the founder and first president of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies states that “one of the major reasons for beginning the APAS is to create a conducive academic forum where African scholars, of all levels and interests can come together as a community of inquiry to discuss contemporary issues of concern and if possible find solutions to them”. Today, APAS has translated this vision into an institutional reality by expanding its scholarly output, formalizing leadership and editorial structures, and embedding governance practices that stress participation, ethics, and quality assurance. APAS has organized over 9 international conferences and workshops that have brought African scholars together across disciplines. APAS has published journals like journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development JASSD), OCENDO (Innovative studies), AKU (Contemporary Research) with different volumes since 2019 till date. APAS has supported books, proceedings, and chapter volumes; aims to get indexed in Google Scholar, ACJOL, and eventually Scopus. APAS has expanded its academic scope into multiple disciplines such as Philosophy, Anthropology, Political Science Religion and Cultural Studies and International disciplines. Currently, APAS is planning to publish Book of Chapters titled; APAS at Ten: History, Impact, and Intellectual Trajectories to commemorate a decade of the association.

The Governance Structure of APAS (the main figures recorded in leadership roles)

The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) was founded in 2016 by Rev. Fr. Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, O.S.A. He is also the president and Editor-in-chief of Igwebuike Journal of Arts and Humanities and other related journals. On May 26, 2024 at the APAS 8th International Conference held at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Distinguished Prof. Ejikemeuwa Ndubisi, who was the secretary of APAS since its inception emerges the APAS president, succeeding the pioneer president and founder, Prof. Ikechukwu Kanu. Prof. Nkechinyere Nwokoye of the department of Igbo, African and Asian Studies of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka was elected as the vice president of the association. Rev. Fr. Jude I. Onebunne of the department of Philosophy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka was appointed the Secretary, and Dr. Ngozi Ulogu of the department of English/Literature, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka became the APAS Assistant Secretary. Dr. Ebele Udeh of the department of Igbo, African and Asian Studies emerged the APAS Treasurer, and Dr. Agatha Ogochukwu Okpokwasili of the department of Philosophy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka emerged the APAS PRO. Vincent Gerald Onwudinjo of the department of philosophy, Tansian University was elected the APAS Financial Secretary. APAS has over 300 members and advisory board members.

About the Current APAS President

Professor Ejikemeuwa Ndubisi is a professor of Philosophy in Tansian University, Umunya, and one of the pioneers of APAS since the inception of the association. He had meritoriously served as the APAS Secretary since 2016. The reviews of his satisfactory secretarial discharge of duties served as the background to his becoming APAS members' choice for the coveted presidency. (www.afrikanwatchngr.com) He was elected as the APAS president during the 8th annual international conference of the

Association for the promotion of African Studies held on 22nd to 25th May, 2024 at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Distinguished Prof. Ejikemeuwa took over the reins of affairs of the Association from the pioneer and founder, Distinguished Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu. In his acceptance speech, Prof. Ejikemeuwa saw the new position as a call to service. He has been an academic for more than 17 years. He has held many academic positions including being the one-time head of the department of philosophy and Religious studies, Director of Continuing Education CEP and the Director of Academic Planning of the University in Tansian University, Umunya. His research interest areas are on African Philosophy, Metaphysics, Epistemology, Logic, Religion, Gender and Peace Studies. Prof. Ejikemeuwa has the vision and willing of making APAS the number one academic association in Africa and beyond.

APAS board of trustees and board members are;

Prof. Kanu, Ikechukwu .A. O.S.A, Veritas University, Abuja
Prof. Nkechinyere Nwokoye, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.
Prof. Martin Nkafu Nkemnkia, Pontifical Lateran University
Prof. Mahmoud Masaeli, University of Ottawa, Canada.
Dr. Chiugo Catherine Kanu, University of Nigeria Nsukka.
Prof. Edmund Ugwu Agbo, Int. Bio-research University, Italy.
Prof. Ejikemeuwa J.O. Ndubisi, Tansian University, Umunya, Nigeria.
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Prof. Kanayo Nwadior, Nnamdi Aikiwe University, Awka.
Prof. Jerome Okonkwo, Imo State University, Nigeria.
Uchenna Emmanuel Kanu, Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola.

APAS Organizational Growth

APAS which started as a scholarly network, has organized nine successful international conferences, inviting different academic figures as keynote speakers and lead paper presenters within and outside Africa. The Association has as well publishes over three reputable journals with regular volumes and book reviews. These journals are; African Studies and Sustainable Development (JASSD), OCHENDO, AKU, and Politics and Economic Development in Africa; proceedings of the 2023 International Conference of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies held at the University of Nigeria Nsukka on 24th-27th May are all included in Google Scholar for the visibility of the Contributions of APAS scholars to knowledge.

Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development (JASSD) is a journal published by APAS. It is purely dedicated to the publication of original academic manuscripts in the areas of arts and Humanities. Since 2018 till date, JASSD Journal has produced 9 volumes of publications.

OCHENDO - An African Journal of Innovation Studies (OAAJIS) is a journal published by the APAS. This journal is also purely dedicated to the publication of well researched academic manuscripts that focus on innovative studies. OAAJIS has produced 7 volumes of journals since 2020 till date.

AKU- African Journal of Contemporary Research (AAJCR) is another reputable journal published by APAS, dedicated to the publication of original academic papers on contemporary issues. AAJCR has produced 6 publications since 2020 till date.

APAS JOURNAL PARTNERS

Igwebuike Research Institute (IRI)

Patristic Institute, Augustinianum Library, Rome, Italy

Augustinian Institute Library, Nigeria

Nnadiesube Research Institute (NRI)
Academic Journals Online (ACJOL)

APAS Conferences from 2018 to 2025

The association since 2018 has organized over 9 conferences annually in different countries in Africa. The themes of these conferences tend to centre Africa's place in global dialogue-philosophy, culture, development, peace and the continent's challenges and achievements APAS has rotated its yearly international conferences through several host institutions:

2018 2nd APAS International Conference, Venue: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Theme: African Ideologies in a World of Change. The chairman of the conference was Prof. Jerome Okonkwo while the keynote speaker and the lead paper present were, Prof. Chima Iwuchukwu and Prof. Philip Njamanze

2019 3rd APAS International Conference, Venue: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Theme: Migration and African Identity. The keynote speaker and lead paper presenter were Dr. Emeka Obiezu, O.S.A., a migration governance expert of the United Nations Economic and Social Council and Prof. Ike Odimegwu, the Director of the Centre for Migration Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

2020 4th APAS Webinar International Conference, (ZOOM Webinar) Venue: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (Online) Theme: African Ideologies, Human Security and peace-Building. The lead paper presenter was Prof. Maduabuchi Dukor, Department of Philosophy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

2021 5th APAS International Conference, Theme: African Ideologies and innovative Trends and Advances: Honoring the Past and Shaping the Future. The lead paper presenter was Professor Mahmoud Masaeli from Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada.

2022 6th APAS International Conference, Venue: Tangaza University College, Nairobi. Theme: A Global Dialogue on African philosophy, religion and culture: Prospects for development. The

keynote speaker and lead paper presenter were Prof. Apolinaire CHISHUGI, Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research and Extension Tangana University College, Kenya and Dr. Oriare Nyarwath, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya.

2023 7th APAS International Conference, Venue: University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Theme Africa in the Global community: Landmark achievements, setbacks, and future development. The lead paper presenter was Prof. Umar Habila Dadem Danfulani. From University of Jos, Plateau State.

2024 8th APAS International Conference, Venue: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Theme: African Heritage and Sustainability in the Global Future. The lead presenter was Prof. Alloy Ihua, from Benue State University, Markudi.

2025 9th APAS International Conference, Theme: Shaping Africa's Future: The Impacts of Artificial Intelligence and Entrepreneurship in a Globalized Society. The keynote speaker and lead paper presenter were; Prof. Mathew Owuworotimi Oladele from City University, Cambodia, and Prof. Mark Ikeke from Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria.

2026 10th APAS International Conference, Venue: Veritas University, Abuja Theme: Biodiversity, Conservation and Public Health in Africa: Challenges and Prospects. Keynote speaker and lead paper presenter are Prof. Moses Zarawa, former Vice Chancellor, Adamawa State University, and Prof. Nnamdi Nwoodu, Director General, Centre for African-American Research Studies, Abuja.

Conclusion

From the analysis so far, it is very clear that APAS as an African scholarly institution is waxing strong every year. What began as Pan-African intellectual vision has successfully organized over 9 international conferences, launched three peer-reviewed journals, published over 30 book projects and multiple conference

proceedings; journals indexed in Google Scholar, Mendeley and Acjol. It has also transitioned to a structured academic organization with successful leadership transition, showing institutional continuity just within nearing 10 years of its existence. Collectively, The Association for the Promotion of African Studies has created a home-grown, interdisciplinary platform foregrounds African philosophy and cultural studies for a decade now.

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4

LEADERSHIP IN APAS: HOW CURRENCY AND CONTINUITY DRIVE INSTITUTIONAL SUCCESS

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Introduction

Leadership remains a central and indispensable force in ensuring the growth, stability, and long-term sustainability of institutions across the world, particularly within academic and cultural organizations. In African scholarly associations, leadership assumes an even more strategic role, as these institutions often operate within dynamic environments shaped by socio-political transitions, economic limitations, and the ongoing struggle for intellectual relevance and global recognition. The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) stands as a significant example of such an institution, offering a valuable lens through which to examine how leadership, currency, and continuity interact to drive institutional success. Leadership in academic associations involves far more than administrative coordination; it encompasses vision-setting, intellectual direction, policy formulation, capacity building, and the cultivation of collaborative networks across disciplines and regions. Effective leadership must respond proactively to internal organizational needs while engaging external academic trends. This is especially true within African contexts, where institutions frequently face challenges related to funding, governance structures, global visibility, and technological transformation. In such settings, leadership must be both resilient and innovative, ensuring that the institution remains relevant without compromising its foundational mission and identity.

Central to this study are the concepts of **currency** and **continuity**, which together provide a robust framework for evaluating leadership performance within APAS. Currency refers not to financial resources but to the relevance, adaptability, and responsiveness of leadership in addressing contemporary realities and evolving scholarly demands. It includes the capacity to engage emerging discourses, technological advancements, interdisciplinary methods, and global academic standards while remaining rooted in African epistemologies and intellectual traditions. Currency ensures that APAS evolves progressively rather than becoming stagnant. Continuity, on the other hand, emphasizes the preservation of institutional memory, policy consistency, organizational stability, and the sustained pursuit of long-term goals. It reflects the capacity of leadership transitions to maintain coherence and direction without fragmenting the institution. Continuity is crucial within academic associations, where poorly managed leadership changes can lead to policy reversals, loss of focus, and structural instability. Within APAS, continuity ensures that the association's mission and vision remain strong and coherent across successive administrations. The interplay between currency and continuity requires careful balance. Overemphasizing currency may produce abrupt shifts in direction that undermine long-term planning, whereas excessive reliance on continuity can breed rigidity and resistance to innovation. APAS has demonstrated success in harmonizing these dimensions, maintaining progressive relevance while grounding its actions in established institutional principles.

African academic associations have historically played transformative roles in intellectual discourse, the promotion of indigenous knowledge, cultural preservation, and scholarly exchange. Yet many struggle with sustainability due to leadership gaps, weak institutional structures, inadequate funding, and limited adaptability to global trends. In this wider context, APAS provides

an instructive example of how deliberate and strategic leadership can navigate these challenges through balanced integration of currency and continuity. This study therefore seeks to explore the mechanisms through which leadership drives institutional success within APAS. It examines how leadership practices have evolved, how they address emerging challenges, and how they maintain a coherent organizational identity over time. By foregrounding both currency and continuity, the research moves beyond simplistic notions of leadership effectiveness to analyze the dynamic processes that sustain organizational growth, resilience, and relevance. Situating APAS within broader discourses on organizational leadership in Africa, the study recognizes that African institutions operate within unique historical, cultural, and socio-economic realities that demand context-specific leadership models. The experiences of APAS offer valuable insight into how African scholarly organizations can achieve sustainability, credibility, and global relevance. Currency highlights the importance of engaging with technological change, global academic trends, and international collaboration without losing institutional autonomy or African epistemological grounding. Continuity underscores the importance of institutional heritage, organizational coherence, structured succession planning, and commitment to long-term goals. The study contributes to ongoing debates on governance, leadership effectiveness, and institutional development by emphasizing that leadership is shaped not merely by individual capabilities but also by organizational structures, governance frameworks, and systems that support both innovation and stability. In APAS, leadership effectiveness is demonstrated through policies that endure beyond individual tenures while remaining flexible enough to integrate new ideas and respond to changing academic landscapes. The relevance of this research extends beyond APAS, offering practical insights for other academic and professional associations aiming to strengthen institutional performance and impact. Strategies such as leadership

development programs, deliberate succession planning, mentorship systems, and strong mechanisms for preserving institutional memory emerge as essential tools for sustainable governance. Moreover, as global interest in African studies continues to expand, the role of organizations like APAS becomes even more significant. Leadership that embodies both currency and continuity is crucial for positioning APAS as a leading voice in African scholarship and for ensuring its ongoing relevance and visibility within global academia. This study provides a comprehensive examination of leadership within the Association for the Promotion of African Studies, focusing on how currency and continuity function as interrelated drivers of institutional success. Through this analytical framework, APAS serves as a compelling example of how leadership can effectively balance change and stability to achieve long-term relevance, resilience, and organizational excellence.

Conceptual Clarifications

Conceptual clarification refers to the process of defining, explaining, and refining key terms or concepts used in a study to ensure clarity, precision, and shared understanding. It involves breaking down abstract ideas into clear, specific meanings within a particular context, thereby avoiding ambiguity or misinterpretation. Conceptual clarification helps establish a common framework for analysis, ensuring that readers and researchers interpret concepts consistently. It is essential in academic writing, as it strengthens the coherence, validity, and overall quality of a research work.

Leadership

Leadership refers to the ability to influence, guide, and direct individuals or groups toward the achievement of shared goals within an organization. It involves vision creation, decision-making, communication, and the mobilization of human and

material resources for collective progress. In academic and institutional contexts, leadership ensures strategic direction and sustainability. According to Northouse (2019), “leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 43). Leadership is not merely positional authority but also includes relational and transformational dimensions that inspire commitment and innovation. Similarly, Yukl (2013) notes that “leadership involves influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done” (p. 23). These perspectives emphasize influence, purpose, and shared direction.

APAS

The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) is conceptualized as an academic and professional body dedicated to the advancement of African scholarship, culture, and intellectual discourse. It serves as a platform for researchers, scholars, and practitioners to engage in the study and dissemination of knowledge about Africa. APAS promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, supports research initiatives, and fosters dialogue on African issues within global contexts. Scott (2004) argues that “organizations are social structures created by individuals to support the collaborative pursuit of specified goals” (p. 27). As an institution, it embodies both organizational structure and intellectual mission. In line with organizational theory. Likewise, Etzioni (1964) defines organizations as “social units deliberately constructed to achieve specific objectives” (p. 3), reflecting APAS's structured purpose.

Currency

Currency, in the context of this study, refers to the relevance, adaptability, and responsiveness of leadership and institutional practices to contemporary realities. It signifies the capacity of an organization to remain up-to-date with evolving trends, knowledge

systems, and environmental demands. Currency is essential for maintaining competitiveness and intellectual vitality, particularly in academic institutions. Drucker (1993) emphasizes that “the greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence, it is to act with yesterday's logic” (p. 76), underscoring the need for currency. It involves innovation, awareness of global developments, and the ability to respond proactively to change. Similarly, Burns (1978) observes that “transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct” (p. 20), highlighting relevance and responsiveness.

Continuity

Continuity refers to the consistency, stability, and sustained implementation of policies, values, and institutional goals over time. It involves preserving organizational memory, maintaining strategic direction, and ensuring that leadership transitions do not disrupt progress. According to Selznick (1957), “the institutional leader is primarily an expert in the promotion and protection of values” (p. 62), reflecting continuity. Continuity is crucial for institutional coherence and long-term success, particularly in academic associations where vision must endure beyond individual tenures. It also ensures that accumulated knowledge and experiences are retained and built upon. Likewise, Kotter (1996) asserts that “successful change is grounded in a culture that supports continuity of purpose” (p. 148), emphasizing stability alongside adaptation.

Drive

Drive refers to the internal and external forces that motivate and propel individuals or organizations toward achieving set objectives. In institutional contexts, drive encompasses ambition, commitment, strategic intent, and the persistent effort required to attain success. It is often reflected in proactive leadership, goal-oriented behavior, and resilience in the face of challenges.

According to McClelland (1961), “the need for achievement is a key driver of human motivation and performance” (p. 101). Drive is essential for sustaining momentum and ensuring that institutional visions are translated into tangible outcomes. Similarly, Pink (2009) explains that “motivation is driven by autonomy, mastery, and purpose” (p. 72), highlighting the psychological and strategic dimensions of organizational drive.

Institutional

The term institutional refers to the structures, systems, norms, and processes that define and regulate the functioning of an organization. It encompasses both formal frameworks, such as policies and governance mechanisms, and informal elements, such as culture and shared values. Institutional characteristics shape how organizations operate, make decisions, and achieve their objectives. Meyer and Rowan (1977) state that “institutionalized organizations are those that incorporate practices defined by prevailing norms and expectations” (p. 343). In the context of APAS, the institutional dimension reflects its organizational identity, governance structure, and operational consistency. Similarly, Scott (2014) notes that “institutions are comprised of regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements” (p. 56), emphasizing structure and meaning.

Success

Success refers to the achievement of desired goals and objectives in a manner that ensures sustainability, relevance, and impact. In institutional contexts, success is measured not only by immediate outcomes but also by long-term growth, stability, and influence. It involves the effective utilization of resources, strategic leadership, and the ability to adapt to changing environments. According to Drucker (2007), “what gets measured gets managed” (p. 28), indicating that success is tied to clear objectives and evaluation. Success is therefore multidimensional, encompassing

performance, reputation, and continuity. Similarly, Collins (2001) argues that “great organizations sustain performance by preserving core values while stimulating progress” (p. 195), highlighting both continuity and advancement.

Conceptual clarification ensures clarity, precision, and consistency in research by defining key terms within their proper context. It strengthens understanding, reduces ambiguity, and enhances the quality of analysis. By establishing a shared framework, it provides a solid foundation for examining how core concepts interact to produce meaningful and reliable research outcomes.

Leadership in Academic Associations

Leadership in academic associations refers to the capacity of individuals or governing bodies to guide scholarly communities toward shared intellectual, professional, and organizational goals. These associations function as essential platforms for research collaboration, knowledge dissemination, policy engagement, and professional development. Within this context, leadership extends beyond routine administration to include vision-setting, intellectual direction, and the cultivation of a collaborative academic culture. A defining feature of leadership in academic associations is its collegial and participatory nature. Unlike hierarchical leadership models, academic environments emphasize shared governance, inclusivity, and consensus-building. Leaders create opportunities for members to contribute ideas, engage in dialogue, and participate actively in decision-making processes. This approach strengthens institutional cohesion and enhances scholarly productivity. As Bryman (2007) notes, “effective leadership in higher education is characterized by a consultative and participative approach that fosters trust and collaboration” (p.

699), underscoring the importance of collective responsibility in academic settings.

Leadership also involves safeguarding and advancing academic standards. Leaders ensure that conferences, journals, and workshops reflect current developments while upholding scholarly integrity. This requires expertise, ongoing learning, and adaptability to emerging trends, including technological innovations. Leadership is therefore not limited to formal positions but is often distributed across members who contribute specialized knowledge. According to Bolden et al. (2012), “leadership in academic contexts is increasingly distributed, relying on the collective contributions of individuals across different roles and levels” (p. 575). Strategic thinking and prudent resource management are equally essential. Leaders must plan initiatives that support sustainability, mobilize resources, and build institutional partnerships while preserving organizational identity and long-term objectives. Northouse (2019) affirms that “leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 43), highlighting the central role of influence and direction. Ultimately, leadership in academic associations is a dynamic and multifaceted process that integrates intellectual authority, collaborative engagement, and strategic management. It is vital for fostering scholarly excellence, maintaining institutional relevance, and driving the success of academic communities.

Theoretical Perspectives on Leadership

Theoretical perspectives on leadership offer structured explanations of how leadership functions, evolves, and influences organizational outcomes. These perspectives provide valuable insights into leadership behavior and effectiveness, especially within academic and institutional environments. Over time,

leadership theories have expanded from emphasizing inherent personal qualities to focusing on relationships, contexts, and transformational processes. One of the earliest approaches is trait theory, which argues that effective leaders possess inherent characteristics such as intelligence, confidence, and integrity. This perspective views leadership as largely innate and identifiable through personal attributes. However, limitations of the trait approach led to the emergence of behavioral theories, which emphasize what leaders do rather than who they are. Behavioral theorists contend that leadership effectiveness stems from observable actions, including task-focused and people-oriented behaviors. Northouse (2019) supports this view, stating that “leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 43), emphasizing the centrality of leader–follower interactions. Situational or contingency theories further extend leadership understanding by asserting that effective leadership depends on contextual factors. This approach maintains that no single leadership style works universally; instead, leaders must adapt their actions to the needs of followers and situational demands. Such adaptability is particularly relevant in academic associations, where diverse memberships and evolving environments require flexible and responsive leadership. Yukl (2013) affirms that “effective leaders adapt their behavior to the demands of different situations and followers” (p. 56), highlighting the importance of contextual responsiveness. Transformational leadership theory has also become influential due to its emphasis on vision, inspiration, and organizational change. Transformational leaders motivate followers to exceed expectations by fostering commitment, creativity, and shared purpose. Burns (1978) explains that “transforming leadership ultimately becomes moral in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration” (p. 20), underscoring its ethical and developmental dimensions.

Collectively, these theoretical perspectives—trait, behavioral, situational, and transformational—offer a comprehensive framework for understanding leadership as a dynamic process shaped by individual qualities, actions, relationships, and contextual demands.

The Concept of Currency in Leadership Practice

The concept of currency in leadership refers to the extent to which leaders remain relevant, informed, and responsive to contemporary developments within their fields and organizational environments. In an age marked by rapid technological change, globalization, and shifting institutional demands, leadership effectiveness increasingly depends on the ability to adapt while maintaining strategic direction. Currency is therefore not simply about staying updated; it involves continuous learning, innovation, and proactive engagement with emerging trends. A central dimension of currency is adaptive thinking—the ability to interpret complex situations, anticipate challenges, and adjust strategies accordingly. Modern leadership requires flexibility and learning agility. Senge (2006) affirms that “leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers responsible for building organizations where people continually expand their capabilities” (p. 340), emphasizing continual development as essential for leadership relevance. Currency also involves innovation and effective knowledge management. Leaders must acquire new knowledge and facilitate its dissemination to ensure that organizational practices align with global standards. In academic associations, currency is demonstrated through organizing relevant conferences, publishing cutting-edge research, and engaging in current scholarly debates. Mintzberg (2009) states that “managing is about dealing with change and complexity in a dynamic environment” (p. 25), underscoring the need to remain updated. Technological competence has become another critical component. As

institutions undergo digital transformation, leaders must understand and leverage technology for communication, decision-making, and knowledge sharing. Castells (2010) argues that “the network society is characterized by the ability to generate, process, and apply knowledge-based information” (p. 32), linking leadership currency to digital literacy. Currency also includes cultural and global awareness. Effective leaders are attuned to diverse perspectives and international developments. Goleman (2000) notes that “effective leaders are distinguished by a high degree of emotional intelligence, which includes adaptability and awareness” (p. 82). Currency requires a willingness to challenge outdated practices and introduce innovations. Kotter (2012) contends that “successful organizations are those that can adapt quickly to changing circumstances” (p. 45). In essence, leadership currency involves continuous learning, adaptability, and innovation, enabling leaders to sustain organizational relevance and competitiveness.

The Principle of Continuity in Institutional Leadership

The principle of continuity in institutional leadership refers to the sustained preservation and advancement of an organization's core values, mission, and long-term objectives, even as leadership transitions occur. Continuity ensures that institutions maintain direction during periods of change and build progressively on established foundations. In academic and professional associations, continuity is vital because it safeguards institutional memory, supports stability, and facilitates long-term planning. A central aspect of continuity is the preservation of organizational identity. Leaders serve as custodians of institutional values, ensuring that foundational principles remain intact while new initiatives develop. Handy (1993) affirms that “organizations need continuity of identity if they are to survive and prosper over time” (p. 67), emphasizing the importance of a consistent and enduring

character. Continuity also promotes stability during leadership transitions. Without it, changes in leadership can disrupt systems, weaken cohesion, and hinder progress. Continuity provides a framework through which new leaders can align with existing strategies while introducing innovation gradually. Drucker (2007) supports this view, noting that “management must preserve the institution's integrity while adapting to change” (p. 221), underscoring the balance between stability and transformation. Another significant dimension is the retention and transmission of institutional knowledge. Organizations accumulate valuable experiences and insights that must be passed on to successive leaders to inform future decisions. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) argue that “knowledge is created and expanded through social interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge” (p. 61), highlighting continuity's role in sustaining intellectual capital. Continuity also ensures strategic alignment and long-term goal attainment. Long-term initiatives, such as research, publications, or capacity-building programs, require sustained leadership commitment. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) contend that “sustainable leadership preserves and develops deep learning for all that spreads and lasts” (p. 17), emphasizing enduring organizational success. Importantly, continuity does not oppose innovation. Instead, it integrates change within a stable institutional framework. Fullan (2001) notes that “lasting improvement depends on continuity of leadership that links past, present, and future” (p. 45). Overall, continuity in leadership is essential for preserving identity, maintaining stability, and ensuring long-term institutional success.

Organizational Structure and Functions of APAS

The organizational structure and functions of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) form the framework through which the association advances African scholarship,

culture, and intellectual engagement. Organizational structure refers to the formal and informal arrangements of roles, responsibilities, and relationships within APAS, while functions denote the activities through which the association fulfills its mission. Understanding both elements is essential for evaluating how leadership, currency, and continuity contribute to institutional success. APAS operates through a hierarchical yet participatory structure with clearly defined authority, decision-making responsibilities, and coordination mechanisms. Leadership positions such as the President, Secretary-General, and committee heads ensure accountability and effective resource management. Bolman and Deal (2017) note that “organizational structures provide a framework for action, enabling coordination and control of complex activities” (p. 45), underscoring the importance of structure in institutional efficiency. Functionally, APAS engages in organizing conferences, supporting research, publishing scholarly works, and promoting interdisciplinary collaboration. These activities enhance knowledge production and reinforce the association's role in African studies. Mintzberg (1983) asserts that “organizations are defined by the sum total of their structured activities and the coordination required to achieve their objectives” (p. 23), highlighting how APAS functions support its strategic goals. Coordination and communication are central to APAS's structure. Clear communication channels among committees, members, and external partners facilitate decision-making and information flow. Galbraith (2014) argues that “the design of an organization's structure directly affects the flow of information, decision-making speed, and capacity to adapt to change” (p. 112), linking structure to organizational agility. Governance mechanisms, including constitutions, bylaws, and ethical guidelines, provide transparency, accountability, and stability. Daft (2016) explains that “formal structures and rules guide behavior, reduce ambiguity, and ensure alignment with organizational goals” (p. 78), illustrating their importance. APAS also relies on member

engagement, partnerships, and collaborative networks. Pfeffer and Salancik (2003) observe that “organizations depend on the external environment for resources, legitimacy, and information” (p. 89), showing the value of external relationships. Overall, APAS's structure and functions work together to support effective leadership, strategic planning, and sustained relevance in African scholarship.

Leadership Dynamics within APAS

Leadership dynamics within the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) refer to the interactions, patterns, and processes through which leaders steer the association toward its goals. These dynamics combine formal authority with informal influence and emphasize collaboration, shared responsibility, and the negotiation of power among members. Understanding them is vital for explaining how APAS sustains relevance, promotes engagement, and achieves institutional success. A major component of APAS's leadership dynamics is the balance between hierarchical authority and participatory decision-making. While elected officers such as the President and Secretary-General hold official authority, effective governance depends on the active involvement of committees, working groups, and members. Yukl and Mahsud (2010) affirm that “effective leadership involves the capacity to influence others while maintaining cooperative relationships” (p. 368), underscoring the relational character of leadership. Collaboration and delegation further shape APAS's leadership environment. By distributing responsibilities across committees, leaders draw upon members' diverse expertise and enhance operational effectiveness. Spillane (2006) reinforces this by stating that “leadership is distributed across multiple actors who jointly contribute to the achievement of organizational goals” (p. 22), a principle evident in APAS's structure. Adaptability is also central to APAS's leadership practice. Leaders must respond to shifting academic trends, funding conditions, and international

partnerships. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) state that “adaptive leadership mobilizes people to tackle tough challenges and thrive in changing environments” (p. 14), highlighting the need for strategic flexibility. Leadership dynamics are additionally shaped by APAS's culture and values. Through decisions and actions, leaders reinforce academic rigor, ethical conduct, and collective purpose. Schein (2010) observes that “leaders embed and transmit culture through their behavior, decisions, and role modeling” (p. 18). Overall, APAS's leadership dynamics integrate authority, collaboration, adaptability, and cultural stewardship, enabling the association to function effectively and advance African scholarship.

Currency as a Driver of Institutional Effectiveness

Currency in leadership refers to the ability of leaders and institutions to remain relevant, responsive, and adaptable to evolving internal and external environments. In the context of academic associations such as APAS, currency ensures that organizational practices, research agendas, and strategic initiatives align with contemporary trends and emerging knowledge systems. Leaders who maintain currency are better equipped to anticipate challenges, implement innovative solutions, and enhance institutional performance. One way currency drives effectiveness is by fostering informed decision-making. Leaders who stay current with academic, technological, and social developments can make strategic choices that enhance organizational outcomes. As March and Simon (1958) note, “decision-making in organizations is most effective when it is informed by relevant and timely information” (p. 144), highlighting the link between currency and operational efficiency. Currency also promotes adaptability, enabling institutions to respond to shifting member needs, funding priorities, and global academic standards. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) argue that “adaptive leaders mobilize people to face challenges that require learning and innovation” (p. 15), indicating

that staying current empowers leaders to guide organizations through dynamic environments successfully. Currency reinforces credibility and legitimacy. Leaders who demonstrate knowledge of emerging trends and best practices inspire confidence among members and external stakeholders. According to Kotter (2012), “leaders who are attuned to change and innovation are better positioned to align their organizations with evolving opportunities” (p. 67). Thus, currency is both a strategic and relational driver of institutional effectiveness, ensuring that associations like APAS remain competitive, relevant, and impactful.

Continuity and Institutional Stability

Continuity in leadership is a critical factor for ensuring institutional stability, particularly in academic associations such as APAS. It refers to the sustained implementation of policies, preservation of organizational values, and maintenance of strategic objectives over time. Continuity allows institutions to retain their identity, consolidate achievements, and prevent disruption during leadership transitions. Leaders who prioritize continuity ensure that progress made under previous administrations is not lost but rather built upon, fostering a stable organizational environment. Continuity contributes to stability by preserving institutional memory, which encompasses accumulated knowledge, best practices, and lessons learned. According to Barnard (1938), “organizations are cooperative systems that rely on the continuity of established norms and routines to function effectively” (p. 65), emphasizing the role of sustained practices in maintaining organizational coherence. This underscores the importance of institutional mechanisms that safeguard ongoing initiatives while enabling adaptive growth. Moreover, continuity enables long-term planning and goal attainment. Leaders who maintain consistent

policies and strategic directions create predictability, which enhances stakeholder confidence and reduces operational uncertainties. Hrebiniak (2005) asserts that “organizational performance improves when strategic actions are consistent over time and aligned with long-term objectives” (p. 102), illustrating the connection between continuity and institutional stability. Continuity fosters resilience, allowing institutions to navigate changes without compromising core functions. As Cameron and Whetten (2013) note, “stable organizations are those that effectively preserve core values while adapting to environmental shifts” (p. 88), highlighting the balance between preservation and flexibility. In this way, continuity serves as a stabilizing force, ensuring that academic associations like APAS remain coherent, credible, and capable of sustained success.

Interplay Between Currency and Continuity in Leadership

The interplay between currency and continuity in leadership reflects the balance between staying relevant to contemporary challenges and maintaining stability within an organization. Effective leaders recognize that institutional success requires both responsiveness to evolving circumstances and adherence to long-standing values, policies, and strategic objectives. In academic associations such as APAS, this interplay ensures that the institution remains adaptable without compromising its core mission and identity. Currency allows leaders to respond to emerging trends, innovations, and environmental changes, ensuring that organizational practices remain up-to-date and effective. At the same time, continuity provides the stability necessary for sustaining institutional memory, long-term projects, and strategic goals. As Weick and Sutcliffe (2007) note, “high-reliability organizations balance the need for flexibility in response to unexpected events with adherence to established procedures and routines” (p. 45), highlighting the necessity of integrating both dynamic adaptation and stability. Moreover, the interaction of

currency and continuity supports informed decision-making and institutional resilience. Leaders who are current in their knowledge and practices can implement change strategically while preserving essential organizational structures and values. Thompson (2010) asserts that “organizations that combine adaptive learning with consistent processes are more likely to achieve sustained performance” (p. 122), emphasizing that the synthesis of responsiveness and stability drives effectiveness. The interplay enhances credibility and trust within the organization. Members are more likely to engage with leaders who demonstrate both an awareness of modern developments and a commitment to the institution's enduring principles. According to Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson (2017), “successful leadership integrates innovation and tradition to maintain competitive advantage and institutional legitimacy” (p. 88), underscoring the strategic value of aligning currency with continuity. The interplay between currency and continuity ensures that leadership in academic associations like APAS is both adaptive and stable, fostering long-term effectiveness and organizational success.

Strategies for Enhancing Leadership Effectiveness in APAS

Enhancing leadership effectiveness in the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) requires deliberate strategies that strengthen decision-making, collaboration, and organizational impact. Effective leadership ensures that the association remains responsive to contemporary challenges, promotes academic excellence, and sustains institutional growth. Key strategies include capacity building, participatory governance, and strategic communication. Capacity building is essential for equipping leaders with the skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary to navigate complex academic and organizational environments. Training programs, workshops, and professional development initiatives enhance leaders' ability to make informed decisions and implement best practices. According to Yukl (2010), “effective

leaders develop the capabilities of their teams through training and mentoring to achieve both individual and organizational goals” (p. 315), underscoring the role of capacity enhancement in leadership effectiveness. Participatory governance is another critical strategy, as it fosters inclusivity, collaboration, and shared ownership of decisions. By engaging members in decision-making processes, leaders can leverage diverse perspectives and build commitment to the association's objectives. Osborn, Hunt, and Jauch (2002) note that “participative leadership strengthens organizational performance by increasing member engagement and accountability” (p. 180), emphasizing the positive impact of inclusive practices on leadership effectiveness. Strategic communication is vital for aligning members with the association's vision, mission, and goals. Clear, consistent, and transparent communication enhances trust, facilitates coordination, and reduces misunderstandings. Robbins and Judge (2019) highlight that “leaders who communicate effectively are better able to influence, inspire, and mobilize followers toward achieving organizational objectives” (p. 252). In APAS, effective communication ensures that initiatives are understood, supported, and successfully executed. Enhancing leadership effectiveness in APAS involves combining capacity building, participatory governance, and strategic communication. These strategies foster adaptability, collaboration, and alignment with institutional goals, thereby promoting sustained success.

Implications for Institutional Success

The implications of effective leadership for institutional success are profound, as leadership directly shapes organizational performance, sustainability, and relevance. In the context of academic associations such as APAS, leadership practices influence strategic direction, member engagement, and the association's ability to achieve its objectives. Leaders who balance currency and continuity, promote collaboration, and foster

innovation contribute significantly to institutional effectiveness. One implication of effective leadership is enhanced organizational performance through strategic alignment and goal achievement. Leaders who clearly articulate vision and implement coherent strategies ensure that institutional activities support long-term objectives. Kotter and Cohen (2002) assert that “successful organizations are those in which leadership mobilizes people around a clear vision and aligns their efforts toward achieving strategic goals” (p. 14), highlighting the critical link between leadership and organizational outcomes. Another implication is the strengthening of institutional resilience and adaptability. Leadership that embraces change while maintaining core values enables institutions to navigate uncertainties and respond effectively to emerging challenges. According to Ulrich, Zenger, and Smallwood (1999), “leaders who cultivate organizational resilience create conditions for sustained performance in dynamic environments” (p. 76), underscoring the role of leadership in ensuring stability alongside innovation. Leadership has implications for stakeholder trust and institutional legitimacy. Effective leaders inspire confidence among members, collaborators, and external partners, thereby enhancing engagement, support, and resource mobilization. Bennis and Nanus (2007) note that “leaders who are credible and consistent in their actions reinforce trust and legitimacy within their organizations” (p. 92), demonstrating how leadership directly impacts institutional reputation and sustainability. Leadership in APAS has multifaceted implications for institutional success, affecting performance, resilience, and legitimacy. By fostering strategic alignment, adaptability, and stakeholder trust, effective leadership ensures the association achieves its goals and sustains its relevance over time.

Conclusion

In conclusion, leadership within academic associations such as APAS is a critical determinant of institutional success, shaping organizational performance, sustainability, and relevance. The study of leadership in this context reveals the interconnected roles of currency and continuity, which together ensure that the association remains both adaptive to contemporary challenges and stable in its core mission. Effective leadership integrates vision, strategic decision-making, and relational influence to guide members toward achieving shared objectives while preserving institutional identity. The importance of balancing innovation with stability cannot be overstated. Leaders who maintain currency by staying informed of emerging trends and global developments can guide the association toward relevant and impactful initiatives, while continuity ensures that organizational values, policies, and long-term goals are preserved. As Drucker (1999) emphasizes, “the task of leadership is to create alignment of strengths...making the system's weaknesses irrelevant” (p. 17), highlighting the role of strategic focus in achieving sustained effectiveness. Furthermore, leadership effectiveness has implications for member engagement, institutional legitimacy, and organizational resilience. Leaders who foster collaboration, transparency, and ethical practices strengthen trust and participation, which are essential for long-term success. Yukl, Gordon, and Taber (2002) assert that “leaders who build strong networks and social capital enhance organizational performance and adaptability” (p. 161), demonstrating how relational dynamics contribute to institutional outcomes. Leadership in APAS serves as both a stabilizing and transformative force. By integrating currency, continuity, and strategic vision, leaders ensure that the association achieves its objectives, remains relevant within the scholarly community, and sustains its long-term growth and influence. Effective leadership is thus indispensable for the continued success of academic associations.

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5

TEN YEARS OF APAS: ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

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Introduction

The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) is an international Association. It is an academic and cultural organization established by Professor Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu in 2016 dedicated to promoting interdisciplinary African studies. Its mission includes fostering research, collaboration, and dissemination of African-centered knowledge across disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology, and education. The association emerged from the growing needs among African Scholars, researchers and cultural advocates to create a platform that would encourage research and intellectual engagements on African continent, language, culture, history and indigenous knowledge systems. Many scholars and researchers observed that for a long time African realities were often interpreted mainly through foreign perspectives., and most times denied existence. However, according to Kanu (2015), African philosophy has survived the systematic and ruthless attempt to deny African the fundamental human right of self -determination and self-identity. A cursory glance at the historical evolution of philosophy reveals that no “regional philosophy” has suffered the bruises that African philosophy on its way to survival, neither, German, Indian nor Oriental philosophy” (xvi). This shows the strength and resilience

of African philosophy. In view of this, Anthony Kanu, created APAS as a platform that will promote research, teaching and scholarly dialogue centered on African, “with Africa being the locale for the philosophical investigation” (xviii). The association organizes international conferences and publishes scholarly works aimed at retelling African stories from indigenous perspectives. For instance, its conferences emphasize on presenting Africa “in African voices” to counter external misrepresentations.

Since the Association came into existence it has worked towards fostering academic engagement through conferences, workshops, publications, community outreach and the promotion of indigenous languages and cultures. As the Association marks its tenth anniversary, it becomes important to reflect on its journey, evaluate its achievements, examine the challenges encountered and identify lessons that can guide its future development. Therefore, the paper studies APAS at ten focusing on the major achievements over the past decades, the challenges it has faced and the lessons learned from its experiences. Such reflection is necessary not only for the institutional growth but also for strengthening the broader mission of promoting African Studies.

Literature review

The discourse on African studies has increasingly shifted towards the decolonization of knowledge and the repositioning of Africa within global intellectual frameworks. Contemporary scholars emphasize the need to foreground African epistemologies, challenge Eurocentric paradigms and promote indigenous knowledge Systems. Iheka and Saba (2025) highlight the growing dynamism of African studies as a global field shaped by interconnected intellectual networks and transnational engagements. Their work underscores the importance of situating African scholarship within a “global African” framework that transcends geographic and disciplinary boundaries. Scholars like

Ogude (2024) argue for a critical re-evaluation of dominant epistemologies through decolonial approaches that prioritize voices from formerly colonized societies. This perspective aligns with broader calls for epistemic justice and the recognition of alternative knowledge systems within African studies.

The concept of transformation has also emerged as a central theme in African studies literature. Hudani (2024) conceptualizes transformation as a multidirectional process encompassing political, social and cultural change in post- colonial African societies. This perspective reflects the evolving nature of African scholarship as it engages with issues of statehood, identity and development in a rapidly changing global context. In addition, the literature highlights structural inequalities within global knowledge production. Studies reveal that African scholars often face marginalization, limited access to resources and systemic barriers in academic publishing. For example, recent research on African scholarship identifies persistent challenges such as gender inequality, limited institutional support and unequal participation in global research networks. These challenges underscore the importance of scholarly associations in providing platforms for visibility and collaboration.

Furthermore, the role of academic associations in advancing research and intellectual exchange has been widely acknowledged. Associations such as the African Studies Associations and regional bodies like APAS contribute to knowledge production through conferences, journals and collaborative networks. APAS for instance publishes journals such as; JASSD, Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development, OCHENDO: an African Journal of Innovative Studies, and AKU: An African Journal of Contemporary Research. These are outlets for disseminating African-centered research. Recent Scholarship also emphasizes

the need for interdisciplinary approaches in African Studies. Researchers argue that integrating perspectives from history, linguistics, sociology and digital humanities enhance the understanding of African realities. This interdisciplinary orientation is particularly relevant in addressing contemporary challenges such as digital inequality, language preservation and cultural sustainability.

Generally, the literature reveals a growing commitment to redefining African Studies through indigenous perspectives, collaborative scholarship and institutional support systems. However, persistent challenges related to funding, visibility and structural inequalities continue to shape the field. Within this context, the activities of APAS over the past decade has become particularly relevant, as they provide a framework for collective scholarly engagement, capacity building and promotion of African knowledge systems over time.

The achievements of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS)

The Association for the promotion of African studies (APAS) has made significant contributions to the development of African scholarship, intellectual development and the promotion of indigenous knowledge systems. Since its inception, the association has served as a vital platform for scholars interested in African studies and providing opportunities for research collaborations and cultural advocacy. Some of the major achievements of APAS are:

1. Promotion of African-Centered Scholarship

One of the most significant achievements of APAS is its sustained effort in promoting African-centered knowledge production across disciplines in the humanities, such as philosophy, history, religion, politics, and cultural studies. The association has created a platform where African scholars reinterpret Africa from indigenous

perspectives rather than Western frameworks (APAS, 2023; Kanu *et al.*, 2023)

2. Organization of Annual International Conferences

Another major achievement of APAS is organization of annual international conferences that bring together scholars from diverse disciplines and geographical locations. These conferences have served as critical platforms for intellectual exchange, interdisciplinary dialogue and collaborative research. Themes explored at these gatherings often address pressing African issues such as development, governance, identity and indigenous knowledge system. (Kanu, 2019; The Sun Nigeria) Notable examples of the conferences include:

The 6th International Conference at Tangaza University College in Nairobi, Kenya (2022).

The 2023 Conference at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The 9th International Conference (2025)

The 2026 Conference coming up at Veritas University, in Abuja.

These conferences provide platforms for interdisciplinary dialogue, and contribute to shaping African discourse globally (Ndubisi *et al.*, 2023; APAS, 2022; Onunkwo, 2025).

3. Academic Publishing of Journals and Books

APAS has contributed significantly to the publication of scholarly books and conference proceedings. These works are published and they create scholarly visibility internationally for participants. Ideas and knowledge shared at these conferences address key issues in African studies, gender related issues, religion, peacebuilding, governance and social-economic development. The availability of these publications has enriched cultural learning through the academic resources and ensured the documentation of African perspectives in global scholarship. (Kanu, 2020).

4. Reframing Africa's Global Narrative

A major intellectual contribution of APAS is its effort to redefine

Africa's image globally by promoting narratives “from within Africa.” Conferences and publications emphasize correcting distorted representations of Africa in global discourse (Ndubisi *et al.*, 2023).

5. Building a Pan-African Scholarly Network

APAS has successfully built a network of scholars, policymakers, and researchers across Africa and the diaspora, thereby encouraging collaborative research, mentorship and interdisciplinary engagements. This network has strengthened academic growth and created opportunities for intellectual exchange beyond national boundaries (APAS, 2023).

6. Capacity Building and Academic Mentorship

Through conferences, publications, and collaborative projects, APAS has contributed to:

Training early-career researchers, encouraging postgraduate researches, Providing mentorship opportunities within African academia. This has strengthened the development of the next generation of African scholars and ensured continuity in the production of knowledge capacity across African institutions (Kanu 2019).

7. Recognition of Excellence in African Scholarship

APAS conferences often include awards and recognitions, encouraging academic excellence and contributions to African studies and communities, promoting the gown and town alliance. For instance, awards presented at recent conferences highlight the association's role in motivating scholars and stakeholders (Onunkwo, 2025).

8. Interdisciplinary and Development-Oriented Research

APAS promotes researches that address African development and sustainability, integrating fields such as education, governance, religion, technology and artificial intelligence to provide practical

solutions to African challenges (APAS, 2023).

Summarily, APAS has emerged as a key intellectual hub in African studies, distinguished by its commitment to indigenous scholarship, global academic engagement, and the reconstruction of African identity in knowledge production. Its achievements over the past decade demonstrate its growing influence in both academic and policy-oriented discourses (Kanu et al., 2023; Ndubisi *et al.*, 2023).

The challenges of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies

Challenges of APAS includes

1. Financial Constraints and Funding Instability

A major challenge facing APAS is limited and inconsistent funding. Like many scholarly associations in Africa, APAS relies heavily on conference fees and individual member's contributions, which restricts its ability to expand programs, sponsor research, and sustain large-scale projects (Kanu *et al.*, 2023; Iheka, 2025).

2. Limited Institutional and Governmental Support

APAS has struggled with insufficient support from universities and government agencies across Africa. Weak institutional backing affects its capacity to influence policy and limits its integration into national and continental development frameworks (Ogude, 2024; Ndubisi *et al.*, 2023).

3. Infrastructural and Technological Barriers

The digital divide and infrastructural deficits across many African countries hinder effective participation in APAS activities, especially virtual conferences and collaborative research initiatives (Hudani, 2024). Issues such as poor internet connectivity and limited access to digital resources remain persistent obstacles.

4. Low Visibility in Global Academic Space

Despite its contributions, APAS still faces limited global visibility and recognition compared to established Western academic bodies. This affects the international dissemination and citation impact of its research outputs (Iheka, 2025; Ogude, 2024).

5. Fragmentation of African Scholarship

African scholarship remains fragmented along linguistic, regional, and disciplinary lines, making collaboration difficult. APAS has worked to bridge these divides, but structural barriers such as Anglophone–Francophone differences continue to pose challenges (Ndubisi et al., 2023).

6. Brain Drain and Limited Human Capacity

The migration of skilled academics out of Africa (brain drain) reduces the pool of active contributors to APAS initiatives. This affects mentorship, research productivity, and the sustainability of scholarly networks (Hudani, 2024).

7. Sustainability of Conferences and Programs

Although APAS has successfully organized conferences, maintaining consistency and long-term sustainability remains challenging due to funding, logistics, and fluctuating participation levels (Kanu *et al.*, 2023).

8. Policy Impact Limitations

Another challenge is the gap between academic research and policy implementation. While APAS generates valuable insights, translating these into actionable policies within African governments has been limited (Ogude, 2024).

9. Competition with Established Academic Bodies

APAS operates in a space where older and better-funded international associations dominate, making it difficult to attract

global partnerships, funding opportunities, and high-impact collaborations (Iheka, 2025).

The challenges facing APAS highlight broader structural issues within African academia, including funding deficits, infrastructural limitations, and global inequality in knowledge production. However, these challenges also underscore the importance of strengthening institutions like APAS to ensure sustainable growth and deeper impact in African and global scholarship (Kanu *et al.*, 2023; Hudani, 2024).

Lessons Learned from the First Decade of APAS

APAS has come a long way, achieving a significant milestone in promoting learning, interdisciplinary research, and African indigenous knowledge methodology in solving African existential problems. APAS has promoted scholarship on African philosophy and culture, history and African lifestyle. Worthy of note, and very dear to the heart and creative ingenuity of the founder is the ideology of *Igwebuike*, as an operative condition of African philosophy, religion and culture. While espousing the linguistic and ontological analysis of *Igwebuike*, Kanu, the founder and proponent, highlights *Igwebuike* “as a unifying concept of African thought, especially, that aspect concerning the human person's conception of the spiritual and material universe in which he or she lives”. (Kanu, 2021, p.19). *Igwebuike* becomes a standard of knowledge sharing in scholarship, giving rise to collaboration, mentorship, complementarity, unity, and solidarity, among scholars and APAS membership. *Igwebuike* has a wide range of ontological implications prompting African scholars to collaborate in exploring its diverse foundations. Kanu (2021) stresses the fact that “collaboration with the other is a ground for becoming, as everything takes a bit of another to make itself. It is a ground for staying alive and transforming the universe” (22). The idea of *Igwebuike* in African studies promotes humanism and communal living, Scholars through their research fashion out

better ways of fostering cultural harmony, and collective strength.

APAS ideology promotes humanism, and the wellbeing of man in the African cosmology focusing on the value and agency of humans in African contexts. Scholars learn to understand and amplify African experiences and perspectives resting on being human and on community respect and care for others. Ndubuisi (2023) posits that “the philosophy of humanism concerns itself with social justice, non-violence, equality of the human person, human freedom and world peace” (p. 22). These virtues and ethics as guiding principles and knowledge are at the core of APAS mission and vision and so provide the core of intellectual and pragmatic discourse in the last one decade of its existence.

Conclusion

The studies of African philosophy and African indigenous knowledge under the aegis of APAS is a form of rebirth of African identity, knowledge and self-worth. It brings back the honour of African civilization and enlightenment, despite the negative perception and delineation of Africa by the colonizers who qualified it as an impenetrable dark race, without culture or philosophy. Through the instrumentality of APAS, the founder, Professor Ikechukwu Kanu has rekindled hope and resilience in the authenticity of African thinking and knowledge system. According to the founder, expressing his optimism that “amidst great challenges, African philosophy has, with a swaggering gait, migrated from bedside consultations to wider social consultations that privilege discourses about everyday African life issues. It is studied in many universities in Africa, and has, in fact, moved beyond the shores of Africa, finding its way into the curriculum of many universities in Europe and America, where it is taught by both African and non- African professors” (p. xvi). It is believed that APAS is a nature's gift to African scholarship, as it grows from strength to strength in its global alliance, partnership and collaboration.

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SECTION II

Philosophical Foundations and African Worldviews in APAS Discourse

6

AFRICAN ETHICS AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN APAS DISCOURSE

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Introduction

In the last three decades or so, attempts have been made by contemporary African philosophers to give sustained reflective attention to African moral ideas. But, like African philosophy itself, the ideas and beliefs of the African society that bear on ethical conduct have not been given elaborate investigation and clarification and thus, stand in real need of profound and extensive analysis and interpretation. This entry is intended to make some contribution to the understanding of African ethical and moral thinking in APAS. The entry makes the African moral language its point of departure for the language of morality gives insight into the moral thinking or ideas of the society. The centrality of the notions of character and moral personhood which are inspired by the African moral language is given a prominent place. The humanistic foundations and features of African ethics and moral philosophy are extensively discussed in **Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS)**. The concern of this paper is to discuss African ethics and moral philosophy that can lead to peace and unity in APAS. The paper argues that this ethics is born out of African ontology which is community-oriented and looks beyond the individual to the community. It posits that ethics is not distinct from morality and religion: it is an ethics that is lived as well as professed. Therefore, the paper asserts that if this African ethics is revitalized in the APAS society, it will be a morally upright society as well as a socially ordered society with peace and tranquility.

Social order in APAS with traditional ethics is the traditional religion that protects the wellbeing of the people in the society.

Ethics is the study of moral values, principles, conduct and encompasses diverse approaches across cultures. This explores African and moral philosophy drawing heavily on the work of prominent Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye (Gyekye, 1996). Gyekye emphasizes the communitarian nature of African ethics while acknowledging the intrinsic value of the individual. African ethics is fundamentally character-based, prioritizing the quality of an individual's character as paramount in moral life. Good character is the essence of the moral system shaping choices to obey moral rules and fulfill duties. All actions originate from a person's character wrongdoing is directly attributed to bad character.

What are African Ethics and Ethics in-itself?

The Africa ethics is embedded in the ideas and beliefs about what is right or wrong, what is a good or bad character; it is also embedded in the conceptions of satisfactory social relations and attitudes held by the members of the society; it is embedded, furthermore, in the forms or patterns of behavior that are considered by the members of the society to bring about social harmony and cooperative living, justice and fairness. African societies as organized and functioning human communities have undoubtedly evolved ethical systems-ethical values, principles and rules-intended to guide social and moral behavior. This entry is intended to make some contribution to the understanding of African ethical thinking. The word Ethic is derive from Greek word “ethos” which means custom, conduct, code of conduct, etc. Now, what then are ethics, ethics borders on two things? Ethics is also seen as the branch of philosophy which deals with the morality of human actions. Ethics, according to Joseph I. Omoregbe, is “the branch of philosophy which deals with the morality of human actions; or is the branch of philosophy which studies the norms of human behaviour” (Pp. 3-4). These human

actions and behaviour are governed by a set of norms or code of conduct within any given society. Those actions which benefit people and are accepted by the society could be called 'good' and those that bring harm to the people and society could be called 'bad'. This implies that African traditional ethics places emphasis on goodness of character. A good man is a man of good character who refrains from vices, such as killing, stealing, adultery and disrespect for elders, telling lies, ridiculing deformed or unfortunate people, incest and cruelty or doing harm in any way to other people.

What is Moral Philosophy?

Moral Philosophy in APAS often discussed in Philosophical and academic contexts is the systematic study of the nature of duty, morality and the principles governing right conduct, aiming to guide actions toward human happiness. It explores ethical theories like Kantian deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics to determine moral just and fair. Using moral philosophy to address social issues like the justice of taxation, freedom of expression and mandatory education, often overlapping with political philosophy.

“Ethics’ and ‘Morality’

The term 'ethics' is technically used by philosophers to mean a philosophical study of morality-morality understood as a set of social rules, principles, norms that guide or are intended to guide the conduct of people in a society and as beliefs about right and wrong conduct as well as good or bad character. Even though morality is the subject matter of ethics, it is most often used interchangeably with 'ethics'. Thus, moral principles and rules may emerge from or evolved by a particular human society; even so, they are principles that can-and do-apply to all human societies inasmuch as they respond to basic human needs, interests and purposes. After the reflective activities of the individual moral thinkers, the beliefs and presuppositions of a people about right and wrong conduct good and bad character-all of which featured in the moral life of the people prior to the activities of moral thinkers-

remain substantially or generally unscathed; they continue to constitute the moral framework within which the members of the society function.

Importance of Community

African societies emphasize the importance of community in shaping moral values and identity. The community provides a framework for social interaction, transmits cultural norms and fosters a sense of belonging. Key concepts include: **Ubuntu**: A Nguni Bantu term often translated as “humanity towards others,” Ubuntu emphasizes interconnectedness, compassion and respect for all persons. It encapsulates the idea that a person is a person through other people. **Communalism**, this principle highlights the shared responsibility for the community's well-being. Individuals are expected to contribute to the common good and prioritize the interests of the community over purely selfish desires. **Ancestral veneration**, the belief in the continued influence of ancestors on the living community reinforces social and moral norms.

The Social and Humanitarian Nature of African Ethics

Gyekye argues that African morality with its focus on the welfare of each community member is inherently a social morality (Gyekye, 1996). Social life is natural to humans and individuals are naturally oriented towards others. This necessitates a social ethic in contrast to an ethic of individualism. Human limitations necessitate cooperation as expressed in the proverb “Man is not a palm-tree that he should be complete” (Gyekye, 1996). The need for reciprocity is emphasized in maxims like “The right arm washes the left arm and the left arm washes the right arm” (Gyekye, 1996). Refusing to help others can result in being denied help oneself? Social ethic demands mutuality and reciprocity, recognizing human vulnerability. Altruism is a fundamental moral value. Gyekye proposes a “moderate communitarianism” that balances the importance of community with the recognition of individual value (Gyekye, 1997). He argues that individuals are not merely

absorbed into the community but possess inherent dignity and rights. This perspective is supported by the recognition of individual personhood and moral autonomy within a social context. Individuals are held responsible for their actions and are expected to contribute to the well-being of the community, implying individual agency and moral responsibility.

Menkiti's Philosophy of Community and Personhood

Menkiti (1940-2019) was a Nigerian philosopher who became one of the most influential voices in African philosophy during the late 20th century. Born in Nigeria and educated in both Africa and the United States, Menkiti spent much of his career bridging traditional African thought with contemporary philosophical discussions. He taught at Wellesley College for many years and was also a published poet. At the heart of Menkiti's philosophy lies a fundamental question that might seem obvious at first: What does it mean to be a person? In Western philosophy, the answer often focuses on individual characteristics like rationality, consciousness, or self-awareness. But Menkiti challenged this individualistic view by drawing from traditional African ethical systems, particularly those found in Igbo and other West African cultures. His revolutionary insight was that personhood isn't something you're simply born with-it's something you achieve through your relationships and contributions to your community. "*I Am Because We Are*": The Community-First Approach Menkiti's most famous contribution to philosophy centers on what scholars call "strong communitarianism."

He argued that in traditional African thought, the community comes first and individuals become who they are through their participation in communal life. Your identity—who you are as a person—develops through fulfilling your obligations to family, neighbors and the broader community. One of Menkiti's most striking claims is that personhood must be earned. In his view, biological humans aren't automatically full persons in the moral

sense. Instead, personhood is “attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through the discharge of the various obligations defined by one's stations.” A newborn baby is certainly human and deserving of care and protection, but they haven't yet developed the capacity for moral responsibility or community contribution. Similarly, an adult who consistently fails to meet their social obligations—who harms others or refuses to participate in communal life—has in some sense diminished their personhood. Conversely, elders who have spent decades contributing to their communities, raising families, sharing wisdom and fulfilling their responsibilities are considered to have achieved the fullest expression of personhood. This is why many African cultures hold elders in such high regard—they represent personhood at its most complete.

Moral Personhood in African and Moral Philosophy in APAS

Let me start the analysis of moral personhood in African moral philosophy with a statement made by Ifeanyi Menkiti, an African philosopher from Nigeria: The various societies found in traditional Africa routinely accept this fact that personhood is the sort of thing which has to be attained and is attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through the discharge of the various obligations defined by one's stations. It is the carrying out of these obligations that transforms one from its status of early childhood marked by an absence of moral function *into the person-status of later years, marked by a widened maturity of ethical sense—an ethical maturity without which personhood is conceived as eluding one.* (Ifeanyi Menkiti, 1984: 176). Menkiti's statement adumbrates a conception of moral personhood which will now be discussed in some detail. A profound appreciation of the high standards of the morality of an individual's behavior would elicit the judgment, “he is truly a person”. It does not mean however, that personhood in this model of humanity is innate but is earned in the ethical arena: it is the individual's moral achievement that earns him the status of a person. Every individual is capable of

becoming a person inasmuch as he has capacity for virtue-for performing morally right actions-and should be treated (at least potentially) as a morally responsible agent. The meaning of the maxim "God created every human (to be) good" is not too clear; it may be interpreted in two ways.

Social, Not Individualistic in Ethics

A humanistic morality, whose central focus is the concern for the welfare and interest of each member of community, would expectably be a *social* morality which is enjoined by social life itself. Such is the nature of African morality. Social life or sociality is natural to the human being because every human being is born into an existing human society. A traditional Akan thinker asserted in a previously quoted proverb that says that 'When a human being descends from the heavens, he [or she] descends into a human town or a human society.' The point of the maxim is that the human being is social *by nature*. The word *politikon* used in Aristotle's dictum means 'social' rather than 'political'. Being a member of the human community by nature, the individual is naturally related or oriented toward other persons and must have relationships with them. The dependency noted in the foregoing proverb is to be put down to the limited nature of the possibilities of the human individual. Man is not a palm-tree that he should be complete (or, self-sufficient). The proverb points up the inadequacies of the human being that make it impossible for him to fulfill his life, socially, economically, emotionally, psychologically, and so on. It is evidently true that in the context of the society, in terms of functioning or flourishing in a human society the human individual is not sufficient for her capacities, talents and dispositions are not adequate for the realization of her potential and basic needs. It is only through cooperation with other human beings that the needs and goals of the individual can be fulfilled. The right arm washes the left arm and the left arm washes the right arm. Since you refused to help someone who needed your help or someone who was in distress

you are likely to meet the same refusal or denial when you need some help-perhaps more help at that.

The morality of a shared life as in any community thus, demands mutuality or reciprocity as a moral mandate in a world in which human beings weak and limited in many ways are subject to vulnerable situations. A human being needs help. The reason why you should help someone in need is also given in the following maxim among others: Your neighbor's situation is potentially your situation. Two important things about this maxim need to be pointed out. Social morality thus, demands mutual reciprocity as a moral mandate in a world in which human beings can easily be overcome-even overwhelmed-by the contingencies of the human condition and existence. When something, such as a needle sticks into your own flesh or body you feel the pain. There are many African folktales whose conclusions are intended to affirm the values of social morality-the kind of morality that is centered on human relations. The social character of morality requires that the individual member of the society, ever mindful of his interests, adjust those interests to the interests and needs of others. This requires him to give due consideration to the interests and welfare of others. Necessarily embedded in a human community, the individual person has a *dual* moral responsibility: for him or herself as an individual and for others as co-members of the community with whom she shares certain basic needs and interests.

The Notion of the Common Good

The notion of the common good features manifestly in African ethics. It can therefore be interpreted as symbolizing the *common good*, the good of all the individuals within a society. The common good is not a surrogate for the sum of the various individual goods. It does not consist of or derive from the goods and preferences of particular individuals. It is that which is essentially good for human beings as such embracing the needs that are *basic* to the enjoyment

and fulfillment of the life of each individual. If the common good is achieved then the individual good is also achieved. The common good embraces these goods and more. The institution of government or legal system is surely based on a common understanding of the need for societal values, social order and social peace. It is, thus, pretty clear that the common good is that which inspires the creation of a moral, social, political and legal system for enhancing the well-being of people in a community. The common good is a notion that is conceptually affiliated to the notion of community and, thus, to the notion of human society as such. The common good is an essential feature of the ethics espoused by the communitarian African society. The pursuit of the good of all is the goal of the communitarian society which the African society is. A sense of the common good-which is a core of shared values-is the underlying presupposition of African social morality.

Humanity and Brotherhood

These two concepts, humanity and brotherhood, feature prominently in African social and moral thought and practice. They are among the moral or human values that constitute the basic-perhaps the ultimate-criteria that not only motivate but also justify human actions that affect other human beings. In African terms, humanity is not just an anthropological term; it is also a moral term when it comes to considering the relations between members of the human species. The term 'brotherhood' has come to refer to an association of men and/or women with common aims and interests. But the notion of brotherhood is essentially a moral notion, for it is about the relations between individual human beings that make for their own interest and well-being.

Moral Values and Principles:

African and moral philosophy emphasizes a range of values and principles, including respect for life, respect for persons, honesty,

truthfulness, justice, fairness, hospitality, and generosity. These values guide ethical conduct and contribute to a harmonious society. **Morality of Duty over Rights:** Unlike many Western systems, African ethical thought often focuses on moral obligations and duties to the community and others (e.g., family, neighbors, and strangers) rather than solely on rights. A moral conception of personhood is held in African ethics, the conception that there are certain basic moral norms and ideals to which the conduct of the individual human being, if he is a person, ought to conform. The recognition in the African ethical traditions of all human beings as brothers by reason of our common humanity is indeed a lofty moral ideal that must be cherished and made a vital or robust feature of global ethics in our contemporary world.

The Ethics of Duty, Not of Rights

African ethics and moral philosophy is a humanitarian ethics, the kind of ethics that places a great deal of emphasis on human welfare. The concern for human welfare may be said to constitute the hub of the African axiological wheel. This orientation of African ethics takes its impulse, undoubtedly, from the humanistic outlook that characterizes traditional African life and thought. Humanism-the doctrine that sees human needs and interests as fundamental-thus constitutes the foundation of African ethics. The natural rationality of the individual immediately involves one in some social and moral roles in the form of obligations, commitments, and duties (or, responsibilities) to other members of his or her community which the individual must fulfill. There appears to be a conceptual tie-perhaps also a practical tie-between the *social ethic* prescribed by the communitarian ethos and the *ethic of duty* mandated by the same ethos. A morality of duty is one that requires each individual to demonstrate concern for the interests of others. The ethical values of compassion, solidarity, reciprocity, cooperation, interdependence, and social well-being, which are counted among the principles of the communitarian

morality, primarily impose duties on the individual with respect to the community and its members. All these considerations elevate the notion of duties to a status similar to that given to the notion of rights in Western ethics. African ethics does not give short-shrift to rights as such; nevertheless, it does not give obsessional or blinkered emphasis on rights. It would be clear from the foregoing discussion that African ethics takes a stand that would be against what are referred to as acts of supererogation. Thus, it is neither morally obligatory nor forbidden; therefore, it is not wrong, so the argument concludes, to omit or neglect performing it, even though it is good and commendable by virtue of its value and consequences on others if it is performed. It is supposed to be a meritorious act and yet optional, one that may be performed if the spirit moves you, but need not be performed.

Thus, a distinction is made in Western literature between moral duty and a supererogatory act, the former considered obligatory and moral duty 'proper' and the latter nonobligatory and optional, not being a 'proper' moral duty. We would normally think that there is a moral connection between 'good' and 'ought', and that therefore a morally good act ought to be performed: if an act is morally good, then it ought to be performed. African morality which is humanitarian, social, and duty-oriented rather than rights-oriented morality does not make a distinction between a moral duty and a supererogatory duty—one that is beyond the call of duty and so does not have to be performed. In the light of our common humanity, it would not be appropriate—in fact it would demean our humanity—to place limits to our moral duties or responsibilities. The African humanitarian ethic makes all people objects of moral concern, implying that our moral sensitivities should be extended to all people, irrespective of their cultures or societies.

Duty over Rights and Supererogation:

African ethics and moral philosophy is being humanitarian and social prioritizes duties over rights. The natural sociality of human

beings prescribes an ethic of duty (or responsibility). Community life mandates a morality weighted on duty to others and the community. Duties are seen as arising from needs rather than rights. People fulfill duties because of the needs and welfare of others. African ethics also rejects the concept of supererogation (acts “beyond the call of duty”). SSHumanitarian ethics aim to encompass both the morality of duty and moral ideals, such as compassion and benevolence. Such a morality makes no distinction between obligatory and optional acts, insisting that any morally good act conducing to the well-being of others should be considered a duty. This is reflected in the observation that in some African cultures, offering hospitality to guests is not seen as extraordinary but as a normal expectation (Campbell, cited in Gyekye, 1996).

Recommendations

African ethics in APAS within African philosophy and African studies is recommended as a humanist, community centered system prioritizing harmonious relationships, duty and character over abstract rules. It emphasizes Ubuntu (“I am because we are”). Virtue ethics and communal well-being is often distinguishing itself from western individualism. This approach encourages viewing African moral philosophy not merely as an anthropological artifact, but as a living, constructive framework for contemporary ethical challenges. African morality is founded on humanism, the doctrine that considers human interests and welfare as basic to the thought and action of the people. It is this doctrine as understood in African ethics and moral philosophy in APAS, thought that has given rise to the communitarian ethos of the African society. But central or basic to the African morality is character for the success of the moral life is held to be a function of the quality of an individual's personal life.

Conclusion

African ethics in APAS (African philosophy and African studies) discourse and conclude that moral philosophy is primarily

communitarian, humanistic and relational rather than individualistic or solely divine command based. This is centered on Ubuntu shared humanity and character and it prioritizes duty and social harmony over rights, aiming to foster interconnectedness and collective well-being. African and moral philosophy as articulated by Kwame Gyekye, provides a rich and nuanced perspective on ethics. It highlights the importance of community while also recognizing the intrinsic value of the individual. Understanding these ethical traditions, we can broaden our understanding of morality and contribute to a more just and compassionate world. African morality is founded on humanism, the doctrine that considers human interests and welfare as basic to the thought and action of the people. It is this doctrine as understood in African moral thought that has given rise to the communitarian ethos of the African society. Social or community life is thus, not optional to the human being. African moral philosophy emphasizes a range of values and principles, including respect for life, respect for persons, honesty, truthfulness, justice, fairness, hospitality, and generosity. These values guide ethical conduct and contribute to a harmonious society. Traditional African moral philosophy offers valuable insights for contemporary ethical discourse. Gyekye's moderate communitarianism provides a framework for balancing individual rights with social responsibilities.

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7

METAPHYSICS, ONTOLOGY, AND AFRICAN WORLDVIEWS: A DECADE OF APAS CONTRIBUTIONS

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Introduction

Metaphysics and ontology remain central subfields of philosophy concerned with the fundamental nature of reality and being. While metaphysics broadly investigates ultimate questions about existence, causality, space, time, and possibility, ontology focuses more specifically on the nature and categories of being (Loux & Crisp, 2017). In recent decades, African philosophers have increasingly contributed to these discourses by articulating indigenous conceptual frameworks and critically engaging dominant Western paradigms. The emergence and sustained work of the Association for Philosophy and African Studies (APAS) over the past decade has provided a structured platform for advancing scholarly reflections on metaphysics and ontology within African worldviews.

African worldviews are typically characterized by an integrative conception of reality in which the spiritual, communal, and material dimensions of existence are interwoven (Mbiti, 1969). Unlike Cartesian dualism, many African ontologies affirm a holistic understanding of being that situates individuals within a dynamic network of relationships involving ancestors, divinities,

nature, and community (Gyekye, 1995). This relational ontology challenges reductive materialism and affirms a layered conception of reality that includes visible and invisible realms (Wiredu, 1998). Over the last decade, APAS has facilitated scholarly dialogues that retrieve, reinterpret, and systematize these indigenous metaphysical insights within contemporary philosophical debates.

The contributions of APAS have also addressed longstanding debates concerning ethnophilosophy, professional philosophy, and the methodological status of African metaphysics (Hountondji, 1996). By promoting rigorous research, peer-reviewed publications, and interdisciplinary engagement, APAS has helped reposition African ontology as a legitimate and globally relevant philosophical enterprise. Scholars within the association have explored themes such as personhood, vital force, communalism, causality, and destiny, demonstrating how African metaphysical categories enrich broader philosophical inquiry (Gyekye, 1995; Mbiti, 1969).

Furthermore, the last decade has witnessed renewed interest in decolonizing knowledge systems and recovering indigenous epistemologies. Within this context, APAS has contributed to reframing African metaphysics not merely as cultural heritage but as a dynamic intellectual tradition capable of addressing contemporary global concerns, including identity, ethics, and ecological responsibility. By fostering critical engagement and theoretical development, APAS has strengthened the academic legitimacy of African worldviews in global metaphysical and ontological discourse.

Conceptual Clarification

A proper understanding of metaphysics, ontology, and African worldviews is essential for evaluating a decade of scholarly contributions by the Association for Philosophy and African

Studies (APAS). Although these terms are interrelated, they possess distinct philosophical meanings that require clarification within both global and African intellectual traditions.

Metaphysics is traditionally defined as the branch of philosophy that studies the ultimate structure of reality. It addresses questions concerning existence, causation, identity, modality, time, and the relationship between mind and matter (Loux & Crisp, 2017). Aristotle's classical formulation of metaphysics as the study of "being qua being" continues to influence contemporary discourse (Van Inwagen, 2018). In modern philosophy, metaphysics extends beyond speculative inquiry to include analytic rigor in examining possible worlds, universals, particulars, and substance. Within African philosophical reflection, metaphysics often encompasses spiritual dimensions of reality, including beliefs about God, ancestors, destiny, and vital force (Mbiti, 1969).

Ontology, while closely related to metaphysics, is more narrowly concerned with the nature and categories of being. It asks what exists and how entities are classified within a structured framework of reality (Quine, 1969). Ontological inquiry may explore whether abstract entities, moral values, or spiritual beings possess real existence. In African thought, ontology frequently emphasizes relationality and communal existence rather than isolated individuality (Gyekye, 1995). Being is not conceived merely as substance but as dynamic participation within a network of forces and relationships. This relational ontology contrasts with certain strands of Western individualism and substance metaphysics.

African worldviews refer to the comprehensive systems of beliefs, values, symbols, and practices through which African societies interpret reality. These worldviews integrate cosmology, morality, religion, and social life into a unified vision of existence (Wiredu, 1998). Rather than separating sacred and secular domains, African

worldviews typically affirm a holistic understanding of life in which the material and spiritual realms interact continuously (Mbiti, 1969). Personhood, for example, is often understood communally, where identity is constituted through relationships with family, community, and ancestors (Gyekye, 1995).

Thus, in this conceptual framework, APAS contributions over the past decade can be understood as systematic efforts to articulate African metaphysical and ontological categories in dialogue with global philosophy. By clarifying concepts such as being, personhood, causality, and destiny, scholars have demonstrated that African worldviews offer coherent philosophical systems rather than merely cultural expressions. Conceptual clarity thus provides the foundation for assessing the theoretical significance of African metaphysics within contemporary scholarship.

Theoretical Framework: Afrocentric and Communication Ontological Perspectives

The integration of Afrocentric theory and communication ontology provides a robust framework for understanding African-centered conceptions of reality and meaning-making. Afrocentricity, developed by MolefiKete Asante, is grounded in the principle that African experiences, histories, and cultural values must serve as the starting point for analysis (Asante, 2009). Rather than interpreting African realities through Eurocentric paradigms, Afrocentricity centers agency, identity, and epistemology within African historical and cultural contexts. This theoretical repositioning has profound ontological implications because it challenges dominant assumptions about what constitutes reality, knowledge, and communication.

Ontologically, Afrocentric thought is rooted in relationality and communal interdependence. Being is not conceived as an isolated, autonomous substance but as fundamentally constituted through relationships with community, ancestors, nature, and the divine.

This orientation resonates with African philosophical interpretations of Ubuntu, where personhood is realized through participation in communal life (Metz, 2014). Ontology, in this sense, is not merely a classification of entities but an account of lived, interconnected existence. African ontological perspectives thus reject atomistic individualism and affirm a dynamic, participatory model of reality.

Within communication studies, ontology shapes how communication itself is understood. Western models often conceptualize communication as the transmission of information between independent senders and receivers. In contrast, Afrocentric communication ontology views communication as constitutive of community and identity (Miike & Yin, 2022). Meaning emerges dialogically and relationally, reflecting shared histories and collective consciousness. Communication is therefore not merely instrumental but ontological—it sustains being and reinforces communal bonds. This perspective foregrounds narrative, orality, symbolism, and performative traditions embedded in African societies.

Recent scholarship in African communication theory emphasizes the need to decolonize communication research by interrogating its ontological foundations (Chilisa, 2019; Miike & Yin, 2022). Decolonial approaches argue that communication theories must reflect indigenous worldviews and epistemologies rather than universalizing Western experiences. From this standpoint, Afrocentric ontology provides both a corrective and constructive paradigm. It critiques the marginalization of African communicative practices while offering alternative models grounded in reciprocity, spirituality, and collective responsibility.

Furthermore, Afrocentric ontological perspectives contribute to broader philosophical discourse by challenging binary oppositions such as subject/object and individual/community. They promote

complementary frameworks that acknowledge plurality and mutual dependence within reality. Consequently, integrating Afrocentric and communication ontological perspectives expands theoretical possibilities for understanding human interaction in culturally grounded ways.

Historical Evaluation of African Metaphysical Thought

African metaphysical thought has a long and dynamic intellectual history that predates colonial intervention, rooted in indigenous cosmologies, spiritual practices, and communal worldviews. Traditional African societies developed complex metaphysical systems to explain existence, causality, personhood, and ultimate reality long before engagement with Western philosophy. These systems were often transmitted through oral traditions, ritual practices, art, and communal activities, rather than through written philosophical treatises. As a result, much of African metaphysical thought was historically marginalized or misinterpreted by colonial scholars who assumed that written texts were the only valid form of philosophical expression (Mudimbe, 1988).

Early post-colonial scholarship sought to recover and legitimize African metaphysical contributions by demonstrating that African worldviews contain coherent ontological and cosmological frameworks. Pioneering figures such as John S. Mbiti emphasized that African concepts of reality are holistic and relational, integrating the spiritual with the material and foregrounding the interconnectedness of community, ancestors, and nature (Mbiti, 1969). Mbiti's work challenged Western dichotomies between the sacred and the secular, showing that African metaphysics inherently encompasses both. Similarly, Kwame Gyekye critiqued reductive characterizations of African thought as undifferentiated communitarianism, arguing instead for nuanced ontological categories that recognize individuality within communal contexts (Gyekye, 1995).

The historical evaluation of African metaphysical thought also includes critical responses from African scholars skeptical of ethnophilosophical interpretations. Paulin Hountondji, for example, questioned essentialist readings of African philosophy that treated communal beliefs as homogeneous or unchanging (Hountondji, 1996). He argued for rigorous philosophical methods that avoid romanticizing indigenous thought while still acknowledging its intellectual depth. This critical turn helped to situate African metaphysics within broader philosophical debates rather than confining it to cultural anthropology.

More recent scholarship has expanded the historical scope by integrating contemporary theoretical tools and interdisciplinary perspectives. Authors like John Akpan and Oluwole (2018) examine African metaphysics through lenses such as phenomenology and critical theory, highlighting how historical metaphysical systems negotiate identity, agency, and power in post-colonial contexts. Their work emphasizes that African metaphysical thought is not static but evolves in dialogue with global intellectual currents while remaining rooted in indigenous epistemologies.

Contemporary research also recognizes the historical interplay between African metaphysics and religion, particularly how indigenous cosmologies have shaped expressions of Christianity and Islam in sub-Saharan Africa. Scholars such as Sarpong (2019) analyze how metaphysical concepts like ancestral agency and spiritual causation persist in modern religious practices, revealing continuity between traditional thought and contemporary belief systems. These studies demonstrate that African metaphysical categories continue to be relevant in understanding lived religious experience.

In addition, recent works have explored the epistemological implications of African metaphysical thought for decolonial theory and global philosophy. Philosophers such as Chimakonam and Iroegbu (2021) argue that African ontologies offer alternative approaches to issues like personhood, time, and consciousness that challenge dominant Western paradigms. By centering African metaphysical principles, they propose models of reality that foreground rationality, complementarity, and procession becoming.

Decade of APAS Contributions to African Ontology (2015-2025)

Over the past decade, the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) has played a significant role in advancing scholarly engagement with African ontology. While African ontology—as the philosophical study of being, existence, and reality from African perspectives—predates modern institutional frameworks, APAS has provided an organized platform for systematic research, intellectual exchange, and scholarly publication between 2015 and 2025 (APAS, 2025). The association's conferences, journals, and collaborative networks have contributed to both the consolidation of indigenous ontological concepts and their contextualization in contemporary debates.

APAS's annual and biennial international conferences have been critical spaces for ontological scholarship. These events routinely foreground themes such as traditional African conceptions of being, communal personhood, and the legacy of coloniality in shaping contemporary understandings of existence. For example, the 2024 International Conference on “African Heritage, Identity and Sustainability” addressed how ontological frameworks rooted in African thought inform cultural continuity and post-colonial identity formation (APAS, 2024; see Proceedings, 2024). Such

gatherings enable scholars to articulate indigenous ontological categories in dialogue with global philosophical frameworks, emphasizing the distinctiveness of African modes of thought.

APAS's publication platforms have also contributed systematically to the ontology discourse. The association's journals, such as AAJCR (An African Journal of Contemporary Research) and JASSD ((APAS) Journal of Arts, Social Sciences and Development), serve as vehicles for original research articles that grapple with African ontological questions. These publications have featured works exploring the nature of being in African contexts, the relationship between community and individual existence, and the philosophical implications of indigenous worldviews for contemporary epistemology (APAS, 2025). By regularly publishing ontological scholarship, APAS has helped legitimize African perspectives within broader academic conversations.

Moreover, APAS has fostered collaborative networks and interdisciplinary research partnerships that expand ontological inquiry beyond philosophy departments. Through linkages with institutes such as the Igwebuike Research Institute and other scholarly bodies, APAS promotes cross-disciplinary work that situates ontology in anthropology, religious studies, and cultural theory (APAS, 2025). This integration underscores the multifaceted nature of African ontology, which often intertwines metaphysical, moral, and social dimensions in ways distinct from Western philosophical traditions.

In addition to organizational roles, the decade has witnessed significant growth in scholarly resources that resonate with APAS's mission. Contemporary works such as *Contemporary African Metaphysical Thought* (Agada, Ofuasia, & Ikuli, 2024), document evolving ontological conversations on concepts like vital force,

relationality, and process-based understandings of existence. These scholarly contributions reflect a broader intellectual movement that APAS has helped sustain by nurturing research communities and providing platforms for dissemination.

Thus, APAS's emphasis on decolonizing philosophy and affirming African philosophical agency has contributed to a shift in how ontology is taught, researched, and theorized across the continent. By foregrounding African ontological categories in conferences, journals, and scholarly collaborations, APAS aids in reconstructing philosophical curricula and research agendas that honor indigenous philosophical paradigms. Meanwhile, from 2015 to 2025, APAS's contributions to African ontology have been both structural and substantive. Through conferences, publications, and collaborative networks, the association has strengthened the visibility of African ontological thought while fostering critical engagements that expand the global philosophical canon.

Transformation in African Contexts

Metaphysics traditionally concerned with the nature of reality, being, and existence, plays a pivotal role in shaping conceptions of identity and social transformation in African philosophical contexts. Rather than being abstract or detached from lived experience, African metaphysical thought is deeply embedded within communal life, cultural practices, and socio-historical realities. In many African traditions, metaphysics and identity are intertwined: the nature of being is understood through one's relationships with community, ancestors, spiritual forces, and the cosmos. This relational ontology shapes individual and collective identities and offers fruitful pathways for social transformation (Gyasi, 2021).

Central to African metaphysical frameworks is the concept of relational being. Unlike Western ontological models that often emphasize individual autonomy and atomistic existence, African thought situates the self within a network of social, spiritual, and ecological relations that confer identity (Janzen, 2019). The Akan notion of *okra* (soul) and *sunsum* (spiritual character), for example, are understood not as isolated substances but as integrally connected to community, destiny, and cosmic forces (Yeboah, 2023). Through this lens, identity emerges from participation in a shared existential world rather than from individualistic self-assertion.

Relational ontology has significant implications for social transformation. It foregrounds collective responsibility, mutual care, and communal well-being as essential to human flourishing. This philosophical premise aligns with Ubuntu principles famously articulated as “I am because we are” which emphasize that individual identity and moral agency are bound up with social cohesion and interdependence (Mokgoro, 2020). Ubuntu metaphysics thus becomes a resource for reimagining social structures that prioritize solidarity over competition, cooperation over fragmentation, and inclusivity over exclusion. Scholars argue that such perspectives can inform processes of conflict resolution, democratic participation, and community development across African societies (Meyer & Nyamnjoh, 2022).

Contemporary scholarship increasingly situates African metaphysics within conversations about power, identity, and post-colonial transformation. According to Wiredu and Gyekye (2022), rediscovering indigenous metaphysical resources challenges the residual effects of colonial epistemologies that have undermined African concepts of self and community. This epistemic reclamation is central to social change because it enables African peoples to redefine their identities on terms that resonate with their historical and cultural realities, rather than through

externally imposed frameworks. By revaluing indigenous metaphysical categories such as communal agency and spiritual continuity, communities can cultivate forms of self-understanding that resist alienation and marginalization.

In addition, recent research examines how metaphysical narratives influence contemporary debates about nationalism, citizenship, and societal transformation. For instance, Essien (2024) demonstrates that traditional African metaphysical concepts such as vital force and cosmic interdependence offer alternative models of citizenship that foreground shared destiny and mutual obligations rather than legalistic individual rights alone. Such reconceptualizations have significant implications for how nations imagine and enact policies for inclusivity, development, and collective well-being.

Methodological Approaches and Intellectual Debates within APAS

Over the past decade, the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) has fostered diverse methodological approaches and intellectual debates that reflect both indigenous philosophical commitments and global scholarly engagements. APAS serves as a platform where researchers across the humanities, social sciences, and philosophy interrogate Africa-centered methodologies and challenge Universalist epistemological assumptions that have historically marginalized African philosophical voices (APAS, 2025).

One prominent methodological approach within APAS scholarship is multidisciplinary. APAS encourages research that moves beyond strict disciplinary boundaries, incorporating philosophy, cultural studies, history, religious studies, political science, and social sciences to address complex African realities. This is evident in

APAS's diverse conference proceedings, where collected volumes include discussions on religion, culture, identity, development, and even science and technology as they intersect with African philosophical thought (APAS, 2025). Such interdisciplinary engagements reflect a broader debate on whether African intellectual inquiry should replicate Western academic compartmentalization or develop context-sensitive paradigms that align with indigenous conceptual frameworks and lived experience.

A second methodological trend within APAS is contextual and indigenous philosophizing. APAS publishes and promotes works that reject the notion that Western philosophical methods are the only valid basis for rigorous inquiry. Instead, scholars emphasize methods grounded in African worldviews, oral traditions, and communal knowledge practices. These approaches align with broader African philosophical debates on the legitimacy of ethnophilosophy, sage philosophy, and Afrophone philosophy—methodological schools that prioritize indigenous language, collective thought, and culturally embedded reasoning (Nwala, as cited in APAS research; Afrophone philosophy discussions).

Intellectual debates within APAS forums often revolve around methodological legitimacy and epistemic decolonization. Scholars engage critically with the legacy of colonial epistemologies, questioning whether conventional Western research methods inadvertently reproduce colonial frameworks of knowledge production. This debate is sharpened by contributions advocating decolonial and Southern-centric frameworks that situate African experience and agency at the heart of scholarly inquiry (Mungwini, 2024). Such debates echo broader continental efforts to rewrite methodological norms, arguing that African scholarship must confront and transform inherited structures that prioritize universalism over local particularities.

Another active locus of debate concerns the interface between tradition and innovation. APAS platforms host dialogues on how traditional African philosophies can be rigorously analyzed without reducing them to relics of the past. Contributors argue for methodological frameworks that honor tradition while engaging contemporary theoretical tools-such as interpretive hermeneutics, phenomenology, and critical theory to address pressing social issues like identity, globalization, and technology (APAS proceedings, 2024-2025).

Furthermore, APAS's journals, such as *Journal of African Studies* and *Sustainable Development* (JASSD) and *AKU: An African Journal of Contemporary Research*, exemplify publication-based methodological debates where scholars present original hypotheses, comparative analyses, and critiques of dominant philosophical paradigms (APAS, 2025). These publications provide institutional space for systematic debates on philosophical method, epistemic horizons, and the future direction of African scholarship.

Future Directions for African Metaphysical Scholarship

As African metaphysical scholarship continues to grow in both depth and global visibility, future directions in the field point toward theoretical innovation, interdisciplinary integration, decolonial restructuring, and global philosophical dialogue. African metaphysics which explores the nature of reality, being, and existence from indigenous and culturally grounded perspectives has already witnessed significant contemporary contributions, yet emerging research suggests several promising avenues for future inquiry.

One key direction involves expanding conceptual frameworks beyond traditional metaphysical concerns to include emerging

global issues. Recent works such as Contemporary African Metaphysical Thought emphasize new metaphysical categories like vital force, panpsychism, and relational ontology that speak to both indigenous insights and global philosophical questions (Agada, Ofuasia, & Ikuli, 2024). These evolving frameworks suggest that future scholarship will increasingly bridge classical metaphysical themes with contemporary philosophical questions about consciousness, environment, and cosmology.

Another fertile area for future research is the integration of process-relational metaphysics within African philosophical systems. Emmanuel Ofuasia's *Ìwà: The Process-Relational Dimension to African Metaphysics* proposes an innovative metaphysical account that draws on both traditional African thought and modern process philosophies, challenging static ontologies and foregrounding dynamism, agency, and interconnected existence (Ofuasia, 2024). Such approaches open pathways for reconceptualizing metaphysical categories in terms of becoming, relation, and cosmic participation, which are likely to shape new debates on being and existence going forward. The decolonial turn in African metaphysics represents another promising direction. Inspired by decolonial philosophies and methods, scholars are increasingly critiquing how Western philosophical frameworks have historically framed metaphysical inquiry, advocating instead for indigenous and culturally embedded methodologies (Chimakonam & Ogbonnaya, 2021). This shift encourages a broader re-examination of epistemic foundations, including the methods, assumptions, and categories that guide metaphysical research, ultimately fostering a more pluralistic and inclusive global philosophy.

Interdisciplinary and applied metaphysical studies also offer future potentials. Emerging scholarship links metaphysical insights to other fields such as education, psychology, and ethics. For

instance, studies investigating Yoruba metaphysical notions of personhood in relation to human development demonstrate how metaphysics can inform social transformation and identity construction (Lawal, 2024). Such intersections highlight the practical relevance of metaphysical concepts beyond purely academic inquiry.

Additionally, African metaphysical scholarship is poised to engage comparative and intercultural philosophy. New volumes like *Contemporary Debates in African and Western Philosophy* showcase how African metaphysical thought can enter constructive dialogues with Western analytic and continental traditions, enriching both spheres through comparative insight and mutual critique. These dialogues are expected to foster more nuanced understandings of key metaphysical themes such as being, causality, and time.

Finally, the ongoing decolonization of academic structures and knowledge systems will likely shape future directions, as scholars continue to advocate for greater inclusion of African languages, indigenous sources, and epistemic practices within global academic curricula and research. Integrating oral traditions, cosmological narratives, and local ways of knowing can expand metaphysical scholarship to reflect the diversity of human intellectual traditions.

Recommendations

- i. Encourage collaborations between philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and religious studies to explore African

- metaphysical concepts in diverse contexts and applications.
- ii. Prioritize research methods that draw on oral traditions, indigenous knowledge systems, and culturally embedded epistemologies to ensure authentic representation of African thought.
 - iii. Facilitate comparative studies between African metaphysics and Western philosophical traditions to foster mutual enrichment, critique, and the cross-fertilization of ideas.
 - iv. Integrate African metaphysical frameworks into curricula at all academic levels to strengthen philosophical literacy and cultural awareness among students.
 - v. Support Digital and Open-Access Scholarship: Develop accessible online platforms for African metaphysical research to increase visibility, encourage global collaboration, and facilitate the dissemination of knowledge.

Conclusion

African metaphysical scholarship has experienced significant growth over the past decades, reflecting a dynamic engagement with indigenous ontologies, relational notions of being, and the integration of contemporary philosophical methods. Scholars have increasingly demonstrated that African metaphysics is not merely a cultural artifact but a rigorous intellectual tradition capable of addressing pressing social, ethical, and epistemological questions. By foregrounding relationality, communal identity, and indigenous epistemologies, African metaphysical thought offers frameworks for understanding reality that challenge Western-centric paradigms while contributing to global philosophical discourse. The scholarship underscores the value of decolonizing knowledge production, promoting intercultural dialogue, and bridging theory

with practice in areas such as education, identity formation, and social transformation.

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8

ONTOLOGY AND AFRICAN MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN APAS DISCOURSE

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Introduction

African philosophy has increasingly gained prominence in contemporary philosophical discourse, particularly in efforts to articulate and systematize indigenous African worldviews and their implications for understanding ethics, metaphysics, and social thought. According to Paulin J. Hountondji, African philosophy bears a direct relation to history and culture and the reflection of African intelligentsia upon our total historical being represents a significant moment in the intellectual response of Africans to the challenge of western civilization.¹

One significant area of inquiry within the field of African philosophy is the relationship between ontology (the philosophical study of being) and moral philosophy in the Igbo- African thought. The Igbo African traditional ethics/moral values take meaning and justification from the Igbo worldview/cosmology. In the Igbo African traditions, ethical principles are closely connected to deeper metaphysical assumptions about the nature of reality, personhood, and the interconnectedness of all beings. Understanding the Igbo African moral philosophy therefore requires an examination of the ontological foundations upon which African ethical ideas are built.

Within African philosophical scholarship, APAS, through her discourses has contributed in promoting, not only philosophical

studies but also Africa and African studies. This paper therefore, examines ontology and African moral philosophy within APAS discourse. It argues that African ethical thought is deeply grounded in ontological assumptions about the nature of being, the structure of the cosmos, and the relational character of human existence.

Conceptualizing Ontology in Igbo-African Philosophical Traditions

Philosophically, ontology is defined as the study of beings. According to Aristotle, ontology is the study of being *qua* being and the properties inherent in it, in virtue of its own nature.² The ontological foundation of African ethics has to do with the basic assumptions of African metaphysics and African morality is a derivative of African ontology. This implies that in the Igbo metaphysical thought; epistemology, ethics and cosmology intermingle. To write of ontology in the Igbo-African philosophical tradition, is to examine her cultural worldview and cosmology. Igbo ontology is cultural and ontology occupies a central place in the Igbo-African cosmology and her philosophical traditions because the Igbo-African thought generally begins with questions about the nature of reality, being and the philosophical reflection that does not separate metaphysics from ethics, religion, or social life. These provide the foundation upon which moral values, social norms, and cultural practices in the Igbo-African world.

Relationality is a predominant feature of the Igbo-African ontology. Reality is dualistic and hierarchical, hence, there is a web of connection between the physical and metaphysical realms. The living (human beings) are connected with the dead (ancestors, spirits, nature, and the Supreme Being). According to Jonathan Chimakonam Okeke: "In the ontological organization of the Igbo, there is the place of the spiritual. This is because the Igbo ontology

is made up of the physical and spiritual. While God represents the chief being in the spirit realm, man dominates in the physical realm.”³ This relational understanding of existence shapes the Igbo-African interpretations of identity and social responsibility. John S. Mbiti explains the African conception of existence; I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.⁴ This idea reflects the view that individual existence is inseparable from communal and cosmic relationships.

Human being as well as human life stands at the center of Igbo-African worldview and morality. In other words, the Igbo-African worldview is anthropocentric and personhood is not simply a biological fact but a moral achievement realized through active participation in community life.

The individual becomes a full person through moral development, social responsibility, and adherence to communal values. This view illustrates how metaphysical assumptions about the nature of human existence shape ethical expectations and social structures.

The Axiology of the Igbo-African Moral Philosophy.

Morality is concerned with the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior, which are termed moral or immoral respectively. Africa is a heterogeneous society and the African ethics, is all about the value system of African people. Because of the heterogeneous nature of the African society, this paper is limited to Igbo tribes/ ethics in Nigeria. Axiology is the study or theory of value and a value is anything that is worthwhile as well as desirable. Understanding the theory of value aids in the comprehension of the Igbo-African moral philosophy.

The term value is derived from the Latin word *valere*, which means to worth, or be strong. Values are standard and universal

phenomena that are part of nature and are given some primary importance in life. People attach more importance to certain values and the Igbo-African people are not left out. Whatever exists has value, while whatever that is antithetical to human life, growth and development is a disvalue. According to I.B Ewelú,

Values are standards. Standards in which a given society determines what the members are to aim at and what is expected of them. Values determine praise or blame, respect or dishonor, achievement or failure within the society. African values are these things that serve as the standards of the Africans, those serve as the yardsticks for measuring the success among Africans.⁵

In Africa, values can be classified in various ways. There are the moral values, religious or spiritual values, aesthetic values, economic values amongst others, but the interest of this paper is on the moral values.

Moral values cover a wide range of behavior and at the heart of moral value/philosophy of the Igbo-African society is moral life. Life is a primary value. In the Igbo-African society, life is the value of all values, and that is why Igbo people explains this, with the name; *Ndubuisi*, which means that life is first and it is of supreme importance/necessity. In other words, life should be pursued before and above every other thing or value. In the words of E.O. Ezenweke:

Life is the basis on which moral judgments spring. Anything which enhances life is good, while whatever that engenders is evil. And man is the yardstick for measurement. Whatever that is good or evil, must be adjusted so in relation to man. That is why he is called *mmadu*, which means the beauty of life.⁶

Human life is sacred as such Igbo-African people attach importance to life. This is also evident in names like *Mmadukaku* (humans are more valuable than wealth), *Nwakaego* (a child is more valuable than money) etc. Everything is geared towards the preservation of human life. Nothing is therefore done without bearing to life.

Destroying or violating human life is sacrilegious and also considered heinous crime that attracts penalties. Hence, Ike Benjamin Ewelu explains more: "The sin of the violation of human life is fundamental a sin, not only among the Igbo but throughout Africa, that it is regarded as *aru* (abomination)... the guilt that goes with shedding of blood is so serious..."⁷ However, the Igbo-African ethics is, also a character-based ethics that maintains that the quality of the individual's character is most fundamental in one's moral life. Character comes from one's actions and one is termed good or bad from one's character. Igbo people attach importance to a good-name, honesty, truthfulness, hospitality, etc. According to Ike B. Ewelu, "To bring to light the importance Africans attach to truthfulness, some African societies have special ceremonies in which they recognize some of their members as men of truth...Ozo title constitutes them custodians of truth in the society."⁸ When a person is known to be honest or generous or compassionate, the person is judged as a good person, vice versa. Good character is therefore the essence of the Igbo-African moral system.

Salutation is another important moral quality, thus, Igbo people say, "*agwa wu mma*" good character is beauty. Also, one can be seen as "having morals (*o nwere ezigbo agwa*) or "not having morals" (*o nweghi ezigbo agwa*). Social mannerism therefore constitutes moral qualities. Respect for elders, is another virtue. *Ndi-Igbo* belief that age is associated with wisdom and moral authority. Elders serve as custodians of tradition and play a crucial

role in conflict resolution and guiding communal decision-making. Hardwork is not left out. In the Igbo-African world, hardwork is a moral value, as laziness is a vice, hence abhorred. K.N. Afunugo and G. C. Nganwuchu add: “The Igbo people are assiduous and purpose driven. They are diligent and employ tenacity in their place of primary assignment pertinent to making ends meet. They are equally result oriented with the natural endowment of phlegmatic and optimistic mindset.”⁹ The person is seen as *homo faber* (a tool user) who makes consistent and persistent effort amidst hardship, failure and so on. P. Iloanya and B. Nwanegbo add that one of the greatest values in Igbo cosmology is the dignity of the human person, and the parlance that there is dignity in labour. According to them, Igbo people, are the people that understood the parlance better than every other people of the world.¹⁰

The Igbo people believe that it is only through enterprise that wealth can be created and accessed. This is evident in their idea of apprenticeship system (*Igba boy*). This is a quintessence of wealth acquisition and circulation in Igboland.

Igbo–African Moral Philosophy

Igbo–African moral philosophy refers to the ethical principles and values that regulate activities within the traditional worldview of the Igbo people of south eastern Nigeria. Igbo moral philosophy is deeply rooted in communalism, spirituality, and a strong sense of moral responsibility toward others. One of the central features of Igbo moral philosophy is the emphasis on communal responsibility. In traditional Igbo society, the individual is understood primarily in relation to the community, including family, lineage, ancestors, and the broader society. Ethical behavior is therefore evaluated in terms of its contribution to communal well-being and social harmony. Actions that promote

peace, cooperation, and mutual respect are considered morally good, while actions that disrupt social relationships are regarded as morally wrong.

Another important aspect of Igbo moral philosophy is the concept of *omenala* (tradition or customs of the land). *Omenala* represents the moral and cultural code that regulates human behavior within the community. It encompasses social norms, customs, taboos, and rituals that guide interpersonal relationships, governance, and justice. In Igbo society, adherence to *omenala* is considered essential for maintaining moral order and social stability. Violations of these norms are often believed to attract not only social sanctions but also spiritual consequences. Justice and accountability are equally important components of Igbo ethical thought. Traditional Igbo communities often employ communal institutions such as village assemblies and councils of elders to settle disputes and enforce moral norms. These systems emphasize restorative justice, aiming to repair relationships and restore harmony rather than simply punish offenders. This approach reflects the broader African moral emphasis on reconciliation, retribution and social balance.

Igbo moral philosophy also incorporates a strong spiritual dimension. Moral conduct is believed to maintain harmony not only within the human community but also between humans, ancestors, and the divine order. When moral norms are violated, rituals of reconciliation or purification may be required to restore balance. This spiritual understanding of morality underscores the interconnected nature of ethical life in Igbo thought.

APAS, Ontology and Igbo-African Moral Philosophy

APAS, which is an acronym for the Association for the Promotion

of African Studies, celebrates a decade of its existence. The development of APAS discourse was significantly advanced by African philosophers who sought to defend the legitimacy of African philosophy and distinguish it from ethnographic descriptions of cultural beliefs. APAS discourse also engages with contemporary issues affecting Africa, including governance, human rights, social justice, development, and cultural identity. By drawing on both traditional African thought and modern philosophical methods, scholars seek to address practical challenges facing African societies while preserving valuable aspects of indigenous knowledge systems. In this way, African philosophy becomes not only an academic discipline but also a tool for critical reflection on Africa's past, present, and future.

Furthermore, APAS discourse promotes dialogue between African philosophical traditions and other global philosophical traditions. By comparing African ideas with Western, Asian, and other philosophical systems, scholars aim to enrich global philosophical discussions and demonstrate the universal relevance of African thought. This engagement helps to challenge the historical marginalization of African philosophy within the global intellectual community. The **Association for the Promotion of African Studies** has played significant roles in shaping, preserving, upholding and advancing the Igbo-African ontological and ethical thought. The impacts of APAS in promoting ontology and the Igbo-African moral philosophy are as follows;

Promoting African philosophy and African philosophical studies: APAS provides a platform for philosophers and African philosophers to present their ideas, focusing on African views, ideas, and themes, as well as distinct African philosophical methods. This is evident in her 5th and 6th international conferences of 2021 and 2022 themed African ideologies and innovative trends

and advances: honoring the past and shaping the future and a global dialogue on African philosophy, religion and culture: prospects for development respectively.

Revival and preservation of indigenous ethical systems: APAS has contributed to the recovering and uphold of the African moral philosophies that were marginalized during colonial and postcolonial intellectual dominance. By organizing seminars, conferences and supporting research into indigenous value system, such as communalism (*Ubuntu*), character formation, and moral responsibility. This helps to bring about peace, order and sustainable development. The 4th international conference of 2020, themed African ideologies, human security and peace building showcased it.

Decolonization of ethical thought: A major impact of APAS is its role in intellectual decolonization. It questions the assumption that moral philosophy must be grounded in Western traditions and instead affirms African ontological and ethical foundations. This aligns with broader African philosophical efforts led by various African thinkers who advocate for ethical systems grounded in African cultural realities rather than imported frameworks.

Promotion of Communal and relational ethics: African ethics, as promoted by APAS, emphasizes care-based ethics and also community over individualism. The association highlights moral values such as, solidarity, brotherhood, reciprocity, social harmony, social order etc. This contrasts with highly individualistic ethical models and provides alternative approaches to issues like justice, governance, and social responsibility. This is emphasized in the 7th international conference of 2023, themed, Africa in the global community: landmark, achievements, setbacks and future development.

Cultural revalidation and identity formation: By promoting African ethics and ethical systems, APAS reinforces culture, cultural identity and pride. it helps Africans reconnect with moral traditions that define social conduct, leadership ideals, and communal life. this is also evident in her 3rd and 8th international conference of 2019 and 2024, themed, migration and African identity question in a contemporary world and African heritage and sustainability in the global future respectively.

Evaluation and Conclusion

The notion ontology in Igbo-African moral philosophy reveals a deeply interconnected worldview in which being, community, and morality are inseparable. A key strength of Igbo-African moral philosophy lies in its relational ontology. The individual is a being-in- with others in the community. Moral values such as respect for elders, truthfulness, justice, and solidarity emerge naturally from this ontological structure.

Furthermore, the Igbo metaphysical framework—encompassing the visible and invisible realms, including ancestors and spiritual forces—provides a broader basis for moral accountability. Actions are believed to have consequences not only in the physical world but also in the spiritual order. This expands the scope of ethics beyond immediate human interactions to include cosmic and ancestral relationships, thereby strengthening moral consciousness and responsibility. Igbo-African moral philosophy remains highly relevant. Its emphasis on interconnectedness, responsibility, and moral balance offers valuable insights for addressing contemporary ethical issues such as social fragmentation, environmental degradation, and the erosion of communal values.

In conclusion, ontology serves as the fundamental pillar of Igbo-African moral philosophy, shaping its understanding of African philosophy, personhood, community, and ethical responsibility. The Igbo worldview demonstrates that morality is not an external imposition but an intrinsic aspect of being that brings about order and harmony in the society.

Endnotes

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4. John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London: Heinemann (1969), p.45.

5. I.B Ewelu, "Leadership and African Values" *WAJOP* Volume 2, Dec 1999, p.40.

6. Jonathan Chimakonam Okeke, "God and Man in Igbo Traditional Religion", p.43

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9. K.N. Afunugo, G. C. Nganwuchu, “Igbo Youths and Moneymaking Rituals: Re-evaluating the Igbo Philosophy of Hardwork in an era of quick Wealth and Materialism” *Igirigi a Multi Disciplinary Journal of African Studies* Vol.3 No.2 October 2023,p.9.

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9

ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF AFRICAN STUDIES AND THE FUTURE OF INDIGENOUS AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGIES

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Introduction

The production of knowledge in Africa has historically been shaped by colonial experiences that privileged Western epistemological frameworks while undermining Indigenous African systems of thought. African knowledge traditions—embedded in oral histories, proverbs, spirituality, communal practices, and ecological wisdom—were often dismissed as inferior or unscientific. However, these traditions represent rich intellectual resources that reflect the lived experiences and cultural realities of African societies. Indigenous African Epistemologies emphasize communalism, relationality, spirituality, and experiential learning. Knowledge is not only acquired through written texts but also through participation, storytelling, observation, and social interaction. Scholars such as Paulin Hountondji and Kwasi Wiredu have argued that African philosophy must critically examine the legacy of colonial intellectual dominance and work toward reconstructing authentic African systems of thought. In this context, academic associations that promote African-centered scholarship play a vital role.

The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) contributes to this intellectual effort by encouraging research grounded in African philosophical traditions and by creating platforms for scholarship that reflects African realities. This paper

therefore evaluates the role of APAS in strengthening Indigenous African Epistemologies and shaping their future within African academia.

Literature Review

Indigenous African Epistemologies

Indigenous African Epistemology refers to culturally embedded systems of knowledge that are transmitted across generations through oral traditions, rituals, symbols, and communal practices. These knowledge systems emphasize the interconnection of the individual, the community, nature, and the spiritual world. Mbiti (1969) argues that African knowledge systems are fundamentally communal in nature. In many African societies, knowledge is not owned by individuals but shared collectively within the community. Elders, traditional institutions, and oral traditions serve as important custodians of wisdom.

Mudimbe (1988) critically examined the influence of what he described as the “colonial library,” referring to the body of Western scholarship that constructed Africa through external categories and interpretations. According to Mudimbe, this framework often distorted or misrepresented Indigenous African knowledge systems. Similarly, Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) emphasized the role of language in shaping knowledge and cultural identity. He argues that African languages contain unique epistemological structures that cannot always be fully expressed through Western languages. Therefore, preserving African languages is essential for preserving African knowledge systems.

Theoretical Foundations of African Indigenous Knowledge

Scholars have long critiqued the dominance of Western epistemological paradigms in academic knowledge production. Research on “decolonizing epistemologies” argues that Western

frameworks often perpetuate epistemic injustice by marginalizing Indigenous forms of knowing. In the South African context, for example, scholars have proposed conceptual models that foreground African ontologies, dialogue based knowledge frameworks, and epistemic sovereignty—central ideas that reposition African knowledge as authoritative and contextually meaningful. The broader literature on African indigenous knowledge has emphasized the need to include such systems meaningfully in research design and implementation. Owusu-Ansah & Mji highlight that indigenous knowledge is frequently overlooked in mainstream research, particularly in fields such as health and social sciences, despite its relevance for culturally grounded inquiry and community participation.

Books such as *Pathways to Alternative Epistemologies in Africa* explore how African scholars can critically rethink epistemological issues, challenging the denigration of Indigenous knowledge systems and proposing interdisciplinary pathways that respect local contexts and cultural logic.

African Studies Associations and Knowledge Production

African studies organizations, such as the **Association for the Promotion of African Studies**, play an important role in fostering intellectual traditions that value the African voice in knowledge production. APAS explicitly promotes research across humanities and social sciences that centers African philosophical methods and cultural contexts. Its journals, such as the *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, provide platforms for original research in African philosophy, history, culture, and language—fields deeply connected to Indigenous epistemologies.

Scholarly discourse on African studies more broadly also underscores the need for African scholars to lead research on

Africa, challenging epistemic legacies of colonialism and ensuring that African frameworks define the questions and methods of inquiry about the continent. A review of African knowledge production highlights historic and contemporary debates on how intellectual authority is contested and negotiated within African universities and international scholarship.

Challenges in Epistemic Transformation

Efforts to integrate Indigenous epistemologies into formal knowledge systems face structural and institutional challenges. Research on transforming epistemologies within post-colonial African universities suggests that academic politics, entrenched Western frameworks, and power hierarchies within higher education constrain genuine epistemic transformation. These challenges involve not just curriculum reform but also reshaping how knowledge is valued, taught, and disseminated.

The persistence of Eurocentric knowledge structures often results in the under-representation of Indigenous perspectives in mainstream academic discourse. Even when African research is produced, it can be subjected to biases in global publishing norms that privilege Western epistemic standards. These dynamics highlight the ongoing struggle for legitimacy and scholarly recognition faced by African epistemological frameworks.

APAS and the Future of Indigenous Epistemologies

1. Promoting Afro-Centric Scholarship

APAS contributes to the future of Indigenous African epistemologies by fostering Afro-centric scholarship that is rooted in African cultural and intellectual traditions. By encouraging research that prioritizes African philosophical methods—such as African logic, epistemology, and value systems—APAS actively challenges the dominance of Western paradigms.

2. Building Scholarly Networks and Publications

Through its journals and conferences, APAS offers platforms for scholars to publish and discuss research that engages with Indigenous knowledge systems. These platforms help legitimize African epistemic perspectives within academic communities and create intellectual spaces where African researchers can share insights informed by cultural contexts often ignored in global scholarship.

3. Future Directions

The future of Indigenous African epistemologies depends on continued investment in research networks, intercultural dialogue, and education reform. Strengthening the visibility of African epistemic frameworks in academic curricula and publishing is essential for academic decolonization. Associations like APAS, alongside other African studies organizations, are well positioned to lead collaborative efforts that promote epistemic inclusivity and innovation.

Decolonization and African Knowledge Production

The call for the decolonization of knowledge has become a central theme within African studies. Decolonizing knowledge involves challenging the dominance of Western intellectual traditions and recognizing the legitimacy of alternative knowledge systems. Mbembe (2016) argues that African universities must rethink their curricula and intellectual traditions so that they reflect African realities rather than colonial inheritances. This requires a transformation of educational institutions, research priorities, and academic discourse.

Another important concept in this discussion is epistemic injustice, which refers to the systematic marginalization of certain knowledge systems. Academic associations therefore play an important role in addressing these inequalities. By organizing conferences, supporting research, and publishing scholarly work,

they help legitimize Indigenous knowledge systems within global academic discourse.

The Role of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS)

The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) is a Pan-African academic organization established to promote research and scholarship centered on African realities. The association provides a platform where scholars from different disciplines can collaborate in exploring African history, philosophy, culture, and development.

APAS emphasizes interdisciplinary scholarship and encourages collaboration among scholars in fields such as philosophy, anthropology, political science, education, religious studies, psychology, and international relations. Through these collaborations, the association seeks to strengthen research on African knowledge systems and intellectual traditions. In 2025 APAS conference, the theme was Shaping African's Future: The Impacts of Artificial Intelligence and Entrepreneurship in A Globalised Society. One of the major contributions of APAS is its support for African-centered methodologies in research. The association encourages scholars to approach African issues using conceptual frameworks that emerge from African cultural and philosophical traditions rather than relying solely on Western theoretical models. APAS also organizes academic conferences and publishes scholarly works that provide platforms for the dissemination of African-centered research. These initiatives create opportunities for African scholars to share ideas, develop networks, and contribute to global academic conversations.

African Epistemologies: Key Characteristics

African epistemologies can be understood through several key

characteristics that distinguish them from dominant Western approaches to knowledge. One important feature is the communal nature of knowledge. In many African societies, knowledge is validated through collective experience and shared understanding rather than individual authority.

Another characteristic is the importance of oral traditions. Proverbs, folktales, myths, songs, and storytelling serve as important repositories of knowledge and cultural wisdom. Among the Igbo, for example, the proverb “*Ilu bu mmanu eji eri okwu*” (proverbs are the oil with which words are eaten) illustrates how wisdom is embedded within language. African epistemologies also reflect a holistic worldview in which spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions of life are interconnected. Knowledge is therefore closely linked to moral values, spirituality, and community life.

Furthermore, knowledge is often practical and experiential. It is applied in everyday activities such as agriculture, healing practices, conflict resolution, and governance.

Methodology

This study adopts a **qualitative research approach**. Data were collected through the review of relevant literature on Indigenous African epistemologies, African-centered scholarship, and the activities of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies. Academic books, journal articles, and conference papers related to African knowledge systems were examined. The study also relies on **document analysis** of publications and reports related to organizations that promote African studies. This method helps to understand the contributions, challenges, and future prospects of Indigenous African epistemologies within academic discourse.

The Future of Indigenous African Epistemologies

The future of Indigenous African epistemologies depends largely on institutional reform, curriculum transformation, and increased research support within African academic institutions. One important step is curriculum reform. African universities need to integrate African philosophy, Indigenous sciences, oral literature, and cultural knowledge systems into their academic programs. Doing so would help students understand African intellectual traditions as legitimate sources of knowledge. Another important direction involves language revitalization. Promoting African languages in academic research and education would strengthen the transmission of Indigenous knowledge systems that are often embedded within linguistic expressions. Digital preservation also presents new opportunities for safeguarding Indigenous knowledge. Oral traditions, cultural practices, and traditional ecological knowledge can be documented and preserved through modern technologies.

Interdisciplinary research is also essential. By combining Indigenous knowledge with modern scientific approaches, scholars can address contemporary challenges such as climate change, environmental sustainability, and community development. Despite these opportunities, several challenges remain. These include limited funding for research, unequal access to global publishing platforms, and institutional resistance to epistemic transformation.

Nevertheless, organizations such as APAS provide important platforms for addressing these challenges and promoting African-centered scholarship.

Findings

The study finds that the Association for the Promotion of African Studies has contributed significantly to the revival and promotion

of Indigenous African epistemologies through academic conferences, publications, research collaborations, and advocacy for the inclusion of African perspectives in educational curricula. It also reveals that despite these efforts, Indigenous knowledge systems still face challenges such as limited institutional support, inadequate funding, and the continued dominance of Western epistemological frameworks in many universities. However, there is growing recognition of the importance of African-centered knowledge in addressing cultural identity, social development, and intellectual independence.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the study recommends that universities and research institutions should integrate Indigenous African epistemologies into their curricula and research agendas. Governments and academic bodies should provide greater funding and institutional support for organizations like the Association for the Promotion of African Studies. Scholars should also promote interdisciplinary research that bridges Indigenous knowledge with modern academic disciplines. Finally, there is a need to document, preserve, and digitize African Indigenous knowledge systems to ensure their sustainability for future generations.

Conclusion

Indigenous African epistemologies represent rich intellectual traditions that offer valuable insights into human knowledge, culture, and social organization. However, these knowledge systems have historically been marginalized due to colonial influence and the dominance of Western epistemological frameworks. The Association for the Promotion of African Studies plays a crucial role in addressing this imbalance by promoting African-centered research, facilitating scholarly dialogue, and supporting the dissemination of knowledge grounded in African

realities.

Through its conferences, publications, and scholarly networks, APAS contributes to the preservation and development of Indigenous African epistemologies. With sustained institutional support and continued efforts toward decolonizing knowledge systems, African epistemologies can play an increasingly important role in shaping global intellectual discourse.

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10

RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY, AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS IN APAS PUBLICATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, APAS publications - particularly *AKU* (*AAJCR*), *OCHENDO* (*OAAJIS*), and *JASSD* - have consistently foregrounded religion, spirituality, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) as foundational dimensions of African intellectual life. Across thematic issues, conference proceedings, and interdisciplinary essays, these journals have contributed to repositioning African spirituality from the margins of ethnographic description to the center of philosophical and developmental discourse. Rather than treating religion as a sociological residue of premodern Africa, APAS publications frame it as an epistemological system - a structured mode of knowing embedded in African metaphysics and communal ontology.

APAS Journals as Epistemic Institutions

The intellectual history of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) cannot be separated from the establishment of its scholarly journals: *AKU – An African Journal of Contemporary Research* (*AAJCR*), *OCHENDO – An African Journal of Innovative Studies* (*OAAJIS*), and the *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development* (*JASSD*). These journals are not merely publishing outlets; they are epistemic institutions. They embody APAS's foundational commitment to African-centred

scholarship and the reclamation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).

Since 2016, APAS has used these platforms to create sustained academic space for interrogating religion and spirituality as legitimate frameworks of knowledge production. In doing so, it has responded to a longstanding historical problem: the marginalization of African religious epistemology within mainstream academic discourse (Mudimbe, 1988).

The emergence of these journals marks a deliberate institutional strategy, moving from critique of epistemic colonization to constructive intellectual consolidation.

Religion as Ontological Foundation in AKU (AAJCR)

AKU - An African Journal of Contemporary Research (AAJCR) has consistently addressed religion as a living and evolving dimension of African contemporary identity. Within its thematic focus on “contemporary research,” AKU engages religion not as static tradition but as dynamic ontological infrastructure shaping African modernity (AKU, 2018; AKU, 2020).

Several recurring themes within AKU include:

- i. African metaphysics and the structure of being
- ii. The role of religion in identity formation
- iii. Spirituality and moral philosophy
- iv. Indigenous cosmology and social cohesion
- v. Religion and postcolonial reconstruction

AKU publications often explore African ontology through categories such as being, destiny (Chi), vital force, ancestor hood, and communal personhood. These discussions resonate strongly with Kanu's Igwebuiké philosophy, which emphasizes ontological complementarity and relational existence (Kanu, 2015).

In many contributions within AKU, African religion is presented as a coherent system that integrates:

- i. Cosmology (structure of reality)
- ii. Epistemology (ways of knowing)

- iii. Ethics (moral codes)
- iv. Praxis (ritual and social action)

This holistic framing aligns with Mbiti's (1969) assertion that African life is inseparable from religious consciousness. However, AKU moves beyond Mbiti's descriptive analysis by interrogating religion philosophically, examining its metaphysical assumptions and epistemic legitimacy.

Moreover, AKU's engagement with contemporary issues, such as globalization, political instability, and identity crises, demonstrates how African spirituality continues to function as a resource for resilience and reconstruction. Religion, in this context, is not archaic but adaptive.

2. OCHENDO (OAAJIS) and Innovative Reinterpretations of Indigenous Spirituality

OCHENDO – An African Journal of Innovative Studies (OAAJIS) extends this engagement by focusing on innovation within African thought. OCHENDO publications frequently reinterpret Indigenous Knowledge Systems as sites of intellectual creativity rather than relics of the past (OCHENDO, 2019; OCHENDO, 2021).

Within OCHENDO, religion and spirituality are examined through innovative lenses such as:

- i. Indigenous governance systems
- ii. Traditional jurisprudence
- iii. Sacred ecology and environmental ethics
- iv. Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms
- v. Symbolic logic in divination systems

Particularly significant is OCHENDO's treatment of divination systems, such as Ifa and Afa—not as magical practices but as structured epistemic technologies. Drawing from broader African philosophical discourse (Peek, 1991), contributors argue that divination systems operate through codified symbolic structures capable of systematic interpretation.

Such reinterpretations align with decolonial scholarship that challenges Western epistemic supremacy (Mignolo, 2011). By situating indigenous spiritual systems within philosophical analysis, OCHENDO participates in epistemic disobedience—refusing to confine African knowledge within anthropological margins.

Innovation in OCHENDO does not imply Westernization but creative retrieval. It affirms that Indigenous Knowledge Systems possess internal rationality and adaptive capacity.

3. JASSD and the Integration of Spirituality within Sustainable Development

The *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development* (JASSD) provide perhaps the most explicit integration of religion, spirituality, and development discourse.

JASSD publications repeatedly demonstrate that sustainable development in African contexts cannot be divorced from spiritual cosmology (JASSD, 2018; JASSD, 2022). Themes frequently explored include:

- i. Indigenous agricultural knowledge
- ii. Sacred land ethics
- iii. Community-based welfare systems
- iv. Religion and environmental conservation
- v. Moral foundations of governance

African spirituality fosters what Tangwa (2004) describes as eco-bio-communitarianism, a worldview emphasizing interconnectedness between humans, ancestors, nature, and the divine. JASSD publications highlight sacred groves, ritual farming calendars, and ancestral land ethics as practical embodiments of environmental sustainability.

Such scholarship challenges the assumption that development must be secular and technocratic. Instead, JASSD affirms that Indigenous Knowledge Systems grounded in spirituality offer culturally sustainable development models.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems as Structured Epistemology

Across all three journals, a consistent intellectual position emerges: Indigenous Knowledge Systems are structured epistemologies.

This position directly challenges colonial narratives that characterized African knowledge as irrational (Mudimbe, 1988).

APAS publications collectively argue that IKS possess:

- Internal coherence
- Community validation mechanisms
- Symbolic coding systems
- Ethical regulation structures
- Adaptive capacity

For example, indigenous healing systems discussed across APAS publications integrate herbal pharmacology with spiritual diagnosis. Rather than dismissing spiritual dimensions, contributors argue for holistic integration, recognizing psychosocial and communal dimensions of health (WHO, 2013).

Similarly, indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, ritual oath-taking, ancestral mediation, communal reconciliation, are presented as sophisticated systems of restorative justice rather than primitive customs.

Religion and African Personhood in APAS Scholarship

A major recurring theme within APAS publications is African personhood.

Drawing from Kanu's metaphysical reflections (Kanu, 2017), as well as Gyekye's (1995) communitarian philosophy and Ramose's (1999) Ubuntu framework, contributors emphasize that personhood in African thought is relational and spiritually constituted.

Religion, in this context, defines:

- i. Moral accountability
- ii. Social responsibility
- iii. Communal belonging
- iv. Identity formation

APAS scholarship therefore frames spirituality as moral

epistemology, the source of ethical reasoning and social regulation.

Decolonization and Epistemic Justice

Religion and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in APAS publications are inseparable from decolonial discourse. Santos (2014) describes epistemic as the systematic destruction of non-Western knowledge systems. APAS journals implicitly respond to this by:

- i. Publishing African-centred philosophical research
- ii. Encouraging indigenous language conceptual analysis
- iii. Promoting African methodological frameworks
- iv. Hosting interdisciplinary conferences

AKU, OCHENDO, and JASSD function not merely as journals but as intellectual instruments of epistemic justice.

7. Methodological Contributions of APAS Journals

Beyond thematic content, APAS publications also contribute methodologically.

They promote:

- i. Hermeneutical analysis of oral traditions
- ii. Conceptual deconstruction of indigenous categories
- iii. Interdisciplinary dialogue
- iv. Contextual philosophy

This methodological openness reflects Igwebuike's principle of complementarity (Kanu, 2015), integrating philosophy, religion, anthropology, and development studies.

8. Emerging Intellectual Trajectories

As APAS enters its second decade, emerging trajectories within its journals include:

- i. Digitization of Indigenous Knowledge
- ii. Youth engagement with African spirituality
- iii. Integration of IKS into formal curricula
- iv. Pan-African intellectual networking
- v. Global visibility of African religious philosophy

The institutional continuity of AKU, OCHENDO, and JASSD positions APAS as a leading custodian of African spiritual epistemology.

9. Some of APAS Publications that highlights Religion, Spirituality, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems in APAS Publications

JASSD JOURNAL

- i. **“The Africanity of African Literature and Orality of African Orature in a World of Change”** by Jude Ifeanyi Onebunne, PhD & Precious Obasi - Explores the spiritual and cultural roots of African oral and literary traditions.
- ii. **“Gender, Terminologies and an Appraisal of Gender Studies/Discourses in Africa in Contemporary Times”** by Wariboko Onyinyechi Priscilla Christian - Analyzes indigenous spiritual and ethical perspectives on gender in African societies.
- iii. **“The Relevance of African Ideologies of Development to Africa in a World of Change”** by Ignatius C. Uzundu, PhD - Discusses integration of traditional spiritual, moral, and cultural principles in contemporary African development.
- iv. **“African Bioethics in a World of Change”** by Prof. Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony, O.S.A. - Focuses on African ethical frameworks grounded in spirituality to guide health and societal issues.
- v. **“Internally Displaced Persons and the Right to Religious Education in Nigeria through Open and Distance Learning”** by Ushe Mike Ushe, PhD - Highlights the role of religion and spirituality in education for vulnerable populations.
- vi. **“Oath-Taking in Ibibio Society: A Means of Settlement of Traditional Dispute”** by Nana Aniekan Etim, PhD - Studies indigenous spiritual practices in conflict resolution

- and communal regulation.
- vii. **“Infidelity in Christian Marriages: Causes, Effects and Solutions”** by Ibe Julian Chukwuemeka, PhD - Explores the intersection of Christian ethics and local moral philosophy in maintaining marital fidelity.
 - viii. **“Persistent Crisis and Kidnapping in Taraba State, Nigeria: The Role of Religious Organisations in Reducing the Menaces”** by Williams Peter Awoshiri, PhD; Karbon Phillip Benjamin, PhD & Demas Sam Sarki, PhD - Highlights the contributions of faith-based institutions in peacebuilding.
 - ix. **“Indigenous Methods of Peace Building and Conflict Management (Resolution) in Africa”** by Ezesuokwo Johnpaul Ejike - Explores traditional religious and spiritual practices as tools for conflict resolution.
 - x. **“The Response of the Church to the Declining Participation of Her Youth”** by Ekenedilichukwu A. Okolo & Nwankwor Joseph Chukwuemerie - Focuses on the interplay between Christian ethics and youth engagement in African contexts.
 - xi. **“A Christian Appraisal of the Performances of Elders in Public Office in Nigeria: Abuses and Implications on Credibility”** by Luka Markus Barau - Examines ethical failures in leadership through a Christian moral lens.
 - xii. **“Traditional Education: A Viable Option for Curbing Moral Decadence Among Youth in the Ikwerre Societies”** by Amadi-Nche, Church-Hill, PhD - Explores indigenous education as a moral and ethical tool for youth formation.
 - xiii. **“Faith and Culture: The Sacrament of Baptism as a Panacea for the Osu-Caste System”** by Ibe Julian Chukwuemeka, PhD - Studies Christian sacramental practices as instruments for mitigating indigenous social inequalities.
 - xiv. **“Samuel Ajayi Crowther: Bishop of the Niger or West**

- Africa Equatorial Diocese – A Critical Investigation”** – Nnatuanya Chinedu Emmanuel- Discusses historical and religious study of African Christian leadership and mission work.
- xv. **“Raymond E. Brown and the Catholic Biblical Renewal”** by George Odafe, PhD - Examines biblical hermeneutics and Catholic renewal as tools for religious knowledge and ethical formation.
- xvi. **“Education Management, Digital Systems, Ethics and Legal Values as Measures for Standardizing African Religio-Cultural Practices”** by Caroline Onyinye Nweke et al. - Explores how education and ethical systems intersect with indigenous knowledge and cultural practices.
- xvii. **“Igwebuike Epistemology: Towards a Decolonized Theory of Knowledge”** By Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, PhD - Promotes indigenous African epistemologies as alternatives to Western-dominated knowledge systems.
- xviii. **“We Are Not Enemies of African Cultures: Challenges of Totems & Taboos to Contemporary Christians in Ebonyi State”** by Acha Simon Ogbonna & Mokwenye Ekene Michael, PhD - Discusses the reconciliation of Christian faith with African traditional beliefs.
- xix. **“The Impact of Religion on Nigeria's Development”** by Anene, Chidi Pensive, PhD - Analyzes the role of religion in governance, ethics, and socio-economic progress.
- xx. **“Aquinas on Guardianship of Angels as an Execution of Divine Providence”** by Ovie, Valentine Aghoghophia - Examines Christian philosophical theology and spiritual metaphysics in daily ethical life.

AKU JOURNAL

- i. **“Culture, Corruption and Commerce: African Culture vis-a-vis Corruption and Sustainable Development in Africa”** by Zacharia Samita, Ph.D & Joseph Ouma Oindo - Examines how African cultural values interact with ethical lapses and corruption, emphasizing the spiritual and moral dimensions of sustainable development.
- ii. **“Afrocentricity as a Basis for Restoration of African Identity and Agency: A Call to Authentic Education in Africa”** by Wairimu Beatrice Churu, Ph.D & Wachira Nancy - Discusses Afrocentric philosophy and spirituality as foundational for restoring African identity, moral values, and authentic educational practices.
- iii. **“The Spiritual Philosophy of Ubuntu as Path to African Renaissance”**
by Samuel Ebale & Benson A. Mulemi - Highlights Ubuntu as a moral and spiritual philosophy that fosters solidarity, ethical responsibility, and societal regeneration in Africa.
- iv. **“The Rise of Oke-Ite Ritual Among the Contemporary Igbo Youths: The Socio-Religious Implications”** by Nnatuanya Chinedu Emmanuel - Investigates the resurgence of traditional Igbo rituals, analysing their spiritual significance and social impact on youth behaviour.
- v. **An Analysis of the Push Factor in Religio-Cultural Migration in The Central Niger Delta** by Obodoegbulam Agi Otto, Ph.D; Stephen Egwuatu Amadi, Ph.D & Iche Chidi Okpara - Explores how religious and cultural factors motivate migration, linking indigenous beliefs with socio-economic and spiritual consequences.
- vi. **“African Philosophy, Religion, and Functional Education: For Rapid Development and Poverty Reduction in Africa”** by Ignatius C. Uzundu, Ph.D - Connects African religious thought and philosophy to practical education for societal development and poverty alleviation.

- vii. **“A Philosophical Exposition of Cultural Underpinnings of Gender Inequality in Nigeria”** Winifred Gloria Eche, DMMM, Ph.D - Examines how indigenous beliefs, culture, and religious norms influence gender roles and inequality in Nigerian society.
- viii. **“The 2003 General Election Violence in Nigeria: A Historical Analysis”** Festus Chimezie Ajeli - Analyses electoral violence with attention to ethical, moral, and spiritual frameworks for peace and social cohesion.
- ix. **“The African Woman and The Burden of Tradition: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of Flora Nwapa's Efurú & Izuchukwu Emeam's Wife of The Gods”** by Ngozi Ogbodo, Ph.D & Mary Linda Vivian Onuoha, Ph.D - Studies literary depictions of women, connecting traditional beliefs, religion, and cultural expectations to moral and social outcomes.
- x. **“Interfaith Dialogue and Religious Peace-Building in Nigeria: A Study of Acts 15:1-15 Towards the Survival of The Church”** - Longkat Daniel Dajwan - Explores religious pluralism and the role of interfaith dialogue in fostering peace and sustaining church communities.
- xi. **“The Church and Ecological Concerns: A Dogmatic-Systematic Approach”** by Julian Chukwuemeka Ibe, Ph.D & Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, Ph.D - Examines the church's engagement with environmental ethics through theological and doctrinal lenses.
- xii. **“The Igbo Philosophy of Agwu and Understanding Troubling Behaviours in Selected Characters of Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and Half of a Yellow Sun”** by Ngozi Dora Ulogu - Explores Igbo spiritual cosmology (Agwu) to understand human behaviour, ethics, and morality in literature.
- xiii. **“Reinvigorating The African Musical Culture of Moral Impartation: Idoma Ethnic Music Examples”** by

- Emmanuel Ella A., Ph.D - Highlights how traditional African music serves spiritual and moral education, preserving cultural values.
- xiv. **“The Effects of Migration on African Philosophy, Religion and Culture”** by Julius Ijekeye, Ph.D - Analyses how migratory movements affect indigenous religious practices, cultural norms, and philosophical thought.
- xv. **“The Menace of Banditry and Degeneration of Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria: An Evaluation of Boko Haram in Maiduguri Borno State (2010-2021)”** by Anthony Ngonadi, Ph.D; Amakor Nnamdi & Ifeanyi Umeozor by Examines the impact of extremist violence on societal morals, ethics, and the spiritual fabric of affected communities.
- xvi. **“Niger Delta Question, Oil and Fiscal Federalism in Nigeria: An Historical Excursus”** by Nwachukwu J. Obiakor - Connects resource control conflicts to indigenous belief systems and moral obligations in the Niger Delta context.

OCHENDO JOURNALS (OAAJIS)

- i. **“The Influence of Okeite Ritual Practices on the Prevalence of Kidnapping in Anambra State”** by Abunike, Uchenna Evelyn & Ibe Rosemary Chinyere-examines the intersection between indigenous religious practices and contemporary social vices by investigating how the Okeite ritual, rooted in Igbo traditional spirituality, influenced the rise of kidnapping.
- ii. **“The Word and the World: Prince of Peace and Conflict Management in the Canonical Gospel Narratives** by Olugbenga Seun Aina, Temitope A. Olaifa & Olakunle Olasupo Thompson” - explores the role of Jesus Christ as the “Prince of Peace” within the canonical Gospels,

emphasizing the application of biblical teachings to conflict management in contemporary society.

- iii. **“An Analysis of The Concept of Chi in Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu's Understanding of Igbo-African Ontology”** by Gabriel Asuquo, PhD & Adubochi, Isaiah Chijindu - provides a philosophical and metaphysical analysis of the concept of *Chi* within Igbo ontology, particularly through the lens of Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu's scholarship.
- iv. **“Theories Of Punishment: Analysis of the State of Affairs in Contemporary Society and Further Consideration”** by Eruka, C. Raphael, PhD - engages moral and ethical frameworks that are often rooted in religious thought.
- v. **“Concept of Salvation in Major World Religions: A Comparative Study”** by Dr. Christian Maduabuchi Umeanwe - undertakes a comparative analysis of the concept of salvation across major world religions, including Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion.

Conclusion

Over ten years, APAS publications have systematically advanced religion, spirituality, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems as legitimate domains of scholarly inquiry. Through AKU, OCHENDO, and JASSD, the association has:

- i. Re-centered African metaphysics
- ii. Challenged epistemic marginalization
- iii. Integrated spirituality with sustainable development
- iv. Promoted innovative reinterpretations of indigenous thought

Religion in APAS discourse is not reduced to belief; it is treated as ontological foundation, moral epistemology, ecological ethic, and

developmental resource. As APAS moves toward its second decade, its continued engagement with Indigenous Knowledge Systems will remain indispensable for Africa's epistemic sovereignty and global intellectual relevance.

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SECTION III:

Culture, Identity, and the Reclamation of African Thought

11

APAS AT 10: THROUGH THE LENS OF AFROMODALISM AS METHOD AND MOVEMENT

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Introduction: The Philosophical Significance of a Decade

Institutional anniversaries are often commemorative. Yet, in intellectual communities, anniversaries also demand philosophical interrogation. Ten years of APAS invite questions that exceed chronology: *What kind of knowledge community has been formed? What epistemic orientation undergirds its activities? What future trajectories are implied in its first decade?* African Studies as a field has been historically shaped by colonial anthropology, missionary ethnography and externally framed research paradigms. Paulin Hountondji (1996) famously critiqued African scholarship as *extraverted*, oriented toward external academic validation rather than endogenous intellectual priorities. Kwasi Wiredu (1998) similarly called for conceptual decolonization, reworking philosophical discourse through African linguistic and cultural categories.

Within this historical context, APAS formation signals more than administrative organization. It represents an effort to consolidate Afrocentric scholarship as a self-conscious intellectual community. This paper argues that APAS first decade is best interpreted through Afromodalism: a philosophical orientation developed by J. I. Onebunne (2025), and the ontological category of belongingness embedded in African communal thought. Through these lenses, APAS emerges not merely as an association

but as a relational epistemic organism. In response, African scholars have increasingly foregrounded relational ontology and communal epistemology as corrective structural frameworks. John Mbiti (1969) and Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984) argue that African identity and personhood are constituted through communal participation, while Ramose (1999) situates *Ubuntu* as a living praxis of interconnection. Onebunne's (2025) Afrmodalism extends these principles, offering an integrative, modal approach that emphasizes relationality, interdisciplinary convergence and communal accountability. Crucially, belongingness emerges as the central strand connecting all the Afrmodals, linking epistemology, methodology, ethics and institutional praxis. This paper, therefore, examines APAS at ten years as a site of relational and modal reconstruction. Its objectives are to: trace APAS historical evolution; analyze its impact on African-centered scholarship, mentorship and institutional culture; interrogate how belongingness functions as a unifying principle within Afrmodalism; and project potential trajectories for the association in sustaining relational and transformative scholarship.

In sum, *APAS at 10, through the Lens of Afrmodalism as Method and Movement* invites a reflective yet critical engagement with the institution's decade-long journey. Rather than presenting APAS merely as an organization that has grown in years, this theme situates its history within a living philosophical trajectory. Afrmodalism functions as method, offering the conceptual tools for interpreting APAS's vision, structures, and intellectual engagements. At the same time, it operates as movement, expressing the dynamism of community formation, shared identity, and evolving belongingness that have animated its praxis. Over the past ten years, APAS has not only existed; it has become: shaping and being shaped by relational consciousness. Through this lens, the anniversary becomes more than commemoration; it becomes an opportunity to interpret impact, assess transformation and project future trajectories grounded in Afrmodal belongingness.

Literature Review

The field of African Studies has been marked by sustained critique of epistemic extraversion and fragmentation. Hountondji (1996) emphasizes the necessity of endogenic research agendas, while Wiredu (1998) advances conceptual decolonization, arguing that African philosophy must develop categories rooted in indigenous thought. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) situates these critiques within the broader context of coloniality, highlighting how structural inequalities continue to shape knowledge production and institutional development in postcolonial Africa. Relational and communal philosophies provide critical corrective insights. Mbiti (1969) emphasizes that, *I am because we are*, highlighting the ontological centrality of communal belongingness. Menkiti (1984) similarly situates personhood within social and generational networks, while Ramose (1999) conceptualizes *Ubuntu* as relational praxis guiding moral, social and intellectual life. These frameworks undergird contemporary efforts to restructure African scholarship around community-grounded epistemic practices.

Onebunne's (2025) Afromodalism builds on this intellectual heritage, offering a modal and relational framework for knowledge production. Afromodalism emphasizes relational integration, interdisciplinarity and communal accountability, positioning belongingness as the organizing principle. Every Afromodal dimension: epistemology, methodology, ethics and institutional design, presupposes belongingness as both foundation and guiding logic. APAS can, therefore, be situated within this discourse as an institutional embodiment of relational and modal scholarship, promoting African-centered research, mentorship and intergenerational continuity.

Aims and Objectives

This paper aims to critically examine the ten-year trajectory of APAS through the philosophical framework of Afromodalism

understood as both method and movement. It seeks to interpret the institution's growth, engagements, and impact not merely as administrative milestones, but as expressions of an evolving Afromodal consciousness grounded in belongingness. Specifically, the objectives are:

1. To articulate Afromodalism as a methodological lens for interpreting institutional identity and development.
2. To analyze how APAS embodies Afromodalism as movement, that is, as lived praxis expressed in community formation, relational engagement, and shared intellectual vision.
3. To evaluate the transformative impact of APAS over the past decade in light of belongingness as a central Afromodal principle.
4. To propose future trajectories for APAS that deepen its Afromodal commitment and communal relevance.

Methodological Approach

This study adopts a qualitative and philosophical-analytical approach grounded in Afromodalism as both interpretive framework and evaluative paradigm. It is a research that integrates African philosophical inquiry with institutional analysis. Data sources include literature on African Studies, APAS proceedings, publications, conference reports and Onebunne's online and formal writings on Afromodalism. Rather than employing purely empirical or statistical measurement, the paper engages in conceptual analysis, hermeneutical reflection and critical synthesis. Afromodalism functions as the primary methodological lens through which the historical development, institutional structures, programs and communal engagements of APAS are examined. The research draws on documentary sources such as foundational records, published works, conference proceedings, institutional reports and reflective narratives produced within the decade under review. These materials are analyzed thematically in light of core Afromodal principles, especially belongingness,

relationality, complementarity and communal becoming. In addition, the study employs reflective-historical interpretation, situating APAS within broader currents of African philosophical discourse and institutional development. By integrating philosophical reflection with institutional history, the methodology allows for a critical yet celebratory reading of APAS at ten, assessing not only what has been achieved, but how its journey embodies Afromodalism as both method and movement.

Conceptual Appreciation of Afromodalism

Afromodalism is an emerging African philosophical framework that integrates ontology, epistemology and ethics within a distinctly African worldview. The term *Afromodalism* is derived from *Afro* referring to African identity, and *modal*, indicating a mode of being and knowing (Onebunne, 2025). As such, it is more than a descriptive or cultural notion; it articulates a distinct modality of African existence and knowledge, emphasizing relationality and praxis. Central to Afromodalism is the ontological interconnectedness of all entities. Existence, from this perspective, is fundamentally relational: individuals, communities, ancestors, and the spiritual world are inseparable in defining what it means *to be* (Onebunne, 2025). This view aligns with classical African philosophical ideas, such as Mbiti's (1969) assertion that *I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am*, highlighting the communal constitution of personhood.

Afromodalism also foregrounds epistemological relationality, wherein knowledge emerges not from isolated reasoning but from collective life, lived experience and communal practices (Onebunne, 2025). This perspective challenges Eurocentric epistemologies by positioning knowledge as inseparable from social context and communal interaction, resonating with broader African philosophical debates about indigenous knowledge systems (Wiredu, 1996). Ethically, Afromodalism promotes

communal as well as communitarian orientation, emphasizing responsibility, solidarity and collective flourishing. In this regard, moral agency is understood not as autonomous choice but as participation in the well-being of the community, reflecting the principles of the Afromodals and other African relational ethics (Onebunne, 2025). This positions of Afromodalism is both normative and practical, guiding moral and social conduct in ways deeply rooted in African communal ontologies. Another key feature of Afromodalism is its praxis-oriented character, which distinguishes it from abstract theorizing. It encourages active engagement with existential and socio-political challenges through African normative frameworks, thereby bridging the gap between philosophical reflection and practical action (Onebunne, 2025). In this way, Afromodalism contributes to the ongoing project of decolonial philosophy, creating space for African philosophical agency and challenging the dominance of Western paradigms (Wiredu, 1996). Despite its promise, Afromodalism remains a nascent concept, with limited critical debate and application beyond conceptual exposition. Afromodalism can be greatly appreciated in comprehensive articulation of Afromodality and Afromodals. Conceptually, *Afromodalism* is the overarching structure. By way of definition, Afromodalism is a philosophical movement and method that foregrounds African modes of knowing, being and relating. It emphasizes belongingness, communal values and the harmonization of diverse African epistemologies into a coherent framework. It serves as both philosophical lens and critical methodology for analyzing African realities, social structures and knowledge systems. Rather than being prescriptive, it is transformative, guiding thought and action through African-centered values and practices. Afromodalism is like the umbrella theory or approach under which nuances of Afromodality and Afromodals operate.

Afromodalism as a Critical Movement

Afromodalism has evolved beyond a conceptual framework or methodological orientation to emerge as a critical philosophical movement that engages with African realities, decolonial thought and global philosophical discourse. As a movement, it operates on multiple levels: intellectually, socially and ethically, seeking to reshape African self-understanding, knowledge production and communal praxis (Onebunne, 2025). As a critical movement, Afromodalism is inherently decolonial, challenging the dominance of Western philosophical paradigms and epistemologies in the interpretation of African lived and shared experiences. It critiques the historical marginalization of African knowledge systems, insisting that African philosophical thought must be grounded in African ontologies, ethics, and epistemologies (Wiredu, 1996). Through this lens, Afromodalism aligns with broader African philosophical movements, such as Afrocentricity and African humanism, but differentiates itself by emphasizing relational modalities of existence, highlighting interconnectedness and relational responsibility as core principles (Onebunne, 2025; Gyekye, 1997). This critical stance also involves a normative reorientation: it evaluates social, political and economic structures against African ethical frameworks. For instance, policy-making, education and community engagement are examined through relational and communal lenses rather than imported individualist norms. In this way, Afromodalism functions as a philosophical corrective measures that re-centers African agencies and worldviews in global discourse.

Beyond critique, Afromodalism constitutes a philosophical movement in its capacity to inspire collective intellectual engagement and social action. Scholars, educators and community leaders who adopt Afromodalism do not only theorize but also seek to implement relational ethics and communal values in practical life (Onebunne, 2025). The movement emphasizes that philosophy

should intersect with social realities, promoting education, research and policy interventions that reflect African ethical and ontological principles. This aligns with the broader African philosophical tradition in which philosophical inquiry is inseparable from the lived social and shared moral life of communities. By framing philosophy as a movement, Afrmodalism mobilizes ideas into action, creating a bridge between abstract thought and transformative praxis (cf Oruka, 1990). Afrmodalism, as a movement, also represents cultural and philosophical renewal. It seeks to reimagine African identity, knowledge systems and ethical life in ways that respond to both historical injustices and contemporary global challenges (Onebunne, 2025). This renewal is both inward-searching and outward-looking: it affirms African intellectual traditions while engaging critically with global philosophical currents, thereby establishing African thought as dynamic, rigorous and globally relevant. Moreover, the movement encourages interdisciplinary dialogue, connecting philosophy with education, governance, social policy, and environmental ethics, ensuring that African philosophical insights are not confined to academic abstraction but inform societal transformation (Wiredu, 1996). In essence, Afrmodalism as a critical philosophical movement functions to: critique and decolonize dominant epistemologies and social norms; mobilize philosophical reflection into practical social and ethical engagement, and renew African intellectual and cultural identity, integrating relational ethics and communal values into contemporary discourse. As such, Afrmodalism positions itself not merely as a concept or method but as a living philosophical movement, capable of influencing thought, policy and community life across Africa and the diaspora (Onebunne, 2025).

Afrmodalism as a Methodological Model

Afrmodalism is not merely a theoretical construct; it functions both as a conceptual structure and as a methodological approach for

engaging with African realities, knowledge systems and social practices (Onebunne, 2025). Its dual function reflects a uniquely African orientation toward knowledge, where theory and praxis are inseparable. As a framework, Afromodalism provides a relational and holistic lens for understanding African ontologies, epistemologies, and ethics. It highlights interconnectedness and relationality as central to human and non-human existence, guiding interpretation of social, political, and cultural phenomena (Onebunne, 2025). Within this framework, human beings are not isolated agents but exist in continuous dialogue with community, environment and spiritual realms, a perspective deeply resonant with classical African thought, such as the philosophy of *Ubuntu* and *Igwebuike*. By emphasizing relationality, Afromodalism offers a normative guide for social organization and ethical engagement, encouraging actions that prioritize communal flourishing over individualistic pursuits. Thus, the framework simultaneously articulates African philosophical principles and provides a lens for critical reflection on contemporary challenges, including governance, education and development.

Methodologically, Afromodalism offers a praxis-oriented approach for research and engagement within the African contexts. Rather than treating philosophy as abstract theorization, it encourages scholars and practitioners to immerse themselves in lived experiences, communal practices, and indigenous knowledge systems. Knowledge production, from an Afromodal perspective, emerges through dialogical engagement with communities, reflective practice, and ethical participation in social life. This method aligns with broader African philosophical methodologies that prioritize participatory, narrative and context-sensitive approaches, such as ethnophilosophy and communal inquiry (Oruka, 1990). Afromodalism specifically emphasizes modality of connectedness, which directs researchers to attend not only to observable social phenomena but also to underlying relational

structures that shape ethical, epistemic and ontological realities (Onebunne, 2025). In practical research, employing Afromodalism as a method may involve: integrating indigenous narratives and oral histories into analysis; applying communal ethical lenses in interpreting social behavior; designing interventions or policies grounded in collective relational ethics, rather than individualistic models. Through this methodological orientation, Afromodalism bridges theory and practice, making philosophical reflection both analytically rigorous and socially relevant. In sum, by functioning simultaneously as a model and a method, Afromodalism provides a holistic, relational and praxis-oriented philosophy. As a framework, it offers conceptual tools to analyze African realities through relational and ethical lenses. As a method, it guides research and practical engagement, emphasizing immersion in communal life, reflection on relational dynamics and alignment with African ethical norms. This duality positions Afromodalism as a versatile approach for scholars, educators and practitioners seeking to advance African-centered knowledge production and social transformation.

Belongingness as a Common Strand through Afromodals

One of the fundamental lenses through which Afromodalism thrives is belongingness. Within the architecture of Afromodalism, as a methodological and philosophical movement grounded in relationality, belongingness functions not merely as a social sentiment but as an ontological and epistemological principle. It is the strand that weaves together the tapestry of Afromodals: *igwebuike*, *ubuntu*, *egbeberegobere*, *onyeaghananwanneya*, *birikambiri*, *kwetuism*, *njikoka*, *consciencism*, *ibuanyidanda*, *et cetera*. In African philosophy, established within African worldviews, as love of African wisdom as well as a disciplinary movement, the self is not conceived as an isolated substance but as a being-in-relation. This insight is most popularly captured in the *Ubuntu* maxim articulated by John Mbiti: *I am because we are; and*

since we are, therefore I am (Mbiti, 1969).

Belongingness, therefore, expresses the metaphysical structure of personhood. Similarly, in Igwebuike philosophy developed by Anthony I. Kanu and systematized further by contemporary scholars, reality is understood as a web of complementary relationships where meaning emerges through interconnectedness (Asouzu, 2004). In this sense, belongingness is not accidental but constitutive of being. Within *ibuanyidanda*, articulated by Innocent I. Asouzu, the principle of complementarity (*no task is insurmountable for the ants working together*) underscores belongingness as existential solidarity (Asouzu, 2007). Likewise, *onyeaghalanwanneya* (let no one abandon his sibling) reinforces the ethical imperative of communal responsibility. Belongingness thus becomes the moral fiber of Afromodalism. As a methodological lens, belongingness allows Afromodalism to transcend fragmentation in knowledge production. It resists atomistic, exclusionary epistemologies and promotes dialogical inclusivity. As a movement, it reclaims African communal consciousness as a transformative force for education, politics and social reconstruction. Therefore, belongingness remains the tapestry strand in Afromodals because it binds ontology, ethics, and epistemology into a coherent framework of relational existence. Without belongingness, Afromodalism would lose its integrative power; with it, it becomes a living philosophy of interconnected being and shared becoming.

Belongingness as the Thread of Unity Across Afromodals

Within the thematic framework of *APAS at 10: Through the Lens of Afromodalism as Method and Movement*, belongingness stands out as the unifying strand that runs through the diverse Afromodals: *Igwebuike*, *Ubuntu*, *Egheberegobere*, *Onyeaghalanwanneya*, *Birikambiri*, *Njik?ka*, *Kwetuism*, *Ibuanyidanda*, *et cetera*. Despite their linguistic and cultural variations, these conceptual formations converge on a shared philosophical intuition: that reality is

relational and that existence finds its fullest meaning within a network of mutual belonging. *Igwebuike* expresses belongingness as strength in unity, affirming that collective solidarity enhances human flourishing. *Ubuntu* deepens this insight by grounding personhood in relational identity, one becomes fully human through others (Mbiti, 1969; Metz, 2011). *Ibuanyidanda* articulates belongingness through complementarity, where each entity is a missing link that finds fulfillment only in connection with others (Asouzu, 2007). Similarly, *Njik?ka* and *Birikambiri* emphasize interconnectedness and communal bonds, while *Onyeaghananwanneya* and *Egbebereugobere* underscore kinship, mutual responsibility and shared destiny. *Kwetuism*, in its own framing, reinforces the idea of *home* as a symbolic space of inclusion and rootedness.

Across these Afromodals, belongingness is not incidental but foundational. Belongingness, in this sense, is not merely a social sentiment but an ontological condition of being. It defines being, guides action, and structures knowledge. In the context of APAS, this shared principle operates both as method and movement. As method, it shapes how the institution interprets its identity and engagements, prioritizing relationality, inclusivity and communal meaning. As movement, it is embodied in the lived experiences of members through collaboration, mentorship, and collective intellectual pursuit. Within APAS's decade-long journey, this shared strand of belongingness is both methodologically operative and existentially enacted. Thus, at ten, APAS reflects the living synthesis of these Afromodal insights, demonstrating that belongingness is not only a philosophical idea but a transformative force that sustains community, drives institutional growth, and anchors African-centered thought in praxis.

Belongingness as Ontology of Connectedness

Belongingness in African philosophy is ontological and

ontosophical before it is sociological. John Mbiti (1969) locates African identity within communal participation of *I am because we are*. If existence itself is a relational participation, then alienation constitutes an ontological diminishment. Menkiti (1984) similarly asserts that personhood is achieved within community. Identity is not prior to belonging; it is constituted through it. Belongingness, therefore, implies: rooted participation, shared memory, intergenerational continuity and mutual responsibility. When applied to African studies, belongingness demands that scholars experience intellectual homecoming. Colonial education often alienated African scholars from indigenous epistemologies. APAS emergence offers a counter-space, a site where African categories frame discourse and communal affirmation replaces epistemic marginalization. From an Afromodality perspective, belongingness is not an emotional attachment but a modal alignment. Scholars, however, belong when their works resonate with communal realities and relational integration. Hence, belongingness requires continuity. mentorship within APAS which nevertheless embodies intergenerational transmission.

APAS Through the Lens of Afromodality

The ten-year trajectory of APAS offers a fertile ground for philosophical reflection when examined through the lens of Afromodality as both method and movement. At its core, Afromodality privileges endogenous modes of knowing, being and relating, emphasizing that authentic African institutional development must emerge from within the lived experiences, shared values and communal consciousness of its people rather than from externally imposed (exogenous) structures. This distinction is crucial in interpreting APAS not merely as an organization that has grown over time, but as a dynamic site of African philosophical becoming. As method, Afromodality provides the analytical model through which APAS's identity,

structures and engagements can be understood. It initiates principles such as relationality, complementarity, and belongingness, conceptual ideas deeply rooted in African thought systems in Afromodals, which emphasize interconnectedness and communal existence (Asouzu, 2007). Through this methodological lens, APAS's initiatives: its conferences, scholarly dialogues and communal activities, can be interpreted as deliberate efforts to cultivate an intellectual space that is internally grounded and culturally resonant. In this sense, APAS reflects an endogenous epistemic orientation, resisting the uncritical adoption of exogenous paradigms that may alienate African realities.

Simultaneously, Afromodalism operates as movement, embodying lived praxis and institutional dynamism. Over the past decade, APAS has functioned as a community of shared purpose, fostering collaboration, mentorship, and collective intellectual growth. This aligns with the African philosophical emphasis on being-with-others, where identity and meaning are constituted through relationships (Mbiti, 1969). The movement dimension underscores that APAS is not static; it is continuously evolving through the interactions, commitments, and contributions of its members. In this regard, Afromodalism transcends abstract theorization and becomes a lived, transformative force shaping both individuals and the institution. The tapestry of interplay between method and movement reveals that APAS's impact is both conceptual and practical, (cf. Kanu, 2014). It demonstrates how an institution can embody philosophy not only in thought but in action, translating endogenous principles into tangible practices that sustain community and intellectual vitality. This dual character also positions APAS as a model for African-centered institutional development, where growth is measured not solely by

external metrics but by the depth of communal belonging and shared meaning. In sum, viewing APAS at 10 through the lens of Afromodalism as method and movement highlights a decade of transformative becoming. It affirms the importance of grounding institutional life in endogenous values while remaining dynamically engaged as a movement of belongingness. Such a perspective not only interprets the past but also provides a philosophical foundation for projecting a future that is authentically African, relationally grounded, and intellectually vibrant.

However, APAS operationalizes in communal transformation. Thus, APAS' significance cannot be measured merely by events organized. Again, APAS founding moment represents this relational consolidation. Scholars recognized the need for communal coordination of African Studies. From an Afromodal perspective, such formation is a modal necessity where relational beings are organizing relational amidst communal scholarship. APAS conferences, however, becomes an *epistemic gatherings*. This is why academic conferences within APAS function as dialogical convergence points. The expected modal integration occurs when disciplines encounter one another within African-centered frameworks. APAS has fostered research agendas centered on African priorities rather than externally imposed frameworks. This a shift that strengthens epistemic agency. These gatherings enact belongingness as a common strand in Afromodals. Scholars who previously experienced fragmentation find communal affirmation. Hence, publications emerging from APAS contribute to conceptual sovereignty, where African categories interpret African realities, highlighting tradition as living continuity rather than static inheritance, and emphasizing conceptual decolonization through language and thought

categories. Afrmodalism extends these institutional frameworks through APAS publications as modal artifacts as well as expressions of integrated, foundational and communal epistemologies.

Conclusion

The researcher, however, concludes through a thorough discussion and the findings with great bent on the recommendations. The examination of APAS over its first decade, through the lens of Afrmodalism as method and movement, reveals a dynamic interplay between institutional structures, communal engagement, and philosophical praxis. The findings indicate that APAS has consistently embodied Afrmodal principles, particularly belongingness that strands in *igwebuike*, relationality, and complementarity, in its organizational ethos. Programs, workshops, and conferences initiated over the past ten years were not merely administrative activities but deliberate enactments of community-centered learning, knowledge sharing, and intellectual co-creation, reflecting Afrmodalism as a lived methodology. Discussion of these findings highlights that APAS's impact is both transformative and relational. Students, scholars, and practitioners associated with APAS have experienced a sense of connectedness and shared purpose that transcends individual achievement. Through initiatives that foster collaboration and inclusivity, the institution has demonstrated that Afrmodalism is not only a conceptual lens but also a movement shaping institutional identity and practice. The alignment of APAS's activities with African philosophical values, such as *Igwebuike*, *Ibuanyidanda*, *Onyeaghananwanneya*, and *Ubuntu*, illustrates how belongingness can be operationalized to produce sustainable intellectual and communal development.

The conclusion emphasizes that the first decade of APAS is a testament to the efficacy of Afrmodalism as both analytical framework and transformative practice. The institution's journey

reflects a continual process of becoming, where communal consciousness and intellectual rigor are mutually reinforcing. APAS's experience demonstrates that philosophy, when operationalized as praxis, can generate tangible institutional and social impact. Recommendations for the future include: consolidating and expanding programs that reinforce belongingness and relational engagement; fostering interdisciplinary and cross-cultural collaborations to broaden Afromodal influence; integrating systematic reflection on Afromodal principles into institutional planning and evaluation; and documenting best practices to serve as a model for emerging African-centered scholarly initiatives. These steps will ensure that APAS not only commemorates its first ten years but also projects a forward-looking vision, maintaining Afromodalism as both method and movement that continues to shape knowledge, community, and institutional life.

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12

AFRICAN IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND VALUES IN ASSOCIATION OF PROMOTION OF AFRICAN STUDIES (APAS) SCHOLARSHIP

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Introduction

Identity is a strong feeling of belonging to a particular group or race through cultural displays, tribal marks, symbols and languages. According to Kalu (2013:90) “the principle of identity is a value expressed by one of the first principle of being. It states that every being is determined in itself, is one with itself and is consistent in itself. Thus every being is one with itself and divided from others”. the author goes further to say that if being does not have an identity, then everything would be everything, giving birth to one thing since nothing can be differentiated from the other. Africa is home to thousands of ethnic groups, languages, and traditions. African identity extends beyond the continent, encompassing people of African descent worldwide. Migration and diaspora experiences add layers of complexity to what it means to be African. This diversity means African identity is not singular but a mosaic of cultures and beliefs. African identity, culture, and values have long been subjects of scholarly inquiry which refers to the shared cultural, historical, and social characteristics that define people of African origin, emphasizing community, heritage, and diversity across the continent. It is shaped by traditions, languages, colonial history, and the collective sense of belonging to Africa. African identity was historically rooted in communalism, kinship systems, and spiritual traditions. Identity was collective rather than individualistic, emphasizing belonging to a community, lineage, and land (*community and family-hood*). The concept of “being-

with” highlights interconnectedness and collective responsibility. Then came colonial disruptions in which European colonialism imposed foreign systems of governance, education, and religion, which disrupted indigenous identities. African identity became contested, often framed through colonial stereotypes. **Historical Influence** colonialism, slavery, and racial ideologies deeply impacted African identity, sometimes distorting self-perception. Yet, resilience and cultural pride remain central to reclaiming identity. The loss of African culture and values will in turn amount to social instability and loss of African long cherished identity. These cultures are manifest in art, music, fashion, spirituality, and philosophies which highlight unity in diversity.

The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) emerged as a scholarly body dedicated to advancing African-centered research and intellectual discourse. Its mission is not only to preserve African traditions but also to promote critical engagement with Africa's diverse cultural and philosophical heritage. This paper investigates how APAS scholarship has contributed to the promotion of African identity, culture and values. In short, **African identity is about shared heritage, community, and resilience, while embracing the continent's vast diversity.** African identity fosters solidarity across different ethnic and cultural groups. The **global influence of music, art, and philosophy** rooted in African identity shape global culture. Reclaiming African identity strengthens pride, self-determination, and resistance against lingering colonial narratives. In short, **African identity is both diverse and unifying—rooted in communal values, cultural heritage, and resilience against historical challenges.** It continues to evolve, especially as Africans in the diaspora contribute new dimensions to its meaning.

An Overview of African Culture

Over thousands of years of history, the Africans have created brilliant history and culture, and at the same time have formed their

own moral codes that have played an important role in social development and progress. This is what we call traditional virtues, which still have great significance today and whose values to the development of human civilization is now widely recognized.

Culture is the totality of learned, socially transmitted customs, knowledge, material objects, and behaviour. It includes ideas, values, customs, and artifacts (for example DVDs, comic books, and birth control devices) of groups of people. It consists of all objects and ideas within a society, including the values, beliefs, language, rituals, traditions, and behaviors passed from one generation to another within a social group. It shapes how people live, interact, and understand the world around them. It is *the beliefs, customs, arts, etc. of a particular social group, place, or time. It can also be said to be “the social behavior, institutions, and norms found in human societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities, attitudes, and habits of individuals in these groups”*. Each people has a distinctive culture with its own characteristic ways of gathering and preparing food, constructing homes, structuring the family, and promoting the standards of right and wrong. The fact that you share a similar culture with others helps to define the group or society to which you belong. A fairly large number of people are said to constitute a society when they live in the same territory, are relatively independent of people outside their area, and participate in a common culture. Culture is learned through *socialization* and *enculturation*—children absorb traditions, language, and values from family and community. It evolves when societies interact, migrate, or face new challenges as well as provides a sense of belonging and shapes personal and collective identity.

All societies have developed certain common practices and beliefs, known as cultural universals. Many cultural universals are, in fact, adaptation to meet essential human needs, such as people's need for

food, shelter and clothing. These may be universals, but the manner in which they are expressed varies from culture to culture. For example, one society may let its members choose their own marriage partners. Another may encourage marriages arranged by the parents. Not only does the expression of cultural universals vary from one society to another; it may also change dramatically over time within a society. Each generation, and each year for that matter, most human cultures change and expand through the processes of innovation and diffusion. African culture encompasses languages, oral traditions, music, art, religion, and social practices.

Language is a critical element of culture that sets humans apart from other species. It stands out as the basis of all creative thought and acquisition of language is of particular importance for the process of humanization and socialization of all sorts. Members of a society generally share a common language, which facilitates day-to-day exchanges with others. Indigenous languages are preserved as carriers of cultural memory. Language occupies a central position in the building, dissemination and transmission of culture. It creates society. Values essentially require languages to embed and articulate them. This shows that language contains traditional values and this is what is implied in the ideas of social stability (Nwokoye, & Eze, 2013).

Oral Traditions: This is derived from oral literature which refers primarily to storytelling, proverbs, and folklore as vehicles of wisdom. These are accentuated by body movements to tell stories, express feelings and reflect the social conditions. African festivals are celebrations of African culture and heritage which serves as a means of re-uniting the people of a particular community. Every community has a culture that is loaded with celebrations and ceremonies, these ceremonies could be in the form of festivals, carnivals, rites etc. In these celebrations, the people's way of live

becomes visible. In traditional African society, no individual exists alone but corporately existing with others. He owes his existence to other people including those of past generation and his contemporaries. Whatever that happens to an individual is believed to have happened to the whole group. The essence of traditional African festivals is not only to create an environment for interaction, but to create a bond in the course of this interaction. For this reason, festival celebrations involve everybody in the community at various levels (Maha, 2013).

Art and music: Africa, a continent of long history with profound culture, inherited and developed a great variety of traditional art forms which suit both refined and popular tastes. The arts have been part of the history of the various African cultures and indeed served as the face of the cultures of these various groups. The performing arts continue to reflect issues that communicate the embodiment of the spiritual essence of a person or groups (hence the ritual) and the physical action that clearly reflect an action and its consequences. This reflects the social cohesion and consequences of breaking from the norm. From the melodious and pleasant folk music to the elaborate and touching local dramas and paintings, traditional African arts have tremendously impressed the world.

Religion: Religion is an inevitable part of the human life and human society; a collective act that includes many forms of behaviour in which people interact with others. It is a matrix of African culture, which cuts across people, institutions and relationship. It is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things. It involves a set of beliefs and practices that are uniquely the property of religion, as opposed to other social institutions and ways of thinking he argued that religious faiths distinguish between certain transcending events and the everyday world. These are referred to as the sacred and the profane. The sacred encompasses elements beyond everyday life that inspire

awe, respect, and even fear. People become part of the sacred realm only by completing some ritual, such as prayer or sacrifice. Because believers have faith in the sacred, they accept what they cannot understand. In contrast, the profane includes the ordinary and commonplace. Religion fulfill social function by providing social support as well as reinforce social norms. It provides both manifest and latent functions. APAS emphasizes that African culture is dynamic, adapting to modernity while retaining core values.

African Values

African values are rooted in African traditions which are culturally the African identity. They are not static but fluid for they serve as guiding principles for identity, social cohesion and development across the continent. For preservation of African culture to be sustained, the values which represent the best of her African nations should be documented and promoted. An understanding of the tensions within the emerging values and traditional values can be a focal point in exploring the deep question of human existence. A value is a principle, belief, or standard that guides behaviour and decision-making. Values help individuals and societies determine what is considered *good, desirable, or important*. **Examples:** Honesty, respect, freedom, hard work, justice. Values are essentially the moral compass or guiding ideals that shape how people live and interact. African values are the guiding principles rooted in African traditions, philosophies, and communal life. They emphasize collective well-being over individualism. African values are deeply embedded in philosophical traditions such as Ubuntu (“I am because we are”), communalism, respect for elders, and harmony with nature. The loss of core values and the destabilization of Igbo society that the late Chinua Achebe bemoaned when he wrote that following the arrival of the white man and his culture “Things Fall Apart” in Igbo land and the people are “No Longer at Ease” (social destabilization). This is social

identity which is the knowledge that (one) belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance of the group membership. Divergent interest and values may restrict concessions and cooperation among members of different ethnic groups, yet there are generally some political, economic and social ties that unite members of different nations. APAS scholarship foregrounds collective responsibility and solidarity, respect for elders, for authority and wisdom are derived from age and experience. Also there should be integration of the sacred and secular in daily life and justice and equity should be maintained as traditional systems of conflict resolution. Welcoming strangers and sharing resources generously as well as helping one another, especially in times of need. These values challenge Western individualism and offer alternative frameworks for ethics and social organization.

Conclusion

African identity, culture, and values remain central to understanding Africa's place in the world. The arts have contributed to development from political, socio-economic as well as religio-philosophical perspectives. First of all, we establish our identity through the use of our various native languages. Identity, whether it is or at an individual, social or institutional level, is something we are constantly building and negotiating all our lives through our interactions with others. APAS scholarship has played a pivotal role in affirming these elements, challenging colonial legacies, and promoting African-centered knowledge. In Africa, arts in the past had been seen as inferior to Western art and other forms. There is need for recovery of the past for sustainability purposes knowing fully well that arts forge social cohesion and are relevant to development of societies. APAS serves as a hub for African-centered scholarship. Its contributions include: academic conferences, creating platforms for scholars to present African-focused research papers as well as publications of journals and books that disseminate African perspectives;

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13

APAS AND THE REAWAKENING OF AFRICAN-CENTRED SCHOLARSHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Introduction

True scholarship demands intellectual integrity: the presentation of unadulterated evidence, respect for diverse worldviews, and the absolute rejection of hate speech, false agendas, or racial denigration. The academy loses its way when knowledge becomes a tool for cultural supremacy or historical erasure. Rigorous inquiry must defend the dignity of all peoples, ensuring that no civilisation's contributions are distorted to serve ideological ends (Glassick, Huber, & Maeroff, 1997).

Africa's apparent lack of written records is not evidence of absent scholarship. The continent was the cradle of intellectual endeavour. Alexandria's Mouseion, founded in the third century BCE, housed hundreds of thousands of volumes that preserved and advanced human knowledge across mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and philosophy (El-Abbadi, 1990). This repository suffered catastrophic destruction. In 48 BCE, Julius Caesar's forces burned warehouses containing an estimated 40,000 to 400,000 scrolls during the Alexandrian War (El-Abbadi, 1990). More devastating was the 391 CE attack led by Archbishop Theophilus, whose Christian followers systematically destroyed the Serapeum,

annihilating what remained of antiquity's greatest library and erasing centuries of African-based wisdom from accessible memory (El-Abbadi, 1990).

European scholars exploited this documentary void to fabricate Africa's past. Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* (1956) notoriously dismissed Africa as "no historical part of the world," a continent with "no movement or development to exhibit" (cited by Okwuadimma, 2021, p.1; Samuel, 2021). This assertion, delivered from complete ignorance, became foundational for subsequent colonial narratives. V. Y. Mudimbe (1988) termed this constructed repository the "colonial library": administrative reports, missionary accounts, and anthropological surveys that systematically depicted African societies as primitive and pre-logical. Oral traditions were deprecated by unfamiliar historians, reinforcing the fiction that Africa possessed neither history nor the desire to create it (Okonkwo, 2025). This gaslighting positioned Europe as humanity's sole source of reason; a theft of history that was also a theft of humanity.

The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) confronts this legacy directly. Founded in 2016 by Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, Professor of African Philosophy at Tansian University, APAS is an institutional response to the urgent need for endogenous knowledge production (The Sun Nigeria, 2020). Through international conferences, scholarly networks, and journals including the *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, *OCHENDO*, and *AKU*, APAS cultivates research that articulates African realities from indigenous perspectives (Association for the Promotion of African Studies, 2025).

The present study critically examines APAS as an intellectual movement reshaping contemporary scholarship. The problem

addressed is the persistent marginalisation of African-centred research within global discourse: A marginalisation reinforced by limited institutional support and dominant external paradigms. A significant gap exists regarding the specific role of new institutional formations in advancing this intellectual reawakening. Therefore, this study aims to: (a) analyse the mechanisms through which APAS strengthens research networks and stimulates critical debate on African development and human security; and (b) evaluate how its outputs expand scholarly resources for African philosophy and indigenous epistemologies. Employing qualitative documentary analysis of APAS publications, conference proceedings, and institutional records, interpreted through the lens of Afrocentricity, this research demonstrates how African scholarship reclaims its voice. The study's justification lies in documenting the mechanisms through which endogenous knowledge production repositions the continent as a foundational site of philosophical reflection in the twenty-first century, while also identifying the institutional support required to sustain this trajectory.

Literature Review

The colonial construction of Africa as a people without history, epitomised by Hegel and embedded within Mudimbe's (1988) "colonial library," necessitated a scholarly countermovement documenting how the destruction of repositories like the Library of Alexandria enabled this erasure. Scholars subsequently focused on recovering indigenous epistemologies. Mawere (2011) argued the debate on African philosophy's existence is exhausted; the task now is systematising knowledge embedded within African cultural practices. This turn represents a shift from defensive postures to constructive articulation.

Contemporary discourse now addresses structural conditions of

knowledge production. Masaka (2018) critically examined "epistemicide" and pathways to epistemic emancipation. Institutional frameworks have emerged to reconfigure global research dynamics. The Africa Charter for Transformative Research Collaborations (University of South Africa, 2025) explicitly calls for a "pluriversal" academic order where African epistemologies stand in dialogue with Western systems.

Despite these advances, a significant gap persists in examining continentally grounded institutional formations consolidating this intellectual reawakening. The present study provides the first systematic examination of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS), founded by Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu (African Studies Centre Leiden, 2026). Its uniqueness lies in analysing APAS's specific mechanisms: its conferences, journals such as the *Journal of African Studies* and *Sustainable Development*, and its cultivation of indigenous frameworks. This study is justified as a critical investigation into how a contemporary African scholarly institution actively reshapes research networks and reclaims the continent as a site of foundational intellectual reflection.

Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily anchored in Afrocentricity, as developed by Molefi Kete Asante. Afrocentricity argues that African people and experiences must be treated as agents in the production and interpretation of knowledge rather than as objects of analysis (Asante, 1998). The framework therefore calls for the centring of African historical experiences, cultural values, and intellectual traditions when analysing African realities. In this study, Afrocentricity serves as the principal analytical lens for examining whether the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) advances African-centred scholarship and repositions

Africans as producers and interpreters of knowledge about their own societies.

To further situate this analysis, the study engages V. Y. Mudimbe's (1988) concept of the “colonial library.” Mudimbe demonstrates how colonial-era missionary writings, anthropological accounts, and administrative reports constructed dominant representations of Africa that shaped global scholarship about the continent. These inherited narratives often portrayed Africa through external interpretive frameworks. In this study, the concept of the colonial library provides a critical tool for assessing whether APAS's intellectual activities challenge these inherited epistemic structures and promote alternative narratives grounded in African perspectives.

The study also draws on the idea of endogeny, associated with Archie Mafeje (1998). Endogeny emphasises the importance of producing knowledge from African social realities and epistemological traditions rather than relying primarily on externally imposed theoretical frameworks. Within this research, the concept provides a basis for evaluating whether APAS contributes to strengthening locally grounded scholarship and intellectual autonomy in African studies.

Taken together, Afrocentricity, the critique of the colonial library, and the principle of endogeny provide a coherent framework for analysing APAS as an intellectual platform that seeks to promote African-centred knowledge production and challenge long-standing colonial patterns in the study of Africa.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative design to examine the Association for the Promotion of African Studies as an intellectual movement.

Data are drawn from documentary sources, including its journals, conference proceedings, and institutional records, with support from relevant secondary literature. Documents are selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance to African philosophy, indigenous epistemologies, development discourse, and human security. Qualitative content analysis is used, with texts organised into themes such as knowledge production, reinterpretation of African traditions, critique of colonial narratives, and institutional engagement.

Theoretical Analysis is guided by Afrocentricity as articulated by Molefi Kete Asante, which centres African agency and assesses the promotion of endogenous knowledge. Credibility is ensured through the use of multiple sources and consistent interpretation. This study relies only on publicly available documents and does not involve human participants; ethical approval was therefore not required, and all sources are properly acknowledged.

Brief History of Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS)

The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) originated from a recognition of a scholarly lacuna in the study of African affairs. In January 2016, Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, OSA, conceptualised the association and initiated discussions with a cadre of academics to refine this vision (Ndubisi, 2026). The founding members, who now largely constitute the Board of Trustees, included Prof. Ejikemeuwa J. O. Ndubisi, Dr. Kanayor Nwadiakor, Dr. Chiugo Kanu, Dr. Uchenna Kanu, and subsequently Prof. Nkechinyere Nwokoye (Ndubisi, 2026). The association was formally registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission of Nigeria on 15 January 2018, bearing the number CAC/IT/NO 105112 (Ndubisi, 2026). Its foundational objective was to foster robust academic discourse on African developmental and ideological questions. The inaugural international conference,

themed "African Ideologies in a World of Change," was held from 13 to 15 June 2018 at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, in collaboration with Alternative Perspectives and Global Concerns (APGC), Canada (Ndubisi, 2026). This event saw the presentation of 66 papers and marked the commencement of the association's scholarly output, which includes the Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development, launched the same year.

Subsequent annual conferences trace the evolution of the association's thematic focus. The 2019 conference, held in collaboration with the Civil Society Organization Network on Migration and Development, addressed "African Identity and Migration Question in our Contemporary World" (Kanu, 2019). The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 necessitated a shift to hybrid and virtual formats, resulting in two conferences that year: one on "African Ideologies, Human Security, and Peace-Building" and another on the pandemic's Afrocentric implications (Kanu, 2020; Ndubisi, 2026). This period also witnessed the expansion of the association's publication portfolio with the introduction of two new journals.

Geographic expansion characterised the 2022 conference, held at Tangaza University College, Nairobi, Kenya, with the theme "A Global Dialogue on African Philosophy, Religion, and Culture" (Ndubisi, 2026). The 2023 conference at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, examined "Africa in the Global Community: Landmark Achievements, Setbacks, and Future Developments," contributing to the volume *Politics and Economic Development in Africa* (Kanu et al., 2023). The 2024 conference, returning to Nnamdi Azikiwe University, focused on "African Heritage and Sustainability in the Global Future" and featured the presentation of 146 papers (Ndubisi, 2026).

Between 2018 and 2024, APAS organised eight international

conferences, facilitating the presentation of over 744 papers and the publication of 22 Books of Proceedings (Ndubisi, 2026). Its scholarly infrastructure now includes three journals, which have collectively produced 17 volumes and 57 issues (Ndubisi, 2026). Membership grew substantially from 36 registered members in 2018 to 231 by 2024, reflecting a growth rate exceeding 600 per cent (Ndubisi, 2026).

In accordance with its constitutional provisions, the founder, Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, initiated a transition to an elected executive in February 2024 (Ndubisi, 2026). Consequently, during the May 2024 Annual General Assembly, an election was conducted, resulting in a new executive team. This team is led by Prof. Ejikemeuwa J. O. Ndubisi as President and Prof. Nkechinyere Nwokoye as Vice President, with the founder assuming the role of Ex-Officio Member (Ndubisi, 2026). This formalisation of leadership marks a significant phase in the association's institutional development.

Colonial Disruption and the Marginalisation of African Scholarship

Colonial rule altered the structure and direction of knowledge production in Africa. It displaced indigenous systems of thought and replaced them with European frameworks. This shift did not only affect politics and the economy. It also reshaped how knowledge was created, validated, and transmitted. African scholarship became marginal within its own context (Etuk & Ibuot, 2024; Egara et al., 2025).

Pre colonial Africa had established intellectual traditions. These traditions existed in oral history, philosophy, medicine, and governance. Knowledge was tied to community life and practical experience. Colonial education systems ignored these traditions. They introduced curricula that privileged European history,

language, and epistemology. This created a hierarchy of knowledge in which African perspectives were treated as inferior (Teklemariam, 2025; Dumbuya, 2025).

Scholars have shown that colonialism constructed Africa through distorted representations. Valentin-Yves Mudimbe argues that Africa was defined through a “colonial library”. This refers to a body of texts that framed Africa as primitive and lacking history. These representations shaped academic disciplines and influenced how Africa was studied. African scholars often had to work within these imposed categories (Mudimbe, 1988).

Language played a central role in this marginalisation. Colonial systems elevated European languages as the medium of education and scholarship. Indigenous languages were excluded from formal intellectual work. Ngugi wa Thiong'o argues that language carries culture and identity. The use of foreign languages alienated Africans from their own intellectual traditions. It also limited the audience for African scholarship (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986). Knowledge produced in African languages remained undervalued and under circulated.

Economic and institutional structures reinforced this condition. Colonial economies were extractive. They did not invest in autonomous research institutions. After independence, many African universities retained colonial models. Research agendas often followed priorities set in Europe and North America. Walter Rodney links this pattern to a broader system of exploitation. He argues that Europe developed at the expense of Africa, including in the sphere of knowledge production (Rodney, 1972).

The marginalisation of African scholarship also appears in global academic systems. African scholars face limited access to funding,

publication outlets, and citation networks. Studies show that dominant disciplines still privilege Western theories and methods. African realities are often interpreted through external frameworks. This creates a gap between lived experience and academic representation (Daley & Murrey, 2022). It also sustains the perception that valid knowledge originates outside Africa.

Contemporary scholars have challenged this condition. Decolonial approaches call for the recovery of African epistemologies. They stress the need to centre African voices in research. Efforts to rethink curricula and methodology have emerged across the continent. These efforts aim to restore balance in knowledge production. They also seek to validate indigenous systems of thought. Recent work highlights the limits of mainstream social science in capturing African realities and calls for alternative frameworks grounded in local contexts (Kongo, 2025).

Colonial disruption therefore extends beyond historical experience. It continues to shape the present structure of African scholarship. The marginal position of African knowledge is not accidental. It is the result of deliberate systems that privileged external perspectives. Addressing this requires structural change. African scholarship must define its own terms of reference. It must also engage global knowledge systems from a position of intellectual autonomy.

The Rise of African Scholars in Reviving Indigenous Knowledge

African scholars have increasingly foregrounded indigenous knowledge as a legitimate domain of scholarly inquiry. This emergence reflects a broader challenge to inherited epistemic hierarchies that relegated local knowledge to the margins of academic discourse. Research has shown that indigenous

knowledge systems are not relics of the past but dynamic bodies of understanding that can inform environmental management, education, health and development when rigorously analysed and documented (Olaopa, 2025). The growth of dedicated networks and institutions has enabled African researchers to lead scholarship on indigenous knowledge from within Africa's own intellectual traditions. For instance, multidisciplinary efforts across universities and research centres emphasise collaborative inquiry that respects the context and worldviews of indigenous communities. This approach challenges the dominance of imported research paradigms and advances contextualised methodologies rooted in African realities (African Institute in Indigenous Knowledge Systems, 2026).

Prominent African academics also act as bridges between traditional knowledge systems and formal research paradigms. Professor Catherine Odora Hoppers has played a crucial role in policy and academic frameworks that valorise indigenous knowledge as a resource for sustainable development and educational reform (Odora Hoppers, 2025). Similarly, scholars such as Bagele Chilisa have helped theorise research methodologies that centre indigenous epistemologies, advocating for evaluation and inquiry that emanate from African ways of knowing rather than externally imposed frameworks (Chilisa, 2017).

The scholarly reframing of indigenous knowledge extends beyond documentation and preservation. It actively interrogates the ways in which knowledge is produced and validated. Research within disability studies, for example, argues that indigenous research paradigms can reshape methodologies to be more empowering and participatory for marginalised populations (Owusu-Ansah & Gubela, 2013). Such work underscores a shift toward research that

respects local ontologies and restorative epistemic positions.

Collectively, these developments signal a growing academic commitment across Africa to redefine and reclaim indigenous intellectual heritage. African scholars are now shaping international discourse on indigenous knowledge systems, thereby contributing to epistemic justice and expanding global understandings of knowledge beyond Western epistemological frameworks. This trend increases the visibility and validation of indigenous knowledge as a source of insight and innovation for both local and global challenges.

APAS and the 21st Century Revival of African Centred Scholarship

The revival of African centred scholarship in the twenty first century reflects a deliberate intellectual shift. African scholars now seek to reclaim authority over the interpretation of their histories, cultures, and knowledge systems. This shift responds to a long tradition of external representation that marginalised African epistemologies and reduced them to objects of study. Recent scholarship affirms that knowledge production in Africa must emerge from African historical experiences and social realities rather than depend on external validation (Asante, 1998; Ndlovu Gatsheni, 2018).

The Association for the Promotion of African Studies stands as a clear institutional expression of this revival. Its activities reveal a structured and sustained effort to reposition African scholarship within global discourse. The association does not merely critique inherited narratives. It creates platforms where alternative frameworks can develop and gain scholarly legitimacy. One major contribution of APAS lies in its organisation of international conferences. These conferences function as sites of intellectual

exchange where African scholars interrogate dominant paradigms and propose grounded alternatives. The steady increase in participation and output reflects a growing scholarly community committed to African centred inquiry (Ndubisi, 2026). Such platforms are critical within the wider movement for epistemic justice, which calls for the recognition of multiple knowledge systems within global academia (de Sousa Santos, 2014). APAS also contributes through its publication outlets. Journals such as the *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, *OCHENDO*, and *AKU* provide space for rigorous scholarship rooted in African realities. These publications challenge the historical imbalance in knowledge production, where African voices have often been underrepresented. African based journals play a vital role in reshaping intellectual authority and ensuring that research agendas reflect local priorities (Teferra, 2016). The consistency of APAS in sustaining these journals indicates an institutional commitment to long term knowledge production rather than episodic intervention.

Another significant contribution lies in the strengthening of scholarly networks. APAS connects researchers across institutions and countries. This network fosters collaboration and reduces intellectual isolation. It also enables the circulation of ideas that centre African perspectives. Strong academic networks are essential for building resilient research cultures and advancing locally grounded scholarship (Ndlovu Gatsheni, 2021). The growth in membership within APAS reflects its success in creating such a network. APAS further advances the reinterpretation of African intellectual traditions. Its scholarly outputs engage African philosophy, religion, and ethics as valid systems of thought. This approach directly challenges earlier claims that denied Africa a philosophical tradition (Mawere, 2011). It also aligns with broader efforts to dismantle the colonial library that framed Africa through

external categories (Mudimbe, 1988). The association therefore contributes to both critique and reconstruction. It questions inherited distortions and replaces them with grounded interpretations.

The association also addresses contemporary issues such as development and human security from African perspectives. This focus ensures that scholarship remains relevant to lived realities. It reflects an understanding that knowledge must not only interpret the world but also respond to its challenges. African centred approaches to development emphasise context, culture, and agency, which are often neglected in universal models (Mkandawire, 2010). APAS creates space for such approaches to emerge and gain scholarly recognition.

A further contribution of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies emerges from its role in protecting and amplifying the voices of early career scholars. The present author has observed concrete cases where young lecturers faced rejection from so called impact factor journals that demand high publication fees yet fail to provide fair and rigorous review. Editorial decisions in such outlets often reflect preconceived positions rather than careful engagement with submitted work. This pattern reveals a deeper structural problem within global academic publishing, where external standards are imposed on African scholarship without sensitivity to context (Ajani et al., 2025; Addaquay, 2026). The situation is further compounded as some African journals replicate this model in the assessment of academic performance within local universities. Such practices distort the purpose of scholarship and undermine intellectual growth (Olujuwon et al., 2023; Mfengu, & Raju, 2024). APAS offers a corrective space. Its conferences and journals provide accessible and credible platforms where emerging scholars can present and publish their work without exclusionary

barriers. This intervention has enabled many young lecturers to gain visibility and confidence in their research. Their ideas now circulate within and beyond the continent. Their scholarship engages global debates from grounded perspectives. This shift marks a practical step towards restoring fairness in academic evaluation and reducing the undue influence of external publishing structures on African intellectual life.

Despite these contributions, structural challenges remain. Limited funding, weak institutional support, and unequal global knowledge hierarchies continue to constrain African scholarship. APAS operates within this context. Its achievements therefore highlight both progress and the need for further support. Stronger collaboration with universities and increased research funding would enhance its impact and sustainability. APAS represents more than an academic association. It embodies an intellectual movement committed to restoring African agency in knowledge production. Its conferences, publications, and networks demonstrate practical steps towards epistemic renewal. The association contributes to a broader transformation in which Africa is not a subject of study but a centre of knowledge creation. This shift marks a significant moment in the ongoing reawakening of African centred scholarship in the twenty first century.

Conclusion

This study has examined the Association for the Promotion of African Studies as a significant force in the reawakening of African centred scholarship in the twenty first century. The analysis shows that APAS has created viable structures for knowledge production through its conferences, journals, and scholarly networks. These platforms have strengthened intellectual exchange and expanded access to research grounded in African realities. The study also demonstrates that APAS contributes to the correction of long

standing distortions within global academic discourse. Its emphasis on indigenous perspectives restores African agency in the interpretation of history, philosophy, and culture. The association therefore represents a practical and institutional response to the marginalisation of African scholarship.

The study does not claim to be exhaustive. Its focus on documentary sources limits the scope of analysis to available records and published materials. Other dimensions such as participant experiences, institutional partnerships, and long term impact on policy require further investigation. Future research can adopt empirical approaches that engage scholars within APAS networks. Comparative studies across similar organisations in Africa may also deepen understanding of the broader movement for epistemic renewal. There is also a need to examine how African centred scholarship influences teaching, curriculum development, and public policy across the continent.

The findings point to important implications for the future of African scholarship. Sustained institutional support remains necessary for the consolidation of gains already made. Universities, research bodies, and funding agencies have a role in strengthening platforms that promote endogenous knowledge production. Greater collaboration across African institutions will further reduce intellectual isolation and enhance research quality. The study affirms that the reawakening of African centred scholarship is both necessary and ongoing. APAS stands as a clear example of how structured academic engagement can reshape knowledge production and reposition Africa within global intellectual discourse.

Recommendations

1. Universities in Africa should strengthen institutional support for African centred scholarship. This support should include research funding, staff development, and the recognition of locally grounded publications in academic appraisal systems.
2. Academic institutions should revise evaluation criteria that privilege external publication outlets over credible African based journals. Greater value should be placed on the quality and relevance of research rather than on imposed metrics that do not reflect African realities.
3. The Association for the Promotion of African Studies should expand its conference platforms and publication outlets to reach a wider scholarly audience across Africa and the diaspora. This expansion will deepen intellectual exchange and sustain the growth of African centred research networks.
4. African governments and funding agencies should invest in endogenous knowledge production. Dedicated grants should support research in African philosophy, indigenous knowledge systems, and context based development studies.
5. Scholars should adopt research frameworks that emerge from African historical and cultural contexts. Such frameworks will reduce dependence on external paradigms and enhance the validity of research outcomes within African societies.
6. Academic networks across African universities should be strengthened to promote collaboration and reduce intellectual isolation. Joint research projects and shared platforms will improve the quality and visibility of African scholarship.

7. Greater attention should be given to the integration of indigenous knowledge into formal education. Curriculum reform at all levels should reflect African epistemologies and promote their relevance to contemporary challenges.
8. Early career scholars should receive structured support through mentorship, accessible publication platforms, and fair peer review processes. This support will sustain intellectual growth and protect emerging voices from exclusionary academic practices.
9. African journals should maintain rigorous editorial standards while ensuring accessibility and fairness in the review process. This balance will enhance credibility and position such journals within global academic discourse.
10. Further research should examine the long term impact of organisations such as APAS on policy, education, and knowledge production in Africa. Empirical studies will provide deeper insight into their role in shaping the future of African scholarship.

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DECOLONIALITY AND MAINSTREAMING AFRICAN INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENTAL THOUGHT /PRACTICES: APAS TRAJECTORIES

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Introduction

Despite efforts by various actors such as International Non-Governmental bodies, nation-states, academic associations, societies, and individuals, the environmental crisis has remained unabated. The argument of this paper that it has remained unabated is there for all to see. There are still massive environmental problems such as deforestation, desertification, global climate change, global warming, environmental refugeeism, drought, resource wars and violent conflicts, soil erosion, unplanned urbanization, mismanagement of environmental resources, poverty instigated by environmental degradation, etc. In Nigeria, the weather pattern has drastically changed as it is now difficult to distinguish the dry season from the rainy season. In December and January, which used to be the heart of the dry season, you can now witness heavenly rains. In the Niger Delta, there is constant agitation for more resource autonomy as a result of environmental exploitation and massive underdevelopment caused by the activities of oil multinational corporations. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, there is massive looting of environmental resources. War also has serious implications for the environment as it degrades environmental resources. This is what the war in Russia-Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan,

etc., is doing to the environment. The massive and horrendous cyclones and hurricanes that happen in the United States can be attributed to climate change.

Abating the environmental crisis in its various manifestations requires galvanizing all social forces, including education, activism, conscientization, etc. The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) has greatly contributed in this regard through its publications in books of readings, journals, conferences, advocacy, etc. The uniqueness of APAS is not just that it has contributed to advancing environmental knowledge and promoting environmental protection, but the special contribution of APAS is that its promotion of environmental knowledge has been thoroughly indigenous, and it has gleaned knowledge from the African grassroots. In this sense, it has been a decolonial association. It has challenged Western environmental hegemony by mainstreaming environmental knowledge from the subalterns of Africa. This is the bane of this paper. In carrying out the task of this paper, conceptual clarifications of key concepts will be made, and then there will be an examination of the role of APAS in eco-decoloniality. The paper will then propose insights on future engagement. When this has been done, the paper will be brought to a conclusion.

Conceptual Clarifications

Key concepts that ground this paper are decoloniality, eco-decoloniality, mainstreaming, African indigenous environmental thought, and trajectories. Trembath (2025) states that: “Decolonization refers to the physical, political shift of power between colonizing powers and their soon-to-be-former subjects. Decolonization occurs when colonized people militarily overthrow an occupying power or, more rarely, negotiate their freedom in some other way and reclaim their country as independent. Decoloniality, on the other hand, is a mindset or praxis; it is an orientation toward culture marked by a commitment

to root out that which remains in culture, education, society, and so on from the colonial era”(par 3). It was Anibal Quijano, a sociologist, who coined the concept. The idea is that the so-called colonial masters have physically left, but their legacy, influences, and effects remain in the former colonies. For instance, much of what is taught in the educational system in Africa is colonial in outlook and content. In the study of Philosophy, in undergraduate studies, many of the courses are in Western Philosophy and only very few in African Philosophy. Much of what is promoted today as environmental knowledge or thought is by Western scholars. There is an epistemic privileging of Western knowledge. This ought not to be. Decoloniality is to continue to undo the structures of colonialism that are remaining, especially to unlearn what they impacted on us, in favour of what is indigenously ours. Eco-decoloniality then refers to unlearning Western environmental thought systems that have been imparted unto us or, at times, imposed upon Africans. It is to deconstruct the Western environmental thought systems and policies that predominate in Africa and replace them with African indigenous environmental knowledge systems or transformed Western environmental thought systems, so that if Africa takes anything from the West, it should be from our own vantage position. Our ecological lens must be African. Nobody is saying that we cannot learn anything from the West, but it must be from our own terms and in the light of our values. Environmental Eurocentrism must be destroyed. This is what eco-decoloniality is.

The next concept that requires clarification is mainstream. To mainstream a thing is to bring it to the limelight, to give it priority, to make it more known. It is to bring it from a position of being relegated to the forefront. Indigenous refers to what comes from the local place. It is what is original to a place. Indigenous African environmental thought refers to beliefs, thoughts, and accumulated wisdom about the land and its resources, environmental matters that have been transmitted from generation to generation in Africa.

It is not brought to us by the Whiteman. The danger often is that there are people who think that African has no environmental thought. Melton (2022) states that: “Trajectories refer to the paths followed by moving objects, a concept deeply rooted in classical mechanics, particularly articulated through Newton's second law of motion. This law states that an object's acceleration is directly proportional to the net external force acting on it, leading to various movement patterns depending on the forces involved” (par 1). Trajectory is the path that an object travels. In this paper, APAS trajectory refers to the path that APAS has travelled since its founding to the present moment and the path it will continue to travel. Within this paper, the focus will be on how it has travelled in terms of advancing indigenous African environmental knowledge and practice.

The Role of APAS in Eco-Decoloniality

The imperative of promoting eco-decoloniality can never be overestimated. The adventure of imperialism and colonialism was devastating to African lands and territories. The effects of the European adventure into Africa are still there. The colonialists renamed many African landscapes, including rivers, mountains, trees, etc. By renaming the colonialist saw African names as inferior and pagan. There is a need for African to restore their original and indigenous names, which often carry history and meaning. Colonialists who never understood, for instance, African taboos that protected the environment simply saw them as superstitions and condemned them. The colonial adventure was so devastating that much of what is done in education in Africa is simply a repetition of European values and ways of life.

APAS publications have featured many papers that have helped to promote eco-decoloniality. In the journal *Aku*, a paper by Ikeke (2022) discussed the concepts of Afroecosolidarity. The paper argued for fostering the African values of solidarity and communalism, and unity in galvanizing people to protect the

environment. The paper states: “The paper argues that the African belief in interconnectedness, interrelatedness of all lives and entities in the cosmos necessitated responding in relating with human beings and the natural world healthily and sustainably” (p. 42). This is an African way of being in the world.

Kanu (2021) argued that Africans must relate to the environment in their own categories. This informed the publication in 2021, *African eco-philosophy: Cosmology, consciousness and the environment*. That publication featured the following papers: *African Eco-philosophy: Nature and Foundations* by Kanu (2021), *Ecological Significance of Mmuo Mmiri (Water Spirits) in Igbo Philosophy and Religion* by Kanu (2021), *An Eco-Philosophical Discourse on The African Charter's Right to a General Satisfactory Environment and Socio-Economic Development* by Ikeke (2021), *Between Environmental Conservation and Development: An African Perspective* by Ifeakor & Chinedu (2021), *The Concept of Taboo in Igbo Spirituality: A Philosophical Examination* by Agama & Onyeakazi (2021), *African Environmental Ethics: Towards a Non-Anthropocentric African Environmentalism* by Ifeakor & Otteh (2021), *African Traditional Religious Taboos and the Eco-System: A Tiv Perspective* by Afaor & Amah (2021), *Afroecology of Traditional African Societies: An Anthropology of Ecotheology, Ecophilosophy and Ecospirituality of the Yoruba* by Tubi (2021), *Indigenous Knowledge Systems, the Environment and the Practice of Traditional Medicine in Africa* by Michael (2021). The work by Akujobi & Ike (2021), which appeared in the *AKU* journal, deals with the ecological dimensions of Igbo proverbs and how they can be used to promote environmental protection.

The papers mentioned above take a perspective that is grounded in African cultural values. This is what this paper calls mainstreaming. They foreground what is relevant to African indigenous knowledge. They highlight the fact that Africa has ecological values. While there is a place for cultural diffusion and

learning from other cultures in a globalized world, Africans should not abandon what is authentically African. Africa should be Afrocentric, and all knowledge should be evaluated from the African vantage point, including environmental beliefs and practices. It is Western science and technology that have brought most environmental degradation and devastation to our world. Africa should not adopt Western scientific environmental technologies hook, line, and sinker. They should be evaluated from the African ethical perspective of culture that valued life and saw the vital force of the creator present in all things. Because of this, nature is to be conserved and respected. There was less environmental degradation in Africa before the coming of the colonialists. The so-called industrial revolution and the coming of globalisation have come with all their environmental challenges. More industries and factories mean more natural environmental has to be utilized to build industries. In most of the Western conceptions, land is only useful when it is used to build factories, etc. Capitalism has done great damage to environmental values. This is why we must mainstream African indigenous environmental thought. By doing this, we are engaging in eco-decoloniality.

APAS has taken giant strides in mainstreaming indigenous African environmental thoughts and practices. And APAS needs to be commended on this. The 2026 annual conference of APAS has the following theme that concerns *Biodiversity, Conservation, and Public Health in Africa*. The APAS Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development has also made giant strides in fostering development that is sustainable and rooted in African indigenous values. There is hardly any APAS journal that has not featured papers on indigenous environmental values and practices.

Future Engagement

APAS, as noted above, has really made a significant contribution to mainstream African indigenous environmental thought and

practices. Some of the contributions in terms of raising eco-consciousness and educating for environmental conservation have been noted above. It should be noted that all that APAS has done in environmental education and fostering eco-friendly practices from an African vantage point cannot all be examined in a short paper like this. It is often said that the greatest room in the world is the room for improvement. As APAS celebrates 10 years of its existence, it can do more in mainstreaming indigenous African environmental thought and practices and thus help in the task of eco-decoloniality. It is imperative to state that people have a right to be educated in traditional or indigenous ecological knowledge. The United Nations (2007) states that: "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard" (art. 25). In the same declaration, the United Nations (2007) enunciates as follows: "Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons" (art. 13). In this paper, indigenous people are inclusive of all African peoples who predate the advent of colonialism in the land they presently occupy. It amounts to epistemic injustice for people to go to school in Africa and not be taught their local ecological knowledge. The teaching of African indigenous ecological knowledge should be done across the curriculum. It is also important that more APAS members move beyond just attending APAS conferences and publishing in APAS journals. They should act as the foot soldiers of APAS in their various communities and places of assignment. They should advocate more for the values championed by APAS in the eco-decolonial project. It ought to be recognized that African indigenous ecological thoughts and practices are not inferior or subservient to any other system of thought. The movement for

indigenization, inculturation, home-grown solutions, etc., must continue.

More of APAS conferences should be devoted to the issues of African indigenous ecological thought. There is also a need for APAS to publish more books of readings on African indigenous knowledge. The fact is that there is still much unexplored in African indigenous ecological knowledge and practice. It will also be helpful if APAS collaborates more with like-minded bodies to promote African indigenous environmental thoughts and thus contribute to eco-decoloniality.

Conclusion

The paper has examined briefly some of the efforts made by APAS, especially in its publications, to mainstream and foreground African indigenous environmental thought. It showed that APAS has galvanized authors and produced a lot of ecological writings rooted in African indigenous ecological knowledge. It was argued in the paper that there is a need to give preference to indigenous African environmental values over those of Western societies. African indigenous environmental values should not be an echo of Western environmental philosophies and ethics. The time is long overdue for Africa to come into its own. APAS has greatly helped in this. This paper expects that APAS will continue in this engagement of eco-decoloniality.

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ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF AFRICA STUDIES (APAS) AND THE GLOBAL VISIBILITY OF AFRICAN THOUGHT: A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction: African Thought and the Question of Global Visibility

The question of the *global visibility* of African thought is not merely about numerical presence in journals, rankings, or conferences; it is a deeply philosophical interrogation of **where** and **for whom** Africa thinks. Contemporary debates on African philosophy and decoloniality converge on the claim that the central problem is *epistemic location*: who has the authority to name, to theorize, and to universalize from their own experience of the world. Ndlovu-Gatsheni conceptualizes this as the struggle for **epistemic freedom**, the right of African peoples “to think, theorize, interpret the world and write from where they are located, unencumbered by Eurocentrism” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Here, visibility is not neutral; it is structured by long-standing regimes that once denied African humanity and, with it, the credibility of African knowledge.

To speak of the global visibility of African thought, therefore, is already to enter a contested terrain. For some, the task is to integrate Africa into an imagined “global knowledge commonwealth.” Yet recent decolonial critiques warn that many initiatives that promise global visibility for African scholars subtly reinscribe colonial

hierarchies, since the so-called global space is materially and historically an extension of Western institutional power (Serunkuma, 2024). Visibility under such conditions risks becoming a sophisticated form of **epistemic absorption**, where African thought is seen, cited, and curated, but only on terms set elsewhere. The philosophical challenge is to distinguish between visibility as mere inclusion within an alien epistemic order and visibility as the self-articulation of African critical authority.

This challenge has been forcefully taken up within African philosophy itself. Efforts to re-centre African philosophy show that African intellectual work has long nourished “universal” theory, even as African thinkers and knowledges were treated as secondary, local, or merely illustrative within a Eurocentric cognitive empire (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). Nigerian discussions on forging a specifically Nigerian philosophical tradition highlight how thinkers are pulled between addressing Nigeria's own political–economic crises, situating their work within wider African philosophical debates, and responding to a still-dominant global epistemic order that polices what counts as “proper” philosophy and “universal” problems (Gwaravanda & Ndofirepi, 2020). What is at stake is not only the recognition of African contributions but the very grammar of universality.

At the same time, African philosophy has developed robust internal resources for rethinking visibility itself. Communal and relational ontologies radically displace the solitary, abstract subject of Western modernity, proposing instead a vision of personhood and community in which identity, knowledge, and value are constituted through networks of relation (Bayuo, 2025; Coetzee, 2018). From this standpoint, *to be visible* is not simply to be noticed by a distant global gaze, but to be acknowledged within an **ecology of knowledges** in which African categories – ubuntu, communal personhood, cosmogonic community – enter the world's self-

understanding as generative concepts rather than ethnographic curiosities (Akuva & Koko, 2025).

Against this background, the emergence of bodies such as the Association for the Promotion of Africa Studies (APAS) can be philosophically framed as a response to a double imperative. First, APAS must resist the seduction of visibility that merely reproduces Africa as an object of study for external audiences. Second, it must cultivate spaces in which African thought appears to itself – African scholars, communities, and institutions – as a primary site of reflection on the global, not a regional supplement to it. The question, then, is not simply whether African thought is visible in the world, but whether the world can come to be thought *from Africa* in a way that transforms what “global” itself means.

Historical Background and Institutional Vision of the Association for the Promotion of Africa Studies (APAS)

The emergence of the Association for the Promotion of Africa Studies (APAS) must be read against a long historical arc in which African universities and scholarly networks struggled to become not mere sites of data extraction but **sovereign locations of knowledge production**. Systematic reviews of African higher education research show how, from the late twentieth century onward, Africa increasingly became an object of study in globally indexed venues while African-based institutions, presses, and journals remained structurally under-represented, with South Africa dominating the field and West African scholarship comparatively obscured (Zavale & Schneijderberg, 2020). This asymmetry discloses the deeper problem that APAS confronts: the reduction of Africa to a research “field” rather than an epistemic **origin**.

Within this context, APAS can be interpreted as an institutional crystallization of the wider struggle for **epistemic freedom** in

Africa: the demand that African scholars think, name, and theorize the world from African locations without passing through Eurocentric filters of visibility and validation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Its historical significance lies less in chronological milestones than in its decision to situate African Studies inside Africa as a philosophical reclamation of authorship. By organizing research, conferences, and publications under African initiative, APAS contests what Ndlovu-Gatsheni calls the “epistemic line” that once disqualified African knowledge and now survives in the geopolitics of indexing, citation, and funding (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

The institutional vision of APAS is therefore not exhausted by disciplinary coordination; it is a **normative project** aimed at reshaping the architecture of global knowledge. Conceptually, APAS aspires to transmute African Studies from a peripheral specialization into a generative standpoint from which the “global” itself is reconceived. Nigerian contributions to African scholarship have stressed how institutional design in Africa must resist becoming a mere conveyor belt into existing metropolitan circuits and instead function as a **counter-public** space where African categories, languages, and problems attain primary, not derivative, status (Etim & Daramola, 2020). APAS's vision, thus understood, is to cultivate an ecology of scholarship in which African thought is historically grounded, institutionally anchored, and globally resonant – visible not because it conforms to external norms, but because it compels the world to rethink what counts as knowledge and from where it can legitimately speak.

APAS and the Promotion of African Philosophical Discourse

APAS can be read as an institutional wager on the possibility of **African philosophy speaking as origin, not appendix**, within the global traffic of ideas. Its promotion of African philosophical discourse is not merely a matter of adding African voices to an

already-given canon, but of unsettling the very criteria of philosophical legitimacy that have historically rendered African thought peripheral. Ndlovu-Gatsheni's call for **epistemic freedom** captures this horizon: African thinkers must be able to theorize and interpret the world from African locations without first submitting to Eurocentric grammars of reason and relevance (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). APAS thus functions as a space where African philosophy appears to itself not as a derivative regional speciality, but as a primary site for articulating concepts of being, knowledge, justice, and community.

This institutional project has at least three intertwined philosophical dimensions. First, APAS enables the retrieval and systematic elaboration of indigenous categories – ubuntu, ukama, communal personhood, African scepticism – not as folklore but as **conceptual resources** for contemporary theory. Recent work on African personhood and community, for instance, demonstrates how relational ontologies reconfigure debates on identity, autonomy, and moral status in ways that challenge Cartesian and liberal individualist assumptions (Bayuo, 2025). Nigerian reflections on African scepticism similarly show that rigorous doubt and critique have long been internal to African philosophical practice, and that their codification strengthens African philosophy's capacity to engage and transform global epistemology rather than merely imitate it (Uzoigwe, 2020).

Second, APAS promotes African philosophical discourse by contesting the institutional architectures that still police what counts as “serious” philosophy. Analyses of knowledge-production regimes in African higher education reveal how publication metrics, language hierarchies, and editorial gatekeeping systematically marginalize African epistemologies, even under the banner of inclusion (Pietersen et al., 2025). By

centering African-based journals, conferences, and research networks, APAS embodies a form of **defiant scholarship** that refuses obedience to colonial grammars of value while cultivating alternative circuits of recognition and critique (Daley & Murrey, 2022).

Finally, APAS orients African philosophy outward, toward a reconstitution of the global itself. Work on African epistemology and higher education insists that African knowledge must claim “its rightful equal place and space” in an interconnected world, not as a local colouration but as a universalizable standpoint that can reshape educational, technological, and ethical paradigms (Bekele et al., 2023; Bafon, 2025). In this sense, APAS does not simply promote African philosophical discourse; it wagers that when African thought is institutionally sustained and conceptually self-confident, the map of philosophy as such is redrawn.

Mechanisms of Global Engagement: Conferences, Publications, and Networks

The global visibility of African thought is not merely the outcome of abstract philosophical production but of institutional mediation through conferences, scholarly publications, and transnational intellectual networks. The **Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS)** exemplifies this mediation by creating platforms that internationalize African philosophical discourse while preserving epistemic autonomy.

First, **international conferences** serve as dialogical spaces where African scholars articulate continental perspectives within global academic debates. The 2023 APAS conference emphasized narrating Africa “from within African voices” (Kanu et al., 2023), an epistemic move that resists representational dependency and restores interpretive authority to African thinkers. As the

conference preface states, “to counter erroneous ideas and projections about Africa” (p. iii), highlighting the philosophical imperative of hermeneutic self-representation.

Second, **publications** – particularly the *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development* – function as archival instruments of philosophical continuity. The journal's mandate “to forge intellectual links and network with scholars...in Africa and beyond” (p. 1) (*Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, 2019) underscores the transformation of African philosophy from regional discourse to globally circulating intellectual capital.

Third, **scholarly networks** institutionalize epistemic solidarity by connecting African researchers with global partners, thereby sustaining collaborative inquiry and amplifying African perspectives in international scholarship (As can be seen in *Join APAS* website page; link in the Reference below). Philosophically, these mechanisms collectively enact what may be termed **institutionalized epistemic visibility** – a structural process through which African thought transitions from marginal intellectual presence to globally recognized philosophical interlocutor.

Philosophical Implications for the Internationalization of African Thought

The internationalization of African thought raises a fundamental philosophical question: how can African epistemic traditions enter global discourse without dissolving their conceptual autonomy? Institutions such as the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) illustrate that global visibility is not merely geographic expansion but the transformation of African philosophy into a dialogical partner within world philosophy. Nigerian scholarship increasingly emphasizes that African

philosophy addresses universal concerns while retaining contextual originality. Obiagwu and Adidi observe that philosophical problems have their own peculiarities and uniqueness in African contexts (Obiagwu, and Adidi, 2019).

Furthermore, contemporary African philosophical movements stress intellectual networking and global participation. APAS publications highlight the need “to forge intellectual links and network with scholars...in Africa and beyond” (*Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, 2019), a structural condition for epistemic circulation. Recent philosophical discourse also insists that African philosophy must actively confront global challenges – migration, governance, and development – to demonstrate its universal relevance (Chimakonam et al., 2022). At the same time, African-centered intellectual traditions emphasize reconnecting continental and diasporic thought through shared conceptual frameworks rooted in African ethos (Kumah-Abiwu, 2024). Thus, the philosophical implication of internationalization is the emergence of **plural epistemic universalism**: a global philosophical order in which African thought participates not as derivative commentary but as a foundational contributor shaping the normative, political, and metaphysical horizons of contemporary philosophy.

Challenges and Prospects for APAS in the 21st Century

The contemporary mission of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) unfolds within a philosophical tension between global integration and epistemic preservation. One major challenge lies in the homogenizing pressures of globalization, which often threaten indigenous conceptual frameworks. Recent Nigerian scholarship warns that globalization has contributed to the erosion of African cultural value systems, producing significant shifts in the traditional value systems (Balogun et al., 2024). This

intellectual climate compels APAS to function not only as an academic institution but also as a guardian of epistemic heritage.

Institutionally, APAS faces structural challenges of funding, research infrastructure, and unequal visibility in global academic publishing. Nevertheless, its mandate “to participate actively...in continental and global debates” (*Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, 2019) demonstrates a strategic commitment to intellectual internationalization.

Philosophically, the prospect for APAS lies in advancing **epistemic pluriversality** – a global knowledge order grounded in intercultural dialogue rather than epistemic dominance. By strengthening conferences, collaborative networks, and African-centered journals, APAS can transform structural marginality into intellectual leadership, positioning African philosophy as a normative contributor to global debates on ethics, development, and technological modernity.

Conclusion

The global visibility of African thought depends not only on the production of philosophical ideas but also on the institutional structures that enable their circulation, preservation, and recognition. The Association for the Promotion of African Studies demonstrates how scholarly organizations can function as epistemic mediators, transforming African philosophy from regionally confined discourse into an active participant in global intellectual debates. Through conferences, scholarly publications, and transnational academic networks, APAS fosters dialogical engagement that affirms African epistemic autonomy while encouraging intercultural philosophical exchange.

In sum, the philosophical significance of APAS lies in its contribution to an emerging pluralistic knowledge order in which

African thought is not merely included but recognized as a constitutive voice shaping contemporary discussions on ethics, identity, development, and global intellectual justice.

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16

TOWARDS A PAN-AFRICAN INTELLECTUAL RENAISSANCE: THE ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF AFRICAN STUDIES (APAS)

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Introduction

The production of knowledge about Africa has historically been shaped by asymmetrical power relations embedded in colonial structures of knowledge. Early European scholarships on Africa frequently portrayed the continent as lacking history, rational philosophy, and scientific traditions. Such representations were reinforced through colonial anthropology, missionary writings, and early historiography, which often interpreted African societies through Eurocentric frameworks. The critique of these representations emerged strongly in the twentieth century through intellectual movements such as Pan-Africanism, Négritude, and African philosophy. Thinkers such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Frantz Fanon, and Kwame Nkrumah challenged colonial epistemologies and advocated the intellectual and cultural emancipation of African peoples. The transformation of global knowledge systems remains incomplete, as African scholarship continues to operate within academic structures largely dominated by institutions in Europe and North America. Consequently, scholars advocate the decolonization of knowledge and the development of autonomous African intellectual frameworks (Mbembe 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013). Mbembe (2001) argues that this process requires rethinking the institutional and epistemic foundations of the modern university,

including its archives, research priorities, and disciplinary structures. Within this context, a Pan-African intellectual renaissance emphasizes revitalizing African traditions and fostering collaborative scholarship addressing contemporary African realities.

This chapter examines the role of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) in contributing to this intellectual transformation of Africa. It argues that scholarly institutions are essential for sustaining the networks, dialogues, and collaborative research necessary for a Pan-African intellectual renaissance.

Literature Review

The question of African knowledge production has been central to African intellectual debates for several decades. Scholars across disciplines including philosophy, history, anthropology, and cultural studies have examined how colonial epistemologies shaped the ways Africa has been represented and studied within global academic systems. This literature highlights both the historical marginalization of African knowledge systems and the ongoing struggle to construct autonomous intellectual frameworks capable of reflecting African realities.

One of the most influential critiques of colonial knowledge production is found in the work of Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, whose seminal book *The Invention of Africa* (1988) examines how colonial discourse constructed Africa as an object of knowledge rather than as a source of knowledge. Mudimbe argues that European anthropology, missionary scholarship, and colonial administration produced a “colonial library” that defined the conceptual boundaries within which Africa could be studied and understood. According to Mudimbe, even postcolonial African scholarship often operates within epistemological frameworks inherited from this colonial archive.

Edward Said's (1978) concept of Orientalism provides an

important theoretical foundation for understanding this process. Said demonstrated how Western knowledge about the “Orient” was closely linked to imperial power structures. Although Said's work focused primarily on the Middle East and Asia, scholars have applied similar insights to the study of Africa, emphasizing how colonial representations shaped Western academic approaches to African societies (Mudimbe 1988; Mbembe 2001). African intellectual movements emerged in the twentieth century to reclaim cultural identity and intellectual autonomy in response to colonial epistemic domination. Pan-Africanism, one of the earliest movements, promoted unity among people of African descent worldwide. W.E.B. Du Bois argued that Africa's liberation required political independence alongside intellectual and cultural emancipation (Du Bois 1903).

Parallel to Pan-Africanism, the Négritude movement emerged among francophone intellectuals such as Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Léon-Gontran Damas. Négritude emphasized the affirmation of African cultural values and the rejection of colonial assimilationist ideologies. Senghor (1964) described Négritude as a humanistic philosophy rooted in African cultural traditions, while Césaire (1939) articulated a poetic and political critique of colonial racism. Another dimension of African intellectual renewal emerged through debates in African philosophy during the 1960s and 1970s concerning the nature of African philosophical thought. While scholars such as Tempels and Kagame located philosophy in traditional belief systems, critics including Hountondji (1997) and Wiredu (1996) rejected this “ethnophilosophy,” advocating instead a critical philosophical tradition grounded in rigorous analysis and scholarly debate. Hountondji emphasized that African philosophy should be understood as a professional intellectual discipline rather than a mere reflection of collective cultural beliefs. He also highlighted the importance of endogenous knowledge production, arguing that African research institutions must develop the capacity to generate

knowledge relevant to African societies rather than relying on external epistemological frameworks.

The question of African knowledge production has also been explored extensively within the broader field of African Studies. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza (2009) has examined the historical development of African Studies as an academic field, noting that much of the early scholarship on Africa was produced outside the continent. This external dominance shaped research agendas and methodological approaches, often marginalizing African scholars within their own field of study. Similarly, Toyin Falola (2016) has argued that the globalization of knowledge production has created both opportunities and challenges for African scholars. While digital technologies and international collaborations have expanded access to information and research networks, structural inequalities in academic publishing continue to disadvantage scholars based in Africa.

These inequalities have renewed calls for the decolonization of knowledge. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) emphasized the role of language in reproducing colonial epistemologies and urged African scholars to reclaim indigenous languages and cultural traditions as foundations for intellectual renewal. Mbembe (2016) further argues that decolonization requires transforming not only academic curricula but also the institutional structures that shape research, teaching, and knowledge production. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), building on Aníbal Quijano's concept of coloniality of power, argues that colonialism persists beyond political independence by continuing to structure global knowledge systems, economies, and cultural institutions. In this intellectual context, the idea of an African intellectual renaissance has gained importance. Ali Mazrui (1986) similarly contends that Africa's intellectual future relies on synthesizing indigenous traditions with modern science, describing African civilization as a "triple heritage" of indigenous African cultures, Islamic

influences, and Western modernity.

Kwame Nkrumah (1965) stressed that intellectual independence is essential for political and economic development, arguing that neo-colonialism functions not only economically but also through cultural and intellectual domination. However, scholars note that African academic institutions often lack the resources needed for sustained collaborative research and knowledge production, facing challenges such as limited funding, weak publishing platforms, and restricted access to global academic networks (Nyamnjoh 2012). As a result, many scholars have emphasized the importance of institutional platforms capable of fostering intellectual collaboration across disciplinary and geographic boundaries. Such platforms play a crucial role in facilitating conferences, research networks, scholarly publications, and academic mentorship.

Organizations such as the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) are significant for creating transnational networks that support African-centered research by bringing together scholars from different disciplines and regions. Institutional collaboration is key to interdisciplinary scholarship, which integrates fields such as history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and literature to better address Africa's complex social, political, and cultural challenges. Literature suggests that the emergence of a Pan-African intellectual renaissance depends on individual scholars and institutional structures supporting intellectual exchange collaboration such as APA which can play transformative roles in this regard.

Crisis of Knowledge Production in Africa

Despite the expansion of higher education across Africa, the continent continues to face significant challenges in knowledge production. Scholars have identified several structural constraints: Dependence on external research funding, Limited academic

publishing infrastructure, Fragmented intellectual networks, and Epistemic marginalization within global academia. Kwasi Wiredu (1996) observed that much of the knowledge required to address African challenges remains located within external institutions rather than within African research systems. This imbalance contributes to the continued marginalization of African perspectives within global scholarly discourse.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on three interconnected theoretical traditions:

Pan-African Intellectual Thought

Pan-Africanism represents one of the most influential intellectual and political movements in modern African history. From the early Pan-African congresses organized by W.E.B. Du Bois to the political vision of Kwame Nkrumah, the movement has sought to promote unity and solidarity among people of African descent worldwide. Pan-Africanism also contains a strong epistemic dimension. It calls for the development of knowledge systems rooted in African historical experiences and cultural traditions. Ali Mazrui (2003) argues that African intellectual renewal requires a synthesis of indigenous knowledge systems and modern scholarly approaches capable of addressing contemporary global challenges.

Decolonial Theory

Decolonial theory provides a critical framework for understanding how colonial structures of power continue to shape knowledge production. Walter Dignolo (2007) and Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) emphasize that coloniality persists in modern academic institutions through epistemic hierarchies that privilege Western forms of knowledge. Decolonizing knowledge therefore requires a reconfiguration of both intellectual paradigms and institutional structures.

African Philosophy and Epistemology

African philosophy has contributed significantly to debates about

the nature of knowledge and intellectual autonomy. Scholars such as Kwasi Wiredu (1996), Paulin Hountondji (1997), and V.Y. Mudimbe (1988) have emphasized the importance of critical engagement with African traditions while avoiding both ethnophilosophical romanticism and uncritical adoption of Western paradigms. Mudimbe famously argued that colonial knowledge systems constructed an “invention of Africa” that shaped how the continent was studied and represented in global scholarship.

Research Questions

Based on the identified research gap, the study is guided by the following research questions:

Main Research Question

How can scholarly institutions such as the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) contribute to the emergence of a Pan-African intellectual renaissance?

Specific Research Questions

1. What structural challenges currently affect African knowledge production within global academia?
2. How have historical intellectual movements such as Pan-Africanism and African philosophy shaped contemporary debates on African knowledge systems?
3. What institutional mechanisms are necessary to support a sustainable Pan-African intellectual renaissance?
4. In what ways can APAS facilitate interdisciplinary collaboration, scholarly networking, and academic publishing among African scholars?
5. What potential impact can organizations like APAS have on strengthening African-centered knowledge production and intellectual autonomy?

Hypothesis

The study is guided by the following conceptual proposition:

H1:

Scholarly institutions that promote interdisciplinary collaboration, academic networking, and publication platforms significantly contribute to the development of a Pan-African intellectual renaissance.

APAS and the Institutionalization of African Scholarship

The Association for the Promotion of African Studies represents an initiative aimed at strengthening African intellectual collaboration. By organizing conferences, supporting academic publications, and facilitating scholarly networks, APAS provides a platform for interdisciplinary research and intellectual exchange. Institutional platforms such as APAS are crucial for sustaining intellectual movements because they create opportunities for scholars to collaborate across disciplines and geographic boundaries. Its objectives include:

promoting African-centered research, facilitating interdisciplinary dialogue, strengthening scholarly networks, supporting academic publications. Through conferences, collaborative research initiatives, and scholarly exchanges, APAS contributes to the institutionalization of African intellectual life.

APAS as a Catalyst for a Pan-African Intellectual Renaissance

APAS can contribute to the emergence of a Pan-African intellectual renaissance in several ways. African societies present complex social, political, and cultural realities that require interdisciplinary approaches. APAS provides a platform where scholars from philosophy, history, sociology, religion, and literature can engage in collaborative research. By promoting African-centered research agendas, APAS encourages scholars to challenge epistemological assumptions inherited from colonial knowledge systems. The association helps connect scholars across different regions of Africa and the diaspora, strengthening intellectual solidarity and collaborative scholarship, Academic

Visibility and Publication. Through conferences and scholarly publications, APAS provides opportunities for African scholars to disseminate their research within the global academic community.

Discussion: APAS and the Historical Trajectory of African Intellectual Renewal

The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) emerged from African intellectual movements seeking epistemic autonomy and challenging colonial knowledge production. From the late nineteenth century onward, these movements from early Pan-Africanism to current decolonization debates have emphasized African-centered scholarship articulating African experiences, values, and aspirations.

One early expression of this awakening was the Pan-African movement, led by W.E.B. Du Bois, Henry Sylvester Williams, and later Kwame Nkrumah. Pan-Africanism pursued political unity and intellectual solidarity. The early twentieth-century Pan-African congresses enabled African and diasporic intellectuals to debate colonial domination, racial discrimination, and cultural identity, laying foundations for transnational networks that later influenced African independence movements. In the mid-twentieth century, the *Négritude* movement, led by Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor, revalorized African culture against colonial narratives of inferiority. Despite criticisms of essentialism, *Négritude* restored confidence in African cultural identity and stimulated intellectual creativity among African and diasporic writers.

Simultaneously, African philosophy as an academic discipline sparked debates on African intellectual traditions. Scholars like Paulin Hountondji, Kwasi Wiredu, and Henry Odera Oruka argued against reducing it to collective cultural beliefs, instead advocating for a critical, analytical discipline engaging global debates through intellectual rigor, methodological clarity, and scholarly dialogue.

Debates in African philosophy revealed structural limits for African scholars in global academia. Key knowledge infrastructure—journals, publishers, funding—remains concentrated in the Global North, creating publication barriers and limited access to research networks. This imbalance fuels the “epistemic marginalization” of African knowledge.

In recent decades, the concept of the decolonization of knowledge has emerged as a central theme within African intellectual discourse. Scholars such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Achille Mbembe, and Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni have argued that colonial epistemologies continue to shape contemporary academic institutions. According to this perspective, decolonization requires not only the revision of academic curricula but also the transformation of institutional practices that govern research, publication, and knowledge dissemination. In this context, scholarly associations like APAS are vital, providing institutional platforms for dialogue and collaboration. Influential movements—such as the Harlem Renaissance, supported by cultural institutions and publishing networks—relied on such structures. Likewise, African Studies as a field has depended on scholarly associations and research institutes.

APAS can therefore be seen as part of a long tradition of institutional initiatives aimed at strengthening African intellectual life. By bringing together scholars from diverse disciplines including philosophy, history, sociology, religious studies, and literature the association provides an important platform for interdisciplinary dialogue. Such dialogue is particularly important in the study of African societies, which often require integrative analytical approaches that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Another important contribution of APAS lies in its capacity to foster Pan-African scholarly networks. Intellectual collaboration

across national and regional boundaries is essential for the development of a truly Pan-African intellectual community. Historically, colonial borders and linguistic divisions have fragmented African academic networks. By encouraging collaboration among scholars from different regions of the continent as well as from the African diaspora, APAS contributes to overcoming these divisions and promoting intellectual solidarity.

Furthermore, APAS plays a role in supporting the institutionalization of African Studies within African universities. Institutionalization involves the creation of sustainable academic structures such as research centers, academic journals, conferences, and postgraduate training programs. These structures are essential for nurturing new generations of scholars and ensuring the continuity of intellectual traditions.

In addition to its institutional contributions, APAS also provides a platform for the articulation of African-centered research agendas. One of the challenges facing African scholarship is the need to develop theoretical frameworks that emerge from African historical experiences rather than merely applying external paradigms. By encouraging research that engages with indigenous knowledge systems, cultural traditions, and contemporary African realities, APAS contributes to the diversification of global intellectual perspectives.

The role of APAS is particularly relevant in the context of ongoing debates about the future of African universities. Many scholars have argued that African higher education institutions must move beyond their colonial origins and become centers of innovation capable of addressing the social and economic challenges facing the continent. Scholarly associations can support this transformation by facilitating collaboration between universities, research institutes, and policymakers.

A Pan-African intellectual renaissance depends on the interplay of scholars, movements, and institutions. Visionary ideas need institutional support to reach wider audiences. APAS provides networks and platforms for this renewal, continuing earlier African traditions while addressing contemporary challenges. By fostering interdisciplinary, African-centered research and transnational networks, APAS enhances African scholarship's global visibility. Such infrastructures are essential for African ideas to flourish, and APAS marks a key step forward.

Conclusion

The quest for a Pan-African intellectual renaissance represents one of the most significant challenges confronting African scholarship in the twenty-first century. Although African intellectual movements have historically challenged colonial representations of the continent, the transformation of global knowledge systems requires strong institutional foundations capable of sustaining collaborative scholarship. The Association for the Promotion of African Studies offers an important example of how scholarly institutions can contribute to this process. By promoting interdisciplinary dialogue, facilitating transnational academic networks, and supporting African-centered research agendas, APAS helps create the conditions necessary for the renewal of African intellectual life. Ultimately, the success of a Pan-African intellectual renaissance will depend not only on the ideas produced by scholars but also on the institutional structures that sustain, disseminate, and legitimize those ideas within the global academic system.

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SECTION IV:

Interdisciplinarity, Knowledge Production, and Academic Networking

17

APAS AND ACADEMIC NETWORKING: BUILDING SCHOLARLY COMMUNITIES ACROSS AFRICA AND THE DIASPORA

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Introduction

To increase scholarly productivity, innovation, and global engagement, academic networking is essential (Castells, 2010). In order to overcome systemic obstacles like underfunded institutions, restricted access to scholarly journals, and inadequate research infrastructure, networking is especially crucial for African scholars (Teferra, 2013). In addition to having an impact on research output, these structural issues also influence how knowledge is produced and disseminated throughout the continent.

Further evidence of how institutional and socioeconomic constraints affect research engagement can be found in scholarly work that emerges from African contexts. For example, research on education and social development in Africa emphasizes how educational systems, societal issues, and knowledge production are intertwined Omojola, (2021). The need for cooperative, multidisciplinary academic networks that can address new societal issues is also revealed by research on social issues like gender-based violence during crises Omojola, (2020).

By bringing together academics from different institutions, fields, and continents, professional networks aid in overcoming these

constraints. They facilitate collaboration, offer mentorship, and introduce scholars to a variety of methodological approaches and new worldwide trends. African and diaspora scholars can participate in conferences, cooperative research projects, and joint publications thanks to the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) (APAS, 2021; 2022; 2023). APAS enhances its members' professional abilities and scholarly visibility through workshops, mentorship programs, and editorial involvement. In order to make the case that structured academic networks are crucial for removing both past and present obstacles to knowledge production, this paper looks at the historical development of academic collaboration in Africa and places APAS within this larger trajectory.

Historical Development of Academic Collaboration in Africa Colonial Era Challenges

Examining the institutional and structural limitations imposed during the colonial era is necessary to comprehend the historical evolution of academic collaboration in Africa. Universities on the continent, like Makerere University in Uganda (founded in 1922) and Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone (founded in 1827), were primarily created to support administrative, missionary, and colonial governance needs rather than to foster independent research or intellectual growth Altbach & Salmi, (2011). There was little opportunity for local academics to investigate subjects of indigenous or societal significance because research priorities were set externally. Academic networking within Africa and among international scholarly communities was hindered by colonial policies.

African academics had little access to international conferences, international journals, or modern research techniques. African knowledge production was consequently marginalized, and scholars encountered significant obstacles when attempting to contribute to global scholarly discourse. During this time, African

intellectuals were systematically excluded, leaving behind long-lasting effects such as weak research infrastructure, limited professional development opportunities, and limited institutional capacity.

Post-Independence Networks

African universities quickly grew after gaining independence in the 1960s and 1970s, adding new faculties and institutions to support more general societal and developmental objectives. Despite this expansion, the development of strong academic networks was hampered by political unpredictability, economic difficulties, and inadequate infrastructure (Teferra, 2013). In order to obtain resources and share research findings, scholars frequently relied on unofficial networks, such as personal relationships, diasporic ties, and cooperation with foreign institutions. During this time, scholars from the diaspora were especially significant. They enabled access to journals, funding opportunities, and academic platforms that would not have been possible in local contexts by utilizing connections in Europe, North America, and Asia. These unofficial networks set the stage for later decades' more formalized, institutionally sponsored partnerships.

APAS and Modern Collaboration

Professional associations have become essential venues for organized academic networking in Africa in recent decades. An example of this evolution is the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS). APAS offers venues for African and diaspora scholars to work together, mentor early-career researchers, and co-produce interdisciplinary research through conferences, workshops, and publications. African Religion and Culture: Honouring the Past and Shaping the Future Kanu et al (2021) is one of the edited volumes that demonstrates APAS's dedication to promoting interdisciplinary discourse and elevating African perspectives in international scholarship.

The modern role of APAS extends beyond academic networking to include capacity building, professional development, and leadership. Members gain the organizational and research skills necessary for long-term academic engagement by serving as conference organizers, session chairs, rapporteurs, and publication editors. APAS helps to build long-lasting, transnational scholarly communities that have the power to influence both regional and global knowledge production by connecting Africa and its diaspora.

According to Teferra (2013), academic networking includes the establishment and upkeep of professional connections between academics for the purpose of knowledge sharing, cooperative research, and interpersonal cooperation. According to theoretical perspectives on knowledge production, networks serve as intellectual exchange systems that facilitate the transfer of concepts, techniques, and innovations across disciplinary and geographic boundaries Castells (2010). These networks are especially important for addressing structural disparities in access to global academic platforms and research resources in the African context.

Beyond networking, scholarly communities create long-lasting intellectual ecosystems based on peer review, mentoring, and cooperative output. In order to prevent African perspectives from being marginalized, studies in African scholarship emphasize the significance of incorporating indigenous knowledge systems into international academic discourse Kanu & Ndubisi, (2020). This method strengthens the relevance of research to local realities while also enhancing the production of global knowledge. By connecting African institutions with international academic platforms, diaspora scholars continue to play a vital role in these communities. Their contributions make it easier to obtain international funding, collaborative research opportunities, and high-impact journals Zeleza (2014). African scholarship becomes more visible and influential as a result of these interactions.

APAS is a prime example of an organized academic community that promotes cross-disciplinary and international cooperation. Scholars from various backgrounds come together to discuss current African issues through its publications and conferences. The association's dedication to advancing African-centered scholarship within a global context, for instance, is reflected in works on African religion, philosophy, and global engagement Kanu, 2021; Kanu, 2023.

Challenges Facing Academic Networking in Africa

African scholars still confront substantial structural obstacles in spite of the advantages of academic networking. Access to conferences, research materials, and cooperative opportunities is still severely limited by a lack of funding (Teferra, 2013). Due to these financial constraints, participation in international scholarly discourse is frequently uneven.

There are still institutional issues. The time and motivation available for scholarly engagement are diminished by heavy teaching workloads, ineffective bureaucracy, and a lack of research incentives. Wider socioeconomic problems that impact educational systems and academic productivity exacerbate these problems Omojola (2021).

Additionally, participation in modern academic networks is hampered by digital and infrastructure constraints. Virtual collaboration and knowledge exchange are hampered by unequal access to dependable internet, expensive data, and insufficient technology resources. During worldwide disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated a quick transition to digital platforms, these limitations became especially apparent Omojola, (2020).

By offering inclusive platforms for collaboration, such as virtual conferences, mentorship programs, and accessible publication opportunities, APAS tackles some of these issues. These programs show how organized networks can improve scholarly engagement and lessen systemic limitations.

Opportunities for Strengthening Scholarly Communities

Despite current obstacles, there is a great deal of promise to improve academic networking in Africa through new opportunities. By facilitating online collaboration, virtual conferences, and open-access publishing, digital technologies have revolutionized scholarly communication Castells (2010). By lowering financial and geographic barriers, these innovations increase the inclusivity of academic engagement.

Knowledge production is further improved through cooperative research projects between African institutions and international partners. These collaborations make it easier to share concepts, techniques, and materials, which strengthens and contextualizes research findings. Crucially, they also provide early-career scholars with opportunities for capacity building and mentoring. In order to take advantage of these opportunities, APAS plays a strategic role. The organization encourages cooperation and advances African scholarship internationally through its conferences, publications, and interdisciplinary projects (APAS, 2022; 2023). Its focus on cutting-edge topics like global engagement, artificial intelligence, and digital humanities shows a forward-thinking approach to academic networking.

APAS Publications as Proof of Academic Influence

Strong evidence of its contribution to scholarly networking and knowledge production can be found in APAS publications. These pieces cover a wide range of topics, such as global engagement, gender, education, religion, and governance. Crucially, these works show a persistent attempt to incorporate African viewpoints into international scholarly discourse. For instance, research on

indigenous knowledge systems highlights how crucial it is to contextualize studies within African realities Kanu & Ndubisi (2020), and studies on philosophy and religion show how African intellectual traditions are relevant worldwide Kanu (2023).

The strength of APAS as a transnational scholarly network is demonstrated by the collaborative nature of these publications, which frequently involve scholars from several nations and disciplines. APAS increases the prominence and influence of African scholarship by offering venues for collaborative research and publication.

APAS's publications provide concrete evidence of its role in fostering scholarly networks and African-centered knowledge production. Selected works include:

- **2018–2019:** *African governance and development issues; Religion and identity in contemporary African society; Philosophy and African development: Emerging discourses.*
- **2020–2021:** *African Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Problems and Perspectives; Reimagining African education in the digital age; COVID-19 and socio-cultural transformations in Africa.*
- **2022–2023:** *African scholarship and global intellectual engagement; Migration, diaspora, and transnational identities in Africa; Gender, human rights, and education in Africa; Politics and economic development in Africa; Advancing African perspectives in global academic discourse.*
- **2024–2025:** *Digital humanities and African knowledge production; Youth, innovation, and sustainable development in Africa; Artificial intelligence and the future of African scholarship; Intercultural dialogue and African global engagement*

These publications demonstrate APAS's ability to foster mentorship, interdisciplinary research, and global visibility. They highlight the transformative role of professional associations in addressing historical and contemporary challenges in African scholarly networks.

Conclusion

In order to increase research productivity, promote intellectual exchange, and promote African scholarship internationally, academic networking is still crucial. The historical development of academic cooperation in Africa demonstrates both enduring difficulties and new prospects influenced by regional and global factors. By offering venues for cooperation, mentoring, and information sharing, APAS serves as an example of how organized academic networks can address these issues. The association works to create inclusive academic communities that connect Africa and its diaspora through its initiatives.

For African scholarship to continue to flourish and remain relevant on a global scale, sustained investment in research infrastructure, supportive institutional policies, and professional networks will be essential.

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PROMOTING INTERDISCIPLINARITY: APAS AT THE INTERSECTION OF PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION, CULTURE, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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1. Introduction

The limitations of single-discipline approaches have become increasingly evident in the face of complex social, cultural, and developmental challenges. Nowhere is this more apparent than in African studies, where lived realities are shaped by deeply intertwined philosophical, religious, cultural, and socio-political dynamics. Such realities resist reductionist interpretations and instead call for integrative frameworks capable of capturing their full complexity. The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) has emerged as a strategic intellectual response to this need. Through its conferences, collaborative engagements, and scholarly outputs, APAS has consistently advanced an interdisciplinary ethos rooted in African-centered perspectives. Its thematic orientations reveal a sustained commitment to bridging disciplinary divides in ways that reflect the holistic character of African worldviews.

This chapter advances the argument that APAS embodies a distinctive model of interdisciplinarity grounded in African epistemology. Drawing on the philosophy of Igwebuike, it demonstrates how APAS fosters integrative scholarship that not

only deepens academic inquiry but also contributes to the reconstruction of African knowledge and the pursuit of socially meaningful development.

2. Interdisciplinarity within African Integrative Epistemology

While interdisciplinarity is often defined in methodological terms as the integration of insights from multiple disciplines (Repko & Szostak, 2020), such a definition remains insufficient when applied to African contexts. In African thought systems, the unity of knowledge is not an intellectual strategy but a reflection of the nature of reality itself. This ontological and epistemological unity is aptly captured in the Igbo philosophical notion of *Igwebuike*. Beyond its literal connotation of “strength in plurality,” *Igwebuike* articulates a worldview in which being and knowing are inherently relational (Kanu, 2014). Knowledge emerges not from isolated inquiry but from the dynamic interplay of perspectives, experiences, and domains of understanding.

From this standpoint, interdisciplinarity is not externally imposed but internally necessitated. It reflects an epistemic orientation in which philosophy, religion, culture, and social sciences are understood as interdependent modes of engaging reality. The fragmentation characteristic of modern academic structures thus appears incongruent with African epistemological sensibilities.

APAS, in its structure and intellectual engagements, reflects this integrative orientation. By creating spaces for cross-disciplinary dialogue, it operationalizes *Igwebuike* as both a philosophical principle and a practical methodology. In doing so, it contributes to an ongoing reconfiguration of knowledge production in African studies.

3. The Ontological Convergence of Disciplines

3.1 Philosophy as a Unifying Reflective Enterprise

Within African contexts, philosophy functions as a synthesizing

discipline that draws together insights from various dimensions of human experience. It engages questions of existence, value, and knowledge not in abstraction but in relation to lived realities. African communitarian philosophy, in particular, emphasizes the primacy of relational existence. The individual is conceived as fundamentally embedded within a network of social and moral relationships (Gyekye, 1997; Metz, 2014). This relational ontology provides a basis for integrating philosophical reflection with religious beliefs, cultural practices, and social structures. In the interdisciplinary framework promoted by APAS, philosophy assumes a critical and normative role. It interrogates underlying assumptions, clarifies conceptual frameworks, and offers ethical guidance for scholarly inquiry and social transformation.

3.2 Religion as a Mode of Being

Religion in African societies extends beyond doctrinal systems to encompass a comprehensive mode of existence. It mediates the relationship between the human, the natural, and the transcendent, shaping both individual consciousness and collective life. The coexistence of African traditional religion, Christianity, and Islam illustrates a dynamic and adaptive religious landscape. Rather than generating epistemic fragmentation, this plurality often fosters integrative forms of understanding that align with the Igwebuiké principle of complementarity. APAS engagements frequently foreground religion as a critical dimension of development, highlighting its role in moral formation, social cohesion, and identity construction. Such engagements underscore the necessity of incorporating religious perspectives into interdisciplinary research.

3.3 Culture as Epistemic Medium

Culture functions as the living archive of African knowledge systems. It embodies philosophical insights, encodes religious meanings, and structures social interactions through symbolic forms such as language, rituals, and artistic expressions.

Traditional media—oral traditions, proverbs, festivals—serve as conduits for transmitting knowledge across generations. They do not merely preserve information but actively shape interpretive frameworks through which reality is understood. The integration of cultural analysis into interdisciplinary research ensures that scholarly inquiry remains grounded in context. APAS's sustained emphasis on cultural themes reflects an appreciation of culture as both source and vehicle of knowledge.

3.4 Social Sciences and Normative Imperatives

Although the social sciences provide empirical tools for analyzing societal phenomena, their application in African contexts cannot be divorced from ethical considerations. Development, governance, and social policy are deeply embedded in value systems that demand critical reflection. The incorporation of social standards—including equity, participation, accountability, and sustainability—introduces a normative dimension to interdisciplinary inquiry. These standards resonate with African communitarian ethics and provide criteria for evaluating the societal impact of research. APAS's interdisciplinary engagements reflect this integration of empirical analysis and ethical reflection, thereby enhancing the relevance and transformative potential of scholarship.

4. APAS Conference Themes as Sites of Interdisciplinary Praxis

The thematic orientations of APAS conferences provide concrete illustrations of interdisciplinarity in practice. Each theme is structured to encourage engagement across disciplinary boundaries, thereby fostering integrative scholarship. The 2022 conference, which focused on dialogue among philosophy, religion, and culture, foregrounded the role of indigenous knowledge systems in development discourse. By bringing these domains into conversation, it highlighted their collective relevance

in addressing contemporary challenges. The 2023 conference expanded this engagement by incorporating political, economic, and social dimensions, thereby situating African experiences within broader global processes. This shift reflects an evolving interdisciplinary scope that responds to changing realities. Subsequent conferences have continued to address issues such as sustainability, governance, and identity, demonstrating a consistent commitment to integrative inquiry. These themes collectively illustrate how APAS operationalizes interdisciplinarity as both principle and practice.

5. Igwebuiké as Methodological Framework

Beyond its philosophical significance, Igwebuiké can be articulated as a methodological framework for interdisciplinary research. This involves a tripartite process:

- i. Integrative Synthesis: The deliberate convergence of diverse knowledge systems.
- ii. Dialogical Interaction: Sustained engagement among disciplines to generate new insights.
- iii. Complementary Realism: Recognition that different dimensions of reality require interconnected modes of understanding.

This methodological orientation resists hierarchical ordering of disciplines and instead promotes epistemic parity. It aligns with APAS's commitment to inclusive scholarship and provides a viable framework for addressing complex issues in African studies.

6. Reconstructing African Knowledge through APAS

A central contribution of APAS lies in its role in reconfiguring African knowledge systems. By challenging inherited colonial epistemologies, it creates space for the articulation of indigenous perspectives. This process of reconstruction involves not only critique but also creative re-engagement with African intellectual traditions. It affirms the validity of local knowledge while situating

it within global discourse. Through its conferences and publications, APAS has established itself as a repository of interdisciplinary scholarship that advances this reconstructive project. It enables scholars to articulate alternative narratives that reflect African realities more accurately and authentically.

7. Interdisciplinarity, Social Standards, and Knowledge Advancement

The integration of interdisciplinarity and social standards enhances both the quality and relevance of knowledge production. It ensures that research is not only analytically rigorous but also ethically grounded and socially responsive.

Within the APAS framework, this integration has yielded several outcomes:

- i. A more comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomena.
- ii. Increased alignment between academic research and societal needs.
- iii. Enhanced capacity for policy engagement and practical impact.
- iv. Greater visibility of African scholarship within global intellectual spaces.

By linking knowledge production to ethical imperatives, APAS contributes to a model of scholarship that is both intellectually robust and socially transformative.

8. Challenges and Future Directions

Despite its successes, interdisciplinarity continues to encounter structural and methodological challenges. Institutional frameworks often privilege specialization, while differences in disciplinary approaches can complicate integration. Nevertheless, APAS has demonstrated adaptability in addressing these challenges. Its future trajectory lies in deepening collaborative networks, expanding digital engagement, and consolidating its role

as a hub for interdisciplinary scholarship. The continued application of Igwebuike and social standards offers a sustainable pathway for advancing African studies and addressing emerging global concerns.

9. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the interdisciplinary orientation of APAS through the lens of African integrative epistemology. By grounding analysis in the philosophy of Igwebuike, it has shown that interdisciplinarity in African studies is both an ontological reality and a methodological necessity.

APAS emerges as a dynamic intellectual community that bridges disciplinary divides, reconstructs knowledge systems, and contributes meaningfully to global discourse. Its activities reflect the interconnected nature of African life and provide a framework for addressing complex challenges.

In integrating philosophy, religion, culture, and the social sciences, APAS exemplifies a model of scholarship that is holistic, context-sensitive, and ethically grounded. Such a model holds significant promise for the future of knowledge production in Africa and beyond.

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AFRICAN INTELLECTUALS AND THE FUTURE: REIMAGINING KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION THROUGH AN APAS ALTERNATIVE

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Introduction

Across the African continent, questions about the future of knowledge production have become increasingly urgent. African universities, research institutes, and intellectual communities operate within a global knowledge economy that is structurally unequal and historically shaped by colonial encounters. While African societies have long possessed rich intellectual traditions rooted in indigenous epistemologies, oral knowledge systems, and philosophical reflections on communal life, these traditions have often been marginalised within contemporary academic structures. The resulting tension between inherited knowledge systems and imported epistemic frameworks has produced what many scholars describe as a crisis of African knowledge systems. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Mbembe, 2016).

One of the most persistent challenges confronting African scholarship today is the problem of dependency in knowledge production. African researchers often operate within externally derived frameworks reinforced by global publishing and funding systems. International publishing systems, research funding structures, and global academic rankings often reinforce this dependency by privileging Western institutions as the primary centres of epistemic authority. As a result, African scholars may

find themselves compelled to align their research priorities with external expectations rather than with locally grounded concerns (Hountondji, 2009; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021).

The consequences of this dependency extend beyond academia. When knowledge production is externally oriented, the capacity of intellectuals to address pressing societal issues becomes significantly weakened. Research agendas may prioritize theoretical debates relevant to global academic audiences while neglecting the practical challenges confronting African communities. Furthermore, the dominance of imported intellectual paradigms can lead to the marginalisation of indigenous epistemologies that possess valuable insights into governance, environmental stewardship, conflict resolution, and communal solidarity. In this context, the African intellectual faces a profound dilemma: how to participate in global scholarly conversations while simultaneously cultivating knowledge systems that speak meaningfully to African historical experiences and contemporary aspirations.

These challenges underscore the need for a new intellectual orientation in African scholarship. Such an orientation must move beyond the binary opposition between wholesale rejection of Western knowledge and uncritical assimilation into global academic norms. Instead, it requires a more reflective and creative approach that recognises the plurality of knowledge traditions and the importance of epistemic autonomy. Scholars such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009) and Mbembe (2016) have argued that the decolonisation of knowledge is not merely about recovering suppressed traditions but about reimagining intellectual practices capable of generating new conceptual tools for understanding African realities. In this sense, the future of African intellectual life depends on the emergence of scholars who are simultaneously rooted in local contexts and engaged in global intellectual dialogues.

Within this broader quest for epistemic renewal, institutional initiatives that promote African-centred scholarship play an increasingly important role. One such initiative is the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS). As an intellectual network committed to advancing research on African societies, cultures, and philosophical traditions, APAS represents an effort to strengthen the institutional foundations of African knowledge production. As a platform for scholarly collaboration, interdisciplinary dialogue, and the dissemination of African-centred research, APAS seeks to contribute to the development of a more autonomous and socially responsive intellectual culture on the continent. APAS can be understood not merely as an academic association but as part of a broader movement aimed at reconfiguring the role of African intellectuals in shaping the continent's future.

This chapter seeks to normatively position APAS as a catalyst for an enriched intellectual culture - one that fosters a transformative model for Africa's future by positioning intellectuals as both theorists and active political agents. By employing a relational model, the discussion reimagines the role of African scholars in knowledge production, aiming to project a more equitable future for the continent. Ultimately, this chapter contends that APAS offers a viable and robust alternative for an African knowledge renaissance in the 21st century.

Crisis of African Knowledge Production

Contemporary African scholarship operates within a deep and multilayered crisis of knowledge production. This crisis is not reducible to a lack of talent or intellectual seriousness among African scholars. Rather, it is rooted in structural conditions that shape what counts as valid knowledge, who has the authority to produce it, where it is circulated, and whose interests it ultimately serves (Asuquo, 2025). The problem, therefore, is not simply one

of output but of intellectual location, institutional power, and epistemic justice. Across the continent, scholars work within universities and research systems that are formally African in geography yet often externally conditioned in their frameworks of validation, funding priorities, and scholarly prestige. This produces a situation in which knowledge about Africa may continue to be generated under terms that do not fully emerge from African historical experiences or contemporary social needs (Etuk & Ibuot, 2024; Ocholla, 2020).

One of the most enduring dimensions of this crisis is epistemic dependency. African scholars frequently engage intellectual traditions, methods, and conceptual vocabularies that originate outside the continent, not necessarily because these are inherently invalid, but because the global academic order has normalized them as the primary standards of scholarly legitimacy. In such a system, indigenous categories of thought, local archives of meaning, and African modes of interpretation are often treated as supplementary rather than foundational. Etuk and Ibuot argue that the coloniality of knowledge continues to sustain the dominance of Western epistemic paradigms while subordinating African indigenous modes of knowing and production. Similarly, Fabidun and Olatunji describe this condition as epistemic deference, in which African knowledge producers defer to external standards in ways that weaken confidence in locally grounded intellectual resources (Etuk & Ibuot, 2024; Fabidun & Olatunji, 2021). This epistemic dependency has far-reaching consequences. It affects curriculum design, research problem selection, publication strategies, and even the language in which African realities are interpreted. Scholars may feel compelled to frame their arguments in ways that resonate with dominant metropolitan discourses in order to secure publication, funding, or international recognition. The result is often a subtle but powerful distortion: African scholarship becomes oriented toward external validation before local intelligibility. Knowledge production then risks becoming a

process of translation into foreign conceptual economies rather than an exercise in conceptual innovation from African life-worlds. In this sense, the crisis is not merely that Africa is underrepresented in global knowledge systems, but that it is too often represented under epistemic terms not of its own making (Etuk & Ibuot, 2024; Ocholla, 2020).

The second dimension of the crisis is the rise of the neoliberal university. Across many African higher education systems, universities are increasingly shaped by market rationalities, audit cultures, managerialism, and productivity metrics. Knowledge is evaluated through measurable outputs, institutional rankings, grant capture, and performance targets. Ndlovu argues that within this neoliberal framework, the production of locally relevant knowledge is fundamentally restricted because academics are pressed to function under productivity imperatives rather than under the demands of social responsibility and epistemic freedom. Hlatshwayo makes a related argument in the South African context, showing how performance management, policy instruments, and market-oriented reforms deepen the hold of neoliberal and colonial logics over higher education (Ndlovu, 2024; Hlatshwayo, 2022).

The neoliberal turn transforms the vocation of scholarship itself. Instead of viewing the university primarily as a public institution tasked with cultivating critical thought and addressing social problems, neoliberalism treats it as a competitive enterprise whose success is measured through efficiency, branding, quantification, and market relevance. In such an environment, scholars are pushed toward strategic productivity: publish quickly, chase grants, align with fashionable topics, and produce outputs that are legible to managerial systems. This can erode slow thinking, theoretical risk-taking, public engagement, and community-rooted research. It also weakens the possibility of building African-centred intellectual traditions that require patience, institutional investment, archival recovery, and conceptual experimentation over time (Ndlovu,

2024; Munyaradzi, 2025; Asuquo 2019a).

The third major challenge is the detachment of scholarship from society. Historically, some of Africa's most influential intellectuals were deeply embedded in public life. Their work spoke directly to liberation, justice, governance, culture, and development. By contrast, contemporary academic systems can produce forms of insulation in which scholars write primarily for peer communities, promotion committees, and journal gatekeepers rather than for wider publics. The issue here is not that specialized scholarship is unnecessary, but that knowledge production loses vitality when it ceases to be accountable to the concrete experiences and aspirations of society. Emerging studies on university-society engagement in Africa indicate that many institutions now recognise the importance of social engagement as a “third mission,” yet the practical integration of research, teaching, and community relevance remains uneven (Bekele, 2021; Badat, 2023).

This detachment is especially troubling in African contexts marked by urgent challenges such as democratic fragility, youth unemployment, ecological degradation, public health inequality, religious conflict, and technological dependency. Where scholarship becomes excessively inward-looking, it risks forfeiting its transformative potential. The crisis of knowledge production in Africa is therefore also a crisis of intellectual purpose. The question is no longer only whether African universities produce enough research, but whether that research is conceptually emancipatory, institutionally autonomous, and socially responsive. Reconnecting scholarship to society requires more than occasional outreach; it demands a rethinking of the very meaning of the African intellectual as one whose work is rooted in public problems and collective futures (Bam-Hutchison, 2024).

From Nationalist Thinkers to Academic Professionals

The intellectual history of modern Africa is defined by a significant shift from the radical activism of anti-colonial nationalists to the professionalized bureaucracy of contemporary academia. During the mid-twentieth century, African thinkers were not merely observers but architects of postcolonial identity. Figures such as Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Frantz Fanon functioned as “organic intellectuals,” synthesising traditional humanism with modern political theory to mobilize mass movements. Whether through Nkrumah's *Consciencism* (1964), Nyerere's communal *Ujamaa* (1968), Senghor's cultural *Négritude* (1964), or Fanon's revolutionary critique of colonial psychology (1963), scholarship and political commitment were inseparable. These thinkers established universities as centres for national renewal, viewing higher education as a vital tool for decolonization and development.

However, in the decades following independence, the intellectual landscape underwent a profound transformation. As universities became institutionalised, the “nationalist thinker” was largely replaced by the “academic professional.” While this brought research expansion and scholarship standardization, it also introduced rigid bureaucratic constraints. As Mbembe (2016) notes, the modern university has increasingly adopted a managerial model where intellectual creativity is often subordinated to administrative metrics, publication counts, and accreditation requirements.

This shift has resulted in a perceived decline in the public relevance of intellectual work. Unlike the anti-colonial generation, whose work addressed urgent moral and political crises, contemporary scholars are often trapped in institutional routines. The global structure of academic publishing further exacerbates this gap; to achieve professional advancement, many African scholars prioritize international journals that favour global theoretical

debates over local realities. These dynamic risks creating an “intellectual sluggishness,” distancing the university from the society it is meant to serve.

While contemporary African scholars remain active in civil society, they operate within a framework of epistemic dependency and institutional conformity. This historical transition raises a critical question for the 21st century: if the previous generation was defined by political liberation, how can modern academics reclaim their role as public leaders within a system that prioritizes managerial efficiency over transformative knowledge production? Addressing this crisis requires a structural re-evaluation of how knowledge is produced, validated, and disseminated across the continent.

Reimagining the African Intellectual: A Normative Reconstruction

The structural crisis confronting African knowledge production characterized by epistemic dependency, neoliberal managerialism, and social detachment demands more than a critique of existing systems; it requires a fundamental conceptual reconstruction of the African scholar's identity. The future of the continent's scholarship depends on a renewed model of intellectual responsibility capable of recovering indigenous epistemic resources and orienting research toward transformative ends. This section proposes a normative reconstruction of the African intellectual through four interrelated dimensions: the Relational, the Public, the Civilizational, and the Futural.

The Relational Intellectual

At the foundation of this reconstruction lies the Relational Intellectual, a thinker whose work is grounded in the social relations that sustain communal life. This perspective draws inspiration from African philosophical traditions where the individual is understood not as an isolated entity, but as a being

whose identity and flourishing emerge through interdependence with the community and the broader moral order (Ramose, 2019). Knowledge production, therefore, cannot be an abstract activity detached from social reality; it must be embedded within the networks of relationships that give meaning to inquiry (Asuquo, 2019b).

This orientation is rooted in African Relational Ontology, which views reality as constituted through complementarity and mutual participation. Within this framework, knowledge is not merely a collection of objective facts but a dialogical process of interpreting lived experiences. The Relational Intellectual rejects the "silo" model of the isolated specialist. Instead, the scholar acts as a mediator between academic discourse and communal wisdom. This echoes Asouzu's (2013) philosophy of *Ibuanyidanda*, which emphasizes the complementary nature of all reality and warns against fragmentary thinking. Knowledge only acquires true meaning when it contributes to the harmonious integration of human life within its broader relational environment.

The Public Intellectual

Closely tied to relationality is the restoration of the Public Intellectual. While the anti-colonial generation was deeply embedded in social movements, contemporary academic structures often force scholars to prioritize professional advancement over societal engagement. Reimagining the African intellectual requires reclaiming the ethical responsibility of knowledge. This does not necessitate a sacrifice of academic rigor; rather, it requires the ability to translate complex theoretical insights into forms that inform public reasoning and democratic participation. As Edward Said (1994) argued, the intellectual must "speak truth to power." In the African context, this involves active engagement with governance, inequality, environmental sustainability, and cultural renewal. Within a relational framework, public engagement is not an "extra-curricular" activity but a

constitutive dimension of scholarly duty. The intellectual is accountable not only to peer-reviewed journals but to the communities whose experiences provide the raw material for their research. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, the Public Intellectual contributes to the moral imagination of society.

The Civilisational Intellectual

The Civilisational Intellectual addresses the crisis of epistemic dependency by recovering and revitalizing African intellectual traditions as legitimate sources of global theoretical innovation. This task goes beyond mere “cultural documentation”; it involves a critical and creative engagement with indigenous systems to address contemporary problems. Scholars like Wiredu (1998) and Gyekye (1997) have championed “conceptual decolonisation,” urging thinkers to strip away the colonial baggage of inherited categories and re-examine reality through African cultural resources. The Civilisational Intellectual treats traditions such as the ethics of Ubuntu, ecological wisdom, and precolonial governance not as static artifacts, but as living reservoirs of knowledge. From the standpoint of African Relational Ontology, this recovery is an exercise in epistemic renewal rather than nostalgia (Asuquo, 2021). By grounding their work in civilizational memory, African scholars can offer original perspectives to global debates on ethics, development, and human flourishing, moving the continent from the periphery to the centre of global knowledge systems.

The Futural Intellectual

Finally, the Futural Intellectual orients scholarship toward long-term societal transformation. While addressing immediate developmental hurdles is essential, there is a profound need for work that anticipates future trajectories. This dimension engages with emerging global shifts in technology, climate change, and urbanization by synthesizing indigenous insights with contemporary scientific advancements.

This orientation aligns with African futures studies, emphasizing speculative thinking and anticipatory governance (Sardar, 2010). In the relational paradigm, the future is not a detached temporal horizon but an extension of the ongoing communal process of world-making. Intellectual work thus becomes an ethical responsibility toward future generations. By operating at the intersection of historical memory and future imagination, the Futural Intellectual ensures that African scholarship is not merely reactive to current crises but is a proactive force in constructing a more equitable and sustainable world.

Dimension	Core Focus	Philosophical Root
Relational	Social embedding; scholar as mediator.	African Relational Ontology / Ibuanvidanda
Public	Speaking truth to power; ethical accountability.	Social Justice / Public Reasoning
Civilizational	Epistemic decolonization; revitalizing tradition.	Conceptual Decolonization (Wiredu/Gyekye)
Futural	Anticipatory governance; long-term transformation.	Speculative Thinking / Intergenerational Ethics

APAS and the Institutional Future of African Studies

The realization of a renewed African intellectualism depends not only on individual commitment but on the institutional platforms that nurture new epistemic cultures. Historically, movements are sustained by spaces that provide for dialogue and research dissemination. The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) represents a critical modern effort to strengthen these foundations, continuing the tradition of organizations like CODESRIA in promoting African-led research agendas and facilitating scholarly autonomy (Mkandawire, 2005).

APAS functions as an institutional catalyst for networked scholarship, fostering collaboration across regions to counter

global academic hierarchies that frequently marginalize African-produced research (Mamdani, 2016). By providing a structured environment for visibility and epistemic autonomy, APAS supports the development of African-centred conceptual frameworks necessary to address the continent's unique social and historical realities (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

Specifically, APAS facilitates the four dimensions of the reconstructed intellectual:

- The Relational Intellectual: Through interdisciplinary workshops and community-based research, APAS ensures scholarship remains embedded in its social context.
- The Public Intellectual: By providing platforms for policy dialogues and media engagement, the association bridges the gap between academic theory and public discourse.
- The Civilizational Intellectual: APAS serves as a sanctuary for the recovery of indigenous knowledge systems, repositioning Africa as a source of theoretical innovation rather than merely a subject of study (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021).
- The Futural Intellectual: By supporting research into technological disruption, climate change, and demographic shifts, APAS positions African scholars to proactively shape the continent's trajectory.

In the long run, APAS represents an intellectual ecosystem designed to overcome the structural constraints of the global knowledge economy. While the success of such an institution relies on the collective responsibility of scholars to rethink established paradigms, the emergence of APAS signals a significant shift toward institutionalizing epistemic autonomy. Through its conferences, publications, and mentorship initiatives, the association ensures that African perspectives occupy a central role in shaping 21st-century intellectual debates, moving toward a future where African scholarship is defined by its own internal logic and societal relevance.

Towards the African Knowledge Renaissance

The aspiration for an African Knowledge Renaissance represents a sustained intellectual renewal where scholars reclaim epistemic agency to contribute original insights to global scholarship. Much like the European Renaissance, this movement envisions the recovery and creative reinterpretation of Africa's intellectual heritage as the foundation for contemporary development and future scholarship.

The success of this renaissance rests on several core pillars:

- **Epistemic Sovereignty:** The ability of African institutions to define their own research agendas and methodological frameworks without undue dependence on external authorities (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).
- **Revitalization of Indigenous Epistemologies:** Integrating traditions like Ubuntu and communal solidarity into modern discourse to address global ethics and governance (Gyekye, 1997; Ramose, 2019).
- **Institutional Strengthening:** Investing in research infrastructure and platforms like APAS to facilitate networked, African-centred scholarship.
- **Interdisciplinary and Futural Imagination:** Adopting holistic, forward-looking approaches to navigate complex challenges such as technological disruption and climate change (Sardar, 2010).

This renaissance is a civilizational undertaking that transcends academia. It requires a new generation of Relational, Public, Civilizational, and Futural intellectuals to reconnect knowledge with social reality. By fostering an intellectual ecosystem that encourages creativity and critical reflection, organizations like APAS catalyse a shift in the global knowledge landscape, repositioning Africa not merely as a subject of study, but as a proactive contributor to the future of humanity.

Conclusion

This chapter examines the evolving role of the African intellectual amid structural crises like epistemic dependency and neoliberal academic constraints. It argues that the challenges facing African scholarship are fundamentally epistemic, necessitating a normative reconstruction of the scholar's identity. By proposing a framework anchored in African Relational Ontology, the chapter defines the ideal intellectual through four dimensions: Relational, Public, Civilizational, and Futural.

Institutional platforms such as APAS are identified as vital spaces for nurturing this socially embedded and autonomous scholarship. Ultimately, reclaiming epistemic agency through these orientations is essential for an African Knowledge Renaissance, repositioning the continent's thinkers as central actors in shaping both local societal transformation and global intellectual discourse.

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20

AFRICAN STUDIES, PAN-AFRICANIST DREAMS AND THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN RESEARCH

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Introduction

Reflecting on the present state of Africa, a pertinent question needs to be asked, has the Pan-African leaders' dreams for Africa been fully actualized? If not, what are the efforts towards living up to these dreams? The foremost African leaders believed that with the attainment of independence, further work needs to be done towards decolonizing Western thoughts and mannerisms in the people (Beltran et al., 2025). The vision of the Pan-African leaders was to see a future Africa that is culturally, politically, socially, psychologically, and economically independent (Martin, 2012: 57). It was also their wish to see a unified and progressive Africa irrespective of the multiple ethnic groups and languages that exists in the continent. According to Ndlovu (2015: 34), the African dream of continental integration has a long pedigree that dated back to the first Pan-African Conference of 1900. Similarly, Abdul-Raheem (1996: 1) asserts that the word Pan-Africanism first entered the political lexicon in 1900. Among the notable Pan-African leaders that fought for African liberation include Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Jomo Kenyatta, Thomas Sankara, Haile Selassie, Julius Nyerere, among others.

After independence came the need to solidify African history, heritage and cultural identity, traditions, and political identity. This can only be achieved through research, knowledge expansion,

education, and documentation of important themes in African Studies. Stanton (2012: 222) informs that the African Studies that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s was characterized by scholarship that was concerned with rehabilitating Africa's image on the global scene. Regrettably, the contemporary Africa is facing numerous challenges. According to Nolte (2019), despite being independent for long, the legacies of colonialism has continued to reverberate on Africans and African Diaspora as they continue to be affected in by foreign projections. Within the past twenty years, many African countries have recorded bad leadership, corruption, loss of cultural values, inter-ethnic clashes, border clashes, crime, terrorism, conflict, insecurity, and poor economy. According to Information Resources Management Association (2020: 1), African economy is still largely described as “a developing economy.” These challenges retard Africa's development which was the dreams of the Pan-African leaders. Thus, African Studies is fundamentally important as an area studies because it is aimed at discussing and finding solutions to African diverse problems. Research and education are fundamentally basic in sorting African problems at the moment. According to Fymat and Kapalanga (2017: xx), it is self-evident that many African countries lag behind the rest of the industrialized world in scientific and medical research and development. Most of the Pan-African leaders were educated men who wished that in the future, every African citizen will be educated and informed. *According to* Ndhlovu and Masuku (2025: 1), at the heart of the development project lie the task of rethinking Pan-Africanism that is devoted to studying the spheres of possibilities, prospects, and opportunities in the continent. Fortunately, there are many African Studies' Centers, Institutes, Associations and Groups around the world today that handles courses, discussions, and conferences on African matters. Africa is an important component of the world; without it the world history is incomplete. Hence, the study of African continent is paramount. So far, the African Studies organizations, both private and institutionally-based, having seen the present state and needs of

Africa, have doubled their zeal towards research in African Studies. These efforts align with the determination of the Pan-African leaders' dream to see that Africa is where it should be.

African Studies and the sustenance of African indigenous values

In the past ten years, African Studies has expanded and most of the Universities and associations holding it are now found across the world. Basically, African Studies is a segment of area studies that is indigenous to the African people. It is a multidisciplinary study which means that it captures diverse themes under its research programme. Basically, any good scholar from arts and humanities, social sciences, fine and applied arts, etcetera, can flexibly key in and develop a key research theme in African Studies for the development of Africa. Andrews and Khalema (2023: 49) mentioned the need for African intellectuals to assist in closing the gap produced in the past four hindered tears of dominance and marginalization of African people's knowledge systems.

Empirically and theoretically, African Studies captures major themes such as culture, politics, economics, traditions, heritage objects, health, archeology, religion, etc. It also prioritizes indigenous knowledge, skills acquisition, and handicrafts and does not fail to compare some major research themes in Africa with other nations of the world. In the past few years, many African Studies' organizations and institutions have staged numerous educational programmes like conferences and workshops on Africa, the environment, and people. One of these associations in Nigeria is the Association for the Promotion African Studies (APAS).

Promoting African Studies: the Association for the Promotion of African Studies

The future remains bright for Africa through research in African

Studies. This is a major multidisciplinary study that welcomes diverse ideas for research and promotes education in Africa. Leveraging on its diverse advantages, attaining the desired development in the continent in the nearest future is possible. The world is advancing and is fast becoming one global village. Likewise, knowledge is expanding in diverse fields while new digital tools are being launched every day. Most of new technological tools enhances education, encourage online communication, networking, and interaction with other scholars across the world.

Nevertheless, while using these digital tools in research in contemporary Africa, it is pertinent that scholars recognize the fact that African core values and indigenous research methods must be promoted and used respectively. Keeping the fire of indigenous research burning through African Studies is paramount towards sustaining originality of research in Africa. In the same vein, periodic acknowledgement and recognition of the efforts of institutes, centers and associations that promotes African research in Africa is important. In line with this, the Association for the Promotion of African Studies is celebrating ten years of promoting research and scholarship in Africa.

The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) is an association that is dedicated to research in African research and scholarship. It was founded by Professor Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu who is a priest and lecturer in Nigeria. APAS research focus is versatile and it encapsulates research in African philosophy, history, heritage matters, culture, religion, science and technology, migration, and many more. Through evidences on ground, APAS is not restrained to the study of only one theme in Africa but its method of research cuts across topics that tackles and resolves African challenges. In the past ten years, the association has

engaged with both local and international scholars in intellectual discussions through conferences, workshops, and seminars. Every year, scholars gather or meet physically and through Zoom in interactive sessions to brainstorm on key issues during conferences. Thankfully, the availability of digital tools and applications such as computers, phones, Zoom, internet, and availability of other social media platforms have enabled quality research, collaboration, and networking in research in African Studies. The Association for the Promotion of African Studies, having clocked ten years, still shows determination to continue expanding and promoting African research by exploring new themes in Africa and the wider world. The management and executives have expressed their zeal and hope for a better African scholarship in opening remarks during APAS conferences in the past few years.

So far, APAS have successfully held several conferences and workshops on themes that address African trending issues. Some of the outstanding themes include *Migration*, *COVID -19 Pandemic*, *Artificial Intelligence in Education*, *Indigenous Knowledge*, and so on. Through APAS yearly international conferences, scholars, researchers, and academicians from around the world have gathered to brainstorm on matters that enhance African research, education, and development in general. Thus, as APAS celebrates ten years' anniversary of its establishment, its focus should remain committed to the best. It should endeavour to leverage on the trending technological tools such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) to make future research in Africa better. Technology is the order of the day and the African continent should not be left out in this area. Hence, there is a need to maximize the opportunity for Africa's future research and education.

African Studies and the future of research

The future of research in Africa is promising thanks to the academic

interest of old and rising scholars in the field. Many scholars, students and academicians are taking interest in African Studies in contemporary times. Stanton (2012: 222) opines that there are a number of academic and professional associations devoted to African Studies. This multi-discipline is all inclusive, encompassing, and flexible. There are so many topics to be researched upon by an interested scholar. Here, studies can be approached through qualitative and quantitative methods.

African continent is yet to be free from so many issues that are preventing its rapid development in contemporary times. As a result, there is need for continuous academic research and discussions in order to fix these issues. Greiner et al. (2022: 1) note that ideas, philosophies, anticipations, aspirations, and expectations of the future will have their impact on how the past is experienced and remembered. In essence, the state of future research in Africa promises to be even better than it is presently. The presence and availability of numerous search engines makes research and education even more interesting and easy. Technically, the availability of Google, Google Scholar, Journal Storage, Scopus, Artificial Intelligence, etcetera, makes future research flexible. Indigenously, the presence and welcoming attitudes of elders in the villages who are willing to assist in giving information on African experiences during interviews is a plus to Africa's future research. Jakaza (2023: 142) advise that researchers should always work with members of the community in conducting natural science or social science research. More importantly, the availability of well stocked libraries in various Universities across Africa and beyond are very promising when it comes to future research in Africa.

The desired state of development have not been attained in most rural areas and communities across Africa, hence research that leads to lasting development of these places are paramount. This is why research in Africa should be intensified in the future. It is

unfortunate to state that Africa in the new millennium is still being referred to as developing. Corruption, political instability, bad leadership etc. are some of the reasons why Africa is still backwards. In the future, it is expected that intense studies through African Studies will be pursued towards tackling these mess. Research and education are required towards launching Africa into the desired development, unity, peace, and progress which are the primary vision of the Pan-African leaders. Noticeably, many African Studies institutions and associations in Nigeria have made reasonable efforts towards research in Africa. According to Eleazu (1974), it is hard to believe that African Studies have paved the way for the early twentieth century research. There is hope that in the future, research in African Studies will aim towards maximizing production techniques as against consumption syndrome, investment and employment opportunities rather than unemployment, leverage technical skills, enhance good leadership, research collaborations, and networking with foreign countries for greater productivity.

Conclusion: Moving forward

Moving forward, there is a need for African scholars to continue researching and documenting relevant topics. Africa is still on a journey trying to maximize its full potential as expected of it. Following this, collaborative effort is needed towards enabling political stability, rich economy, heritage protections, literacy, philosophy, worldview, and human rights. It is pertinent for the people to imbibe and appreciate the values in African indigenous ways: cultural values, thoughts, artifacts, food, dressing, proverbs, idioms, poetry, storytelling, and so on. According to Harrison and Omeihe (2023: 8, 9), we must begin to see the potential in African societies as fertile grounds for future studies; we firmly believe that comprehending the African context is vital to bridging the gap in African research. More so, while trying to tackle continental and national problems through research in African Studies, it is still

pertinent for African scholars to continue to appreciate the place and legitimacy of African traditional rulers, traditional council members, cultural norms and traditions. The importance of preserving African history, heritage artifacts and encouraging storytelling remains very important towards sustaining African future identity. Moving forward also, it is necessary that both natural and human resources in Africa are explored and maximized for future development. In essence, despite the collaborations and interactions with the outside world, sustaining African heritage values remains basic towards ensuring a continent that is totally independent and united.

Moving forward, continuing scholarly collaboration with the outside world remains important for academic growth in African Studies. The contemporary Africa, no doubt, still needs knowledge exchange and intellectual brainstorming with the rest of the world in order to gain new knowledge and technical know-how. Thus, while holding on to indigenous values, educational collaborations and knowledge exchange remains paramount for Africa to avoid being stagnated and isolated from the world affairs. This is the time to be proactive and maximize research in African Studies. Instead of groaning over the endless challenges facing the continent, Africans must strive to live up to the dreams of the Pan-African leaders by enforcing researching deeper in the nearest future. They must also strive to live in peace and unity at this time in order to actualize these dreams. According to Adem (2023: 18), 'while African problems are primarily internal, almost always external powers have played significant role in influencing at least their nature, duration, or intensity.' Hopefully, it is expected that by the year 2050, Africa must have attained the development that is expected of it through research in African Studies.

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SECTION V:

Society, Politics, Gender, and Developmental Trajectories

21

AFRICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT, GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT: AN ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF AFRICAN STUDIES PERSPECTIVE

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1.1 Background of the Study

Africa's political history stretches back thousands of years, marked by diverse systems of organization long before outside forces reshaped the continent. In the pre-colonial era, African societies developed complex political structures that varied widely depending on geography, economy, and culture. Some regions featured centralized kingdoms and empires, like the ancient Mali Empire under leaders such as Mansa Musa or the Great Zimbabwe civilization, where authority rested on kinship ties, councils of elders, and spiritual legitimacy. Other areas relied on decentralized chiefdoms or acephalous societies, where decisions emerged through consensus among community members rather than top-down rule. Hunter-gatherer groups practiced forms of shared resource management that emphasized equality and collective well-being. These systems often blended political power with moral and spiritual responsibilities, ensuring leaders remained accountable to their people through mechanisms like councils or ritual sanctions (Henn).

The arrival of European colonialism in the late 19th century disrupted these indigenous arrangements profoundly. Colonial powers imposed artificial boundaries that ignored ethnic and cultural realities, extracting resources while suppressing local

governance. Indirect rule in places like British Nigeria co-opted traditional chiefs as agents of colonial administration, distorting their original roles and creating resentment. Direct rule elsewhere eroded communal decision-making entirely. This period fostered resistance movements that birthed modern African political thought. Thinkers and activists began articulating ideas rooted in reclaiming dignity, challenging racial hierarchies, and envisioning self-determination. Movements such as cultural nationalism, Negritude led by Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Pan-Africanism championed by figures like Kwame Nkrumah and W.E.B. Du Bois emerged as direct responses to colonial domination. These ideas rejected imposed European superiority and sought to revive African values of community, harmony, and collective progress (Sklar, as discussed in colonial critiques).

The Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) stands as a key player in this intellectual landscape. Founded to advance African-centered research, APAS creates platforms for scholars to reconstruct and promote African history, culture, and knowledge along indigenous lines. Its mission emphasizes generating new ideas for self-awareness and liberation, connecting heritage components through dynamic scholarship. APAS publishes the *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development* (JASSD), hosts international conferences on themes like justice, climate change, and indigenous knowledge systems, and produces books addressing African challenges from within. Through these efforts, APAS promotes an intellectual orientation that prioritizes African perspectives over imported ones, contributing to discourses on governance and development (APAS website; Kanu, Presidential Address).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Africa continues to grapple with persistent governance crises that undermine progress. Corruption remains rampant, draining public resources and eroding trust in institutions. Weak state structures,

often inherited from colonial designs, struggle to deliver services or maintain stability, leading to conflicts, coups, and fragility in several countries. Political instability manifests in electoral violence, ethnic tensions, and authoritarian tendencies that stifle democratic growth. A core issue lies in the overdependence on Western political models. Post-independence leaders frequently imported liberal democracy, socialism, or neoliberal reforms without adapting them to African contexts. These frameworks assume individualistic societies and strong institutions, clashing with communal values prevalent across much of the continent. The result is a mismatch: policies that ignore kinship networks, traditional authority, or spiritual dimensions of leadership often fail to resonate with citizens. This disconnect between leadership and African socio-cultural realities deepens the problem. Many rulers operate in elite bubbles, distant from everyday people, leading to alienation and resistance. Traditional mechanisms for accountability, such as elder oversight or communal consensus, have been sidelined, replaced by imported systems prone to abuse. Without indigenous grounding, governance remains extractive rather than transformative, hindering genuine development (Igboin; Mlambo).

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

Aim:

To examine African political thought in relation to governance and development from an APAS perspective.

Objectives:

- To analyse key ideas in African political thought, tracing their evolution from pre-colonial roots through anti-colonial struggles to contemporary applications.
- To evaluate governance challenges in Africa, identifying how colonial legacies and Western models contribute to ongoing crises.
- To explore APAS contributions to African studies, highlighting its

role in promoting indigenous scholarship and sustainable frameworks.

- To propose context-based solutions for development, drawing on African-centered ideas to foster inclusive, culturally relevant progress.

1.4 Research Questions

- What constitutes African political thought, and how has it developed historically?
- How has governance evolved in Africa across pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods?
- What role does APAS play in shaping African studies and advancing indigenous perspectives?
- How can African-centred ideas improve governance and development outcomes?

1.5 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical approach, relying on interpretive methods to unpack ideas and historical contexts. Primary sources include foundational texts in African political thought, conference proceedings from APAS, and publications in APAS Journals. Secondary materials draw from books, peer-reviewed journals, and scholarly articles on African history, philosophy, and governance. The research employs historical analysis to trace political evolution and philosophical inquiry to examine underlying ideas and values. Data collection involves desk-based review of existing literature, ensuring critical engagement with sources that represent African voices. No primary fieldwork occurs due to the conceptual focus, but the approach emphasizes rigor in sourcing and interpretation.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This work contributes meaningfully to African philosophical discourse by centering indigenous perspectives often marginalized in mainstream academia. It promotes indigenous approaches to

governance, arguing that culturally rooted systems can address modern challenges more effectively than imported ones. Students and scholars benefit from a resource that bridges historical analysis with contemporary relevance, enriching courses in African studies, political science, and development. Policymakers gain insights into context-based solutions, potentially informing reforms that reduce dependency and enhance legitimacy. Ultimately, the study supports broader efforts toward self-reliance and sustainable development in Africa.

1.7 Scope and Limitation

The study focuses primarily on sub-Saharan Africa, where post-colonial governance challenges are pronounced and indigenous traditions remain vibrant. It draws on examples from West, East, and Southern Africa to illustrate broader patterns. Limitations include restricted access to some APAS-specific materials, as the association's publications and archives may not be fully digitized or widely available. The qualitative nature relies on existing scholarship, potentially overlooking emerging unpublished work. Despite these constraints, the analysis remains robust through diverse, credible sources.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2.1 Concept of African Political Thought

African political thought refers to the systematic reflection on political organisation, authority, justice, and communal life within the African context. It is both historical and dynamic, rooted in indigenous traditions while also responding to colonial and postcolonial realities. Unlike Western political theory, which often prioritises individualism and institutional frameworks, African political thought is largely centred on communal values, moral leadership, and social harmony.

Scholars have approached the definition of African political thought from different angles. Wiredu describes it as a critical

engagement with both traditional African political systems and modern governance structures, with the aim of identifying what is relevant for contemporary Africa (Wiredu 52). In a similar vein, Gyekye argues that African political thought represents a balance between tradition and modernity, where communal values coexist with democratic ideals (Gyekye 120). These definitions show that African political thought is not merely about preserving the past but about adapting it to present realities.

The contributions of key African thinkers have significantly enriched this discourse. Kwame Nkrumah developed Consciencism, an ideological framework that sought to synthesise traditional African values with the influences of Islam and Western thought. For Nkrumah, the liberation of Africa required not only political independence but also intellectual and cultural emancipation (Nkrumah 73). He believed that African societies must develop their own ideological foundation to guide governance and development. In the same light, Julius Nyerere proposed Ujamaa, which can be understood as African socialism. Nyerere argued that traditional African societies were inherently communal and egalitarian, making socialism a natural extension of African values. His emphasis on self-reliance, rural development, and social equality was aimed at reducing dependency on external forces (Nyerere 28). Although Ujamaa faced implementation challenges, it remains a significant contribution to African political thought. Another influential thinker is Leopold Sedar Senghor, whose philosophy of Negritude celebrated African identity and cultural heritage. Senghor emphasised the emotional and communal aspects of African life, contrasting them with what he perceived as Western rationalism. He argued that African humanism should serve as the foundation for political organisation and development (Senghor 60).

In contemporary discourse, African political thought continues to evolve, addressing issues such as democracy, governance, identity,

and globalisation. The APAS perspective emphasises the need to ground political theory in African realities while engaging with global ideas. This approach encourages a critical but constructive engagement with both tradition and modernity.

AN EXPOSITION OF AFRICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT AND APAS PERSPECTIVE

3.1 Nature of African Political Thought

African political thought is best understood as a reflection of the communal life, moral values, and historical experiences of African peoples. It is not merely theoretical but deeply practical, evolving from everyday interactions, traditions, and social institutions. Unlike Western political philosophy, which often centres on abstract reasoning and individual rights, African political thought places strong emphasis on community, harmony, and shared responsibility. At its core, African political thought views the individual as inseparable from the community. This idea is captured in the popular African saying, “I am because we are.” Political authority, therefore, is not an end in itself but a means to ensure the well-being of the entire community. Leadership is seen as a moral duty grounded in service, accountability, and respect for tradition.

3.1.1 Pre-colonial Governance Systems (Chiefdoms, Councils of Elders)

Before the advent of colonialism, African societies had well-organised political systems that effectively maintained order and promoted social cohesion. These systems were diverse, reflecting the cultural differences across the continent, yet they shared certain common features such as decentralisation, participatory governance, and moral legitimacy. In many centralised societies, kings or chiefs served as political heads. However, their authority was not absolute. They ruled in consultation with councils of elders, who acted as advisers and custodians of tradition. Among

the Yoruba, for example, the Oba worked closely with the Oyomesi council, which could even check or remove a tyrannical ruler. This system ensured accountability and prevented abuse of power.

In contrast, some societies such as the Igbo operated acephalous (stateless) systems, where political authority was diffused across village assemblies, age grades, and kinship groups. Decisions were made collectively, and leadership was based on merit, wisdom, and respect rather than coercion. Scholars like Kwame Nkrumah argued that these systems reflected a form of African humanism rooted in communal values (Nkrumah 68). Similarly, Julius Nyerere highlighted that traditional African societies practised a kind of communal socialism, where resources were shared and social inequality was minimal (Nyerere 12).

3.1.2 Consensus Democracy and Participatory Leadership

A defining feature of African political thought is the idea of consensus democracy. Unlike the Western model, which often relies on majority rule, African systems prioritized agreement and social harmony. Decisions were reached through extensive dialogue, consultation, and negotiation until a general consensus emerged. This approach fostered inclusiveness and reduced political tension. Every member of the community had the opportunity to express their views, and decisions reflected the collective will rather than the dominance of a majority group. Participatory leadership was also central to this system. Leaders were expected to listen to the people, consult widely, and act in the interest of the community. Authority was earned through trust and moral integrity rather than imposed by force. According to Wiredu, consensus democracy represents a uniquely African contribution to political philosophy, as it prioritises unity and mutual understanding over competition (Wiredu 45). This system not only strengthened social cohesion but also promoted a sense of belonging and shared responsibility.

3.2 Colonial Disruption and Its Impact

The arrival of European colonial powers in Africa marked a major disruption to indigenous political systems. Colonialism did not simply introduce new forms of governance; it fundamentally altered the structure, values, and functioning of African societies.

3.2.1 Imposition of Foreign Political Systems

Colonial administrations imposed Western political systems that were largely incompatible with African realities. These systems prioritised centralisation, bureaucracy, and hierarchical authority, which often conflicted with the decentralised and participatory nature of traditional African governance. For example, the British policy of indirect rule attempted to govern through traditional leaders. However, this approach often distorted indigenous systems by giving excessive power to certain individuals while ignoring traditional checks and balances. In stateless societies like the Igbo, warrant chiefs were artificially created, leading to resistance and instability.

3.2.2 Weakening of Indigenous Institutions

Colonialism systematically undermined indigenous political institutions. Councils of elders, traditional courts, and communal assemblies were either sidelined or transformed into tools of colonial administration. This weakened their legitimacy and effectiveness. Furthermore, colonial education systems promoted Western values and knowledge while devaluing African traditions. Many Africans began to internalise the belief that their political systems were inferior. This psychological impact of colonialism, often referred to as “colonial mentality,” continues to influence governance in Africa today.

The weakening of indigenous institutions also disrupted social cohesion. Traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution and community engagement were replaced with formal legal systems that were often inaccessible and unfamiliar to the people.

GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA – ISSUES AND APPLICATION

4.1 Governance Challenges in Africa

Governance in Africa remains one of the most debated issues in political discourse, especially when linked to development. While Africa possesses a rich heritage of indigenous political systems that emphasised participation, accountability, and communal welfare, the modern state has struggled to reproduce these values effectively. The challenges facing governance today are complex and deeply rooted in both historical and contemporary realities.

4.1.1 Corruption and Leadership Failure

Corruption continues to be one of the most visible obstacles to good governance in Africa. It is not merely an administrative problem but a systemic issue that affects almost every sector of society. Public officials often divert resources meant for development projects into private pockets, leaving critical sectors like healthcare, education, and infrastructure underfunded. Leadership failure is closely tied to corruption. In many cases, leaders lack the moral integrity and political will required to prioritise the public good. Instead of acting as servants of the people, they operate as rulers detached from the realities of ordinary citizens. Kwame Nkrumah warned early on that political independence without responsible leadership would not bring true freedom to African nations. His warning remains relevant today.

In countries like Nigeria, corruption has significantly affected governance outcomes. Funds allocated for development projects are often mismanaged, resulting in abandoned projects and poor service delivery. According to Transparency International, many African countries still rank low in global corruption indices, indicating that the problem is far from being resolved (Transparency International 45).

4.1.2 Ethnic Politics and Tribalism

Ethnic diversity is one of Africa's greatest strengths, yet it has also become a major challenge in governance. Political elites often exploit ethnic identities to gain power, leading to division and conflict. Instead of promoting national unity, politics becomes a competition among ethnic groups for control of state resources.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in multi-ethnic societies where political loyalty is often tied to ethnic affiliation. In such contexts, meritocracy is undermined, and public offices are distributed based on ethnic considerations rather than competence. Julius Nyerere offers a contrasting example. Through his policy of Ujamaa, he sought to build a sense of national identity that transcended ethnic differences. Although his approach had its limitations, it demonstrated that ethnic divisions can be managed through inclusive and people-centred policies.

Ethnic politics also contributes to instability. Conflicts arising from ethnic tensions disrupt economic activities, displace populations, and hinder development efforts. Therefore, addressing tribalism is essential for achieving sustainable governance in Africa.

4.1.3 Weak Institutions

Strong institutions are the backbone of effective governance, yet many African countries struggle with institutional weakness. Institutions such as the judiciary, electoral bodies, and law enforcement agencies often lack independence and capacity. The roots of weak institutions can be traced back to the colonial period. Colonial administrations were designed to extract resources rather than build sustainable governance structures. After independence, many African leaders inherited these weak systems and, in some cases, further weakened them through political interference.

Claude Ake argues that the crisis of governance in Africa is fundamentally a crisis of the state, which lacks both legitimacy and effectiveness (Ake 12). When institutions are weak, laws are not properly enforced, elections are compromised, and accountability becomes difficult. Strengthening institutions requires not only

legal reforms but also a cultural shift towards transparency, accountability, and respect for the rule of law.

5.1 Evaluation

African political thought has emerged as a powerful intellectual framework rooted in the continent's history, culture, and lived experiences. It is not merely theoretical but reflects practical ways in which African societies historically organized themselves, resolved conflicts, and sought the common good. Yet, like any political philosophy, it carries both strengths and limitations, especially when examined in the context of governance and development in contemporary Africa. Thus, African political thought remains a vital resource for governance and development. Its emphasis on communalism, ethical leadership, and participatory decision-making offers solutions to contemporary governance challenges. Despite colonial legacies, weak institutions, and corruption, its relevance persists. Sustainable development in Africa requires reclaiming indigenous political wisdom and integrating it with modern practices. African-centred governance can provide inclusive, resilient, and culturally grounded solutions that meet the continent's unique challenges. Leaders and citizens alike must collaborate to transform these ideals into practical policies and institutions.

5.2 Conclusion

African political thought also encourages self-reliance and context-based development, challenging the notion that Western governance models are universally applicable. This perspective aligns with the view of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS), which emphasizes the development of policies grounded in African realities, rather than wholesale adoption of foreign models. Conclusively, the study reaffirms that African political thought is not merely an academic exercise but a practical guide for creating equitable, sustainable, and prosperous societies.

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22

AFRICAN POSSIBILITIES THROUGH THE PATH OF APAS: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.

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1. Introduction

In contemporary African societies, the struggle for development is inseparable from the struggle for epistemic relevance. For decades, African social realities have often been interpreted, theorized, and evaluated through externally generated frameworks that inadequately capture the continent's historical experiences, cultural logics, and social aspirations. Within this context, the emergence of indigenous scholarly associations represents a critical sociological response to Africa's marginal position in global knowledge production. Such associations function not merely as academic platforms but as social institutions through which intellectual agency, collective identity, and developmental imagination are negotiated and sustained.

The *Association for the Promotion of African Studies* (APAS), founded in 2016, exemplifies this institutional turn in African scholarship. Conceived as a multidisciplinary academic community, APAS was established to promote African-centered research, encourage collaborative knowledge production, and advance scholarly discourses that speak directly to African conditions. Over the past decade, APAS has evolved into a vibrant intellectual network, bringing together scholars across the humanities, social sciences, philosophy, theology, and development studies. Its ten-year anniversary (2016–2026) therefore provides a timely opportunity for sociological reflection

on its role in shaping African possibilities through organized academic practice.

Central to the ideological orientation of APAS is the intellectual influence of Prof. Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu, the proponent of Igwebuike *philosophy*. Igwebuike, which emphasizes communal strength, relational existence, and collective responsibility, offers a conceptual lens through which APAS's institutional character can be understood sociologically. As a philosophy rooted in African communitarian values, *Igwebuike* undergirds APAS's emphasis on collaborative scholarship, interdisciplinary dialogue, and shared intellectual ownership. From a sociological standpoint, this orientation situates APAS as both a knowledge-producing body and a social formation that reflects African modes of collective action.

Beyond its philosophical grounding, APAS has contributed significantly to African knowledge production through sustained academic publishing and conference organization. The association's journals, including the *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development (JASSD)*, *Aku* and *Ochendo Journals*, have provided platforms for rigorous scholarly engagement with issues such as development, identity, culture, governance, religion, and sustainability. These publications, alongside edited volumes and conference proceedings, illustrate how academic associations function as institutional mechanisms for structuring discourse, legitimizing knowledge, and reproducing intellectual communities. Sociologically, they reveal the processes through which ideas circulate, gain authority, and influence broader social debates.

Equally important are APAS-organized conferences, which have been held in various academic spaces within and outside Nigeria, including universities and international locations such as Kenya, with the 2026 conference scheduled at Veritas University, Abuja.

These conferences operate as social spaces where networks are formed, academic capital is exchanged, and Pan-African solidarities are reinforced. From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, such gatherings are not neutral events but structured arenas that shape scholarly hierarchies, research agendas, and the future direction of African studies.

This study, therefore, examines African possibilities through the institutional path of APAS, adopting a sociological lens to analyze its formation, activities, and intellectual outputs over a ten-year period. Rather than treating APAS merely as an academic association, the article conceptualizes it as a social institution engaged in the production, circulation, and legitimization of African knowledge. By situating APAS within broader debates on African epistemology, sociology of knowledge, and development, the article seeks to demonstrate how indigenous scholarly associations can serve as catalysts for reimagining Africa's intellectual and developmental futures

2. Statement of the Problem

Despite Africa's rich intellectual traditions and growing academic community, African knowledge production continues to face structural and epistemic challenges within the global scholarly system. African scholars and institutions often operate at the margins of dominant knowledge economies, where research agendas, publication standards, and theoretical frameworks are largely shaped outside the continent. This marginalization has resulted in the underrepresentation of African perspectives in mainstream academic discourse and the persistent reliance on externally generated paradigms to explain African social realities. From a sociological standpoint, this condition reflects deeper issues of power, institutional inequality, and epistemic dependency. Within this context, scholarly associations have emerged in Africa as collective responses to these challenges, seeking to create alternative spaces for intellectual production,

collaboration, and validation. However, there is a noticeable gap in sociological research that systematically examines these associations as social institutions. Many studies focus on individual scholars or isolated publications, while neglecting the institutional dynamics through which knowledge is organized, sustained, and transmitted. Consequently, the role of indigenous academic associations in shaping African possibilities remains under-theorized and insufficiently documented.

The *Association for the Promotion of African Studies* (APAS) represents one such indigenous scholarly initiative that has, over a decade, contributed to African studies through journals, conferences, and interdisciplinary engagement. Yet, there is limited sociological analysis of how APAS has functioned as a knowledge-producing institution, how its philosophical orientation informs its practices, and how its activities contribute to broader processes of social transformation in Africa. The absence of such analysis creates a gap in understanding the institutional pathways through which African-centered scholarship can challenge epistemic marginalization and promote sustainable intellectual development.

Therefore, the problem this study addresses is the lack of a systematic sociological examination of APAS as an institutional actor in African knowledge production. Without such an examination, the contributions, limitations, and future potential of APAS—and similar African scholarly associations—remain inadequately understood, limiting their recognition as viable instruments for advancing African intellectual autonomy and developmental possibilities.

3. Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to sociologically analyze the role of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies in advancing African knowledge production and expanding African

possibilities over its first decade of existence.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the historical and sociological context that led to the emergence of APAS as an indigenous scholarly association in Africa.
2. Analyze the philosophical and theoretical orientations underpinning APAS, with particular attention to Igwebuike philosophy and its implications for collective knowledge production.
3. Assess the contributions of APAS to African scholarship through its journals, books, and other academic publications.
4. Evaluate the sociological significance of APAS-organized conferences as spaces for intellectual interaction, networking, and Pan-African scholarly collaboration.
5. Identify the challenges confronting APAS in its pursuit of sustainable academic relevance and global visibility.
6. Explore the broader implications of APAS's activities for reimagining African possibilities in education, culture, and development.

4. Methodological and Theoretical Orientation

Methodological Orientation

This study adopts a qualitative and interpretive methodological approach rooted in sociological inquiry. Given the study's focus on an academic association as a social institution, the research relies primarily on documentary and textual analysis rather than empirical field experimentation. Data for the study are drawn from official documents, journal publications, conference proceedings, policy statements, and archival materials produced by the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) between 2016 and 2026. These materials include articles published in APAS-affiliated journals, edited volumes, conference programmes, and publicly available institutional records. The

study employs content analysis to identify recurring themes, intellectual orientations, and disciplinary patterns within APAS publications and conference activities. This is complemented by historical analysis, which situates APAS within the broader trajectory of African scholarly movements and postcolonial knowledge production. By tracing the evolution of APAS over a ten-year period, the study is able to examine changes in institutional focus, scholarly priorities, and modes of academic engagement. This longitudinal perspective enhances the sociological understanding of APAS as a dynamic and evolving intellectual community rather than a static organization.

Interpretive analysis is used to examine the meanings, assumptions, and social implications embedded in APAS's scholarly outputs and institutional practices. This approach aligns with the sociology of knowledge, which emphasizes the social conditions under which knowledge is produced, circulated, and legitimized. The method allows for a critical reading of texts not only as intellectual artifacts but also as expressions of collective values, power relations, and social aspirations within African academia. No primary human subjects were involved in this study, and as such, ethical concerns related to human participation do not arise.

Theoretical Orientation

The theoretical framework of the study is grounded in the sociology of knowledge, particularly its concern with the relationship between knowledge, social institutions, and power. From this perspective, academic associations are understood as social structures that shape research agendas, regulate scholarly norms, and influence the distribution of intellectual authority. The sociology of knowledge provides the analytical tools for examining how APAS operates as an institutional mechanism for organizing African-centered scholarship and challenging epistemic marginalization. Complementing this framework is

Igwebuike philosophy, as articulated by Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu. Igwebuike, which emphasizes communal interdependence and collective strength, is employed as an indigenous theoretical resource for interpreting APAS's collaborative ethos and multidisciplinary orientation. Sociologically, Igwebuike offers an African communitarian lens through which collective intellectual production can be understood as a form of social action aimed at shared development and mutual empowerment.

In addition, elements of institutional sociology inform the analysis, particularly in understanding APAS as an organized social entity with norms, roles, and routines that sustain scholarly activity over time. This perspective allows the study to interrogate issues of institutional sustainability, legitimacy, and adaptation within the African academic environment. By integrating the sociology of knowledge, Igwebuike philosophy, and institutional sociology, the study develops a theoretically coherent framework for analyzing how APAS contributes to the reimagining of African possibilities through organized scholarly practice.

5. Historical and Sociological Contexts that led to the formation of APAS

The *Association for the Promotion of African Studies* (APAS) was founded by Professor Ikechukwu Anthony KANU, O.S.A. to promote and encourage research and scholarship on African philosophy, religion, history, culture, social movements, linguistic, literary and artistic expressions, science and technology, and to forge intellectual links and network with scholars, policymakers, and activists in Africa and beyond (Vanguard, 2022). He established APAS as a, academic platform to counter negative, non-African portrayals of the continent and to "tell the story of Africa from within". Key motivations for founding the organization included: the promotion of research, an academic convergence or forum, the need for global connectivity and multidisciplinary approach to scholarship. Today, APAS celebrates

10 years of existence. Conferences have been held in various universities in Nigeria like Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Tangaza University College, Kenya and the one of 2026 will take place at Veritas University, Abuja.

Sociologically, it can be said that APAS exists from a functionalist perspective. The *Igwebuike ideology* that is one of the pillars or foundation of APAS exists from a functionalist standing. The multidisplinary approach makes it a complex system of interrelated parts. Each scholarly contribution across broad spectrum help to dissect issues from the African standpoint. Each of the various scholarly works published over the years, when applied in politics, ethics, health and education, can make for good societal policies that help shape and transform the African landscape.

6. The African Continent: An Analytic Clarification

Africa like any other continent in the world has come a long way. It is often seen as the cradle of humankind. It is conceived as the mother continent and the foremost inhabited continent on Earth. As succinctly put by the Boudreau *et al* (2025):

Africa, the second-largest continent, is bounded by the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic Ocean. It is divided in half almost equally by the Equator. The continent includes the islands of Cape Verde, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Comoros. Africa's physical geography, environment and resources, and human geography can be considered separately. The origin of the name "Africa" is greatly disputed by scholars. Most believe it stems from words used by the Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans. Important words include the Egyptian word *Afru-ika*, meaning

“Motherland”; the Greek word *aphrike*, meaning “without cold”; and the Latin word *aprica*, meaning “sunny.”

Africa today has 54 independent countries that are recognized by the United Nations, although, it is often argued to be 55, when you add the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (Western Sahara), which is a disputed territory. According to Worldometer (n.d) Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are among the most populous, with Nigeria, actually the most populous black nation. Seychelles, as one of the 54 recognized independent countries in Africa has the least with 134,959 populace. Africa equally has five dependency territories that are either dependents of France or the United Kingdom.

The cultural geography plus historical cultures show that the African continent has a special status in human history. It is widely accepted that Africa is the “cradle of humankind.” Africa is the only continent that has fossils of human beings (*Homo sapiens*) and their ancestors at each and every stage of their evolution. These ancestors include *Australopithecines*, our earliest ancestors; *Homo habilis*, our ancestors who used tools; and *Homo erectus*, a stronger and more advanced form of *Homo habilis* who could walk upright (Boudreau *et al*, 2025). These ancestors were the first to use stone tools, to come down from the trees and walk upright, and, most importantly, to explore and migrate. While the fossils of *Australopithecines* and *Homo habilis* are found in Africa, fossils of *Homo erectus* have been discovered in the Far East, and their tools have been discovered in Asia and Europe. This provides conclusive evidence that the species of *Homo erectus* that originated in Africa was the first to migrate and populate the rest of the world (Boudreau *et al*, 2025).

The foregoing about Africa shows that it is a continent of promise. As the scientifically recognized place for humankind, Africa is blessed in different forms but up till now, has not truly fulfilled its

potentials, especially when comparatively assessed with other continents of the world. Although, many things can be said to have affected Africa in many ways, which includes: the slave trade era and exploitation of resources in Africa, which ushered in a scramble and eventual partition of the various countries in the continent to various European powers. These in turn led to colonialism, which lasted for between 50-70 years in various countries across Africa. By the time independence were gotten by most African countries, neo-colonialism took place and continues. Africa is never really free even in the present milieu.

The Association of African Studies (APAS) as an academic convergence of scholars within Africa, open to the discourses on the development of Africa, through multidisciplinary collaborations. Celebrating its 10 years of existence, this paper is an attempt to look at the possibilities in Africa through the path of APAS. How can APAS lend its voice to the development discourse? How can it contribute to the development of Africa through scholarship? These and many teething issues inform this paper and the reason it was written. It hopes to present African possibilities in this postmodern age and how APAS can contribute to it through transformative and policy-driven scholarship that can change Africa socio-politically. This becomes a sociological attempt to changing society in structural and functionalist senses.

7. APAS and Knowledge Production in Africa

Knowledge production in Africa has historically been shaped by asymmetrical global power relations in which African experiences were often theorized through externally generated epistemic frameworks. Scholars have long noted that colonial and postcolonial academic structures positioned Africa more as a site of data extraction than as a centre of theory production (Ake, 1981, pp. 1–3; Connell, 2007, pp. 44–46). Within this context, indigenous scholarly associations such as the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) represent a deliberate sociological

intervention aimed at reclaiming intellectual agency and institutionalizing African-centred knowledge production.

From a sociological perspective, APAS functions as a collective knowledge-producing institution that mediates between individual scholars and the broader structures of global academia. Sociology of knowledge theorists argue that knowledge is socially situated and institutionally conditioned (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, pp. 3–6). APAS exemplifies this insight by creating structured platforms such as journals, conferences, and edited volumes, through which African scholars collaboratively generate, validate, and disseminate knowledge grounded in African realities. In doing so, APAS contributes to what Odora Hoppers (2002) describes as the “re-centering of indigenous knowledge systems” within formal academic discourse (pp. 9–11).

A major avenue through which APAS advances knowledge production is academic publishing. Its flagship outlets, notably the *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development* (JASSD), *Aku Journal*, and *Ochendo Journal*, provide multidisciplinary spaces for engaging themes such as development, identity, governance, religion, ethics, sustainability, and African philosophy. These journals respond directly to concerns raised by African scholars regarding limited access to publication spaces that prioritize African epistemic questions (Zezeza, 2009, pp. 114–116). By foregrounding African issues and methodologies, APAS publications challenge epistemic dependency and expand the intellectual boundaries of African studies.

The intellectual orientation of APAS is deeply informed by *Igwebuike* philosophy as earlier noted and articulated by Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu, the founder. *Igwebuike* emphasizes communal strength, relational existence, and the idea that knowledge thrives through collective effort rather than isolated individualism (Kanu, 2015, pp. 21–24). Sociologically, this philosophy aligns with

African communitarian thought, which understands knowledge as a social good embedded in communal life (Gyekye, 1997, pp. 35–37). APAS operationalizes this philosophy by encouraging collaborative authorship, interdisciplinary dialogue, and mentorship of emerging scholars, thereby fostering an inclusive intellectual community.

Furthermore, APAS's commitment to multidisciplinary engagement reflects contemporary sociological arguments that complex African problems—such as underdevelopment, identity crises, and governance failures—cannot be adequately addressed within rigid disciplinary silos (Mkandawire, 2011, pp. 7–9). Through its journals and conferences, APAS brings together sociologists, philosophers, theologians, political scientists, economists, and development scholars, enabling cross-fertilization of ideas. This integrative approach enhances the relevance of African scholarship to policy, education, and social transformation.

In sum, APAS contributes to knowledge production in Africa not merely by increasing the volume of scholarly output, but by reshaping the social conditions under which African knowledge is produced. As an institutional actor, it legitimizes African-centered research agendas, nurtures intellectual networks, and promotes epistemic self-confidence among African scholars. Within the broader sociology of African knowledge, APAS stands as a model of how indigenous academic associations can transform intellectual labor into a collective project oriented toward African possibilities and sustainable development.

8. African Possibilities Through the Path of APAS

8.1 Reimagining African Identity Through Indigenous Scholarship

The quest to reimagine African identity has increasingly shifted from externally imposed frameworks toward indigenous

epistemologies that better capture African social realities (Mujab, 2020, pp. 8–9). African identity has historically been subjected to distortions through colonial epistemic frameworks that prioritized Western ontologies over African worldviews (Mbembe, 2015, pp. 12–15). Scholars such as Okpewho (1992) argue that the very project of African scholarship must involve reclamation of African identity from epistemic marginality (pp. 2–3).

Indigenous scholarly associations like the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) provide the institutional space for African scholars to interrogate identity from within African philosophical and cultural matrices. APAS's publications and conferences consistently foreground African agency as foundational to identity formation. For instance, research featured in the *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development* frames African identity not as a residual category but as a dynamic, evolving social construct rooted in local languages, cosmologies, and historical experiences (Asante, 2021, pp. 110–112). This aligns with the perspective of Mazrui (1986), who contends that African identity must be understood through the lived socio-cultural experiences of Africans themselves (pp. 45–47).

Igwebuike philosophy, which emphasizes relational existence and communal belonging, further enhances this reimagining of African identity. Kanu (2019) explains that Igwebuike “seeks to situate African identity within communal complementaristic framework that is sharedness and reciprocity” (p.12). As such, APAS publishes and promotes work that treats African identity as socially constructed and contextually grounded, rejecting universalist Western paradigms that marginalize African worldviews. By privileging indigenous epistemologies, APAS contributes to a sociology of identity that centers African agency, thus fostering epistemic self-confidence and cultural reclamation.

8.2 APAS and the Democratization of African Knowledge Production

Democratization of knowledge production entails broadening the epistemic space so that multiple voices, particularly those historically excluded, can contribute to the generation, validation, and dissemination of knowledge (Smith, 2012, pp. 14–16). In the African context, knowledge democratization challenges the monopoly of Western academic gatekeeping, which has traditionally constrained African scholarship within hierarchical global knowledge structures (Santos, 2014, pp. 1–2).

APAS contributes to this democratization in several ways. First, its journals—*Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*, *Aku Journal*, and *Ochendo Journal*—provide publication platforms that are accessible to African scholars, including early-career academics and those based outside Western research networks. By offering rigorous peer review and editorial support, APAS journals ensure academic quality while broadening access to publication opportunities. Second, APAS conference formats democratize knowledge production through inclusive participation. Conferences are structured to encourage equal participation across scholarly ranks and geographies, ensuring that junior scholars, independent researchers, and those from less-resourced institutions are able to contribute alongside established academics. This practice resonates with Freire's (1970) notion of dialogic knowledge production in which all participants are co-creators of understanding rather than passive recipients (pp. 73–76). Sociologists of knowledge argue that such institutional practices help dismantle traditional hierarchies within academia. Berger and Luckmann (1966) emphasize that institutional contexts shape what is considered legitimate knowledge (pp. 53–55). In democratizing the processes of publication and scholarly interaction, APAS contributes to a more pluralistic knowledge environment in which African scholarly voices are not only present but influential.

8.3 Contributions to Education, Culture, Development, and Policy Discourse

APAS's influence extends beyond theoretical engagement to practical interventions in education, culture, and development policy. Its journals feature research that directly addresses education reform, cultural continuity, and socio-economic development, bridging academic inquiry with real-world concerns. In education, APAS publications have critiqued neo-colonial curricular structures and advocated for pedagogies that incorporate African languages, histories, and epistemologies (Mazrui & Mazrui, 1998, pp. 77–79). Such scholarship aligns with UNESCO's recommendations for curriculum reform in Africa, which call for educational systems that reflect indigenous knowledge systems and cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2010, pp. 112–114). Culturally, APAS supports scholarship that interrogates the relationship between tradition and modernity. Mbiti (1970) famously articulated that African persons are “persons through other persons,” underscoring the social embeddedness of cultural identity (pp. 108–109). Contemporary APAS research builds on this foundation by exploring how cultural values can inform development practices that are sustainable and contextually appropriate.

In the realm of development and policy, APAS promotes scholarship that challenges one-size-fits-all development models. Drawing on insights from African sociologists such as Bofo (2011), APAS authors argue for development paradigms rooted in local institutional realities and social practices (pp. 59–62). This reflects a broader critique in development sociology that posits that externally imposed models often fail because they neglect socio-cultural specificity (Sen, 1999, pp. 47–50).

By publishing research that intersects education, culture, and policy, APAS contributes to a holistic understanding of

development that integrates sociological analysis with practical recommendations.

8.4 Empowerment of Emerging African Scholars

One of APAS's most significant contributions is the empowerment of emerging African scholars. Academic empowerment involves providing the intellectual, institutional, and social resources needed for scholars to develop and disseminate their work effectively (Bourdieu, 1988, pp. 16–18). APAS actively fosters mentorship through structured engagement at conferences, editorial support for journal publications, and networking opportunities with established scholars. This mentorship is crucial given that many emerging African academics face barriers including limited access to research funding, isolation from global research networks, and exclusion from prestigious journals (Mamdani, 2007, pp. 27–31). By creating spaces where early-career scholars can present work, receive constructive feedback, and engage in scholarly dialogue, APAS addresses these barriers within its institutional framework.

Furthermore, APAS encourages collaborative research projects that pair established and emerging scholars. Sociology of education research underscores the importance of such collaborations in building academic capital, which refers to the resources scholars accrue through publication, recognition, and professional networks (Cole & Zuckerman, 1984, pp. 17–19). Through this practice, APAS facilitates the accumulation of symbolic and social capital among emerging African scholars, enabling them to participate more fully in global academic discourse.

Conclusion

This study has examined African possibilities through the institutional pathway of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS), situating its activities within the

sociology of knowledge and African-centred intellectual traditions. By approaching APAS as a social institution rather than merely an academic platform, the article has demonstrated how indigenous scholarly associations can play a decisive role in reshaping the conditions of knowledge production in Africa. The ten-year trajectory of APAS (2016–2026) illustrates how collective intellectual organization can respond to long-standing challenges of epistemic marginalization and dependency that have characterized African scholarship in the global academy.

The analysis shows that APAS contributes significantly to the reimagining of African identity by prioritizing indigenous philosophies, communal values, and context-sensitive scholarship. Through its journals, conferences, and interdisciplinary engagements, APAS advances an understanding of African identity that is dynamic, socially grounded, and intellectually self-affirming. This reorientation challenges inherited colonial epistemologies and affirms Africa not only as an object of study but as a legitimate source of theory and critical reflection. In this sense, APAS embodies a practical response to calls for epistemic decolonization within African studies.

Furthermore, the study has highlighted APAS's role in the democratization of African knowledge production. By creating accessible publication outlets and inclusive scholarly spaces, APAS broadens participation in academic discourse and reduces structural barriers faced by African scholars, particularly those at early stages of their careers. These practices contribute to a more plural and representative intellectual environment, reinforcing the sociological insight that knowledge is shaped by the institutional contexts within which it is produced and circulated.

Beyond academia, APAS's contributions extend to education, culture, development, and policy discourse. Its scholarship bridges theory and practice by engaging pressing African social issues and

offering perspectives rooted in local realities. In doing so, APAS demonstrates how indigenous academic associations can influence broader social debates and support development trajectories that are culturally informed and socially sustainable.

In conclusion, APAS stands as a compelling model of how African scholarly associations can harness collective intellectual effort to expand African possibilities. Its experience over a decade underscores the importance of institutionalized collaboration, indigenous theoretical grounding, and sustained scholarly engagement in advancing Africa's intellectual autonomy. Future research may build on this study by comparatively examining similar associations across the continent, thereby deepening sociological understanding of the institutional foundations necessary for a vibrant and self-sustaining African knowledge economy.

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RETHINKING AFRICAN STUDIES: NEW QUESTIONS FOR THE NEXT DECADE

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Introduction

The historical development of African Studies has long been intertwined with the epistemic structures established during colonial rule, which framed the continent primarily as an object of investigation rather than as a locus of independent theorizing. Although postcolonial scholarship sought to reverse this orientation, the field continues to wrestle with uneven balance between critiquing inherited structures and building new intellectual foundations. In the mid-2020s, this tension has become more urgent. Digital infrastructures now shape how knowledge is produced and circulated, often extending older patterns of extraction, while environmental instability and renewed decolonial movements expose the limits of established paradigms and demand deeper forms of epistemic transformation (Kessi et al., 2020; Meagher, 2025). Despite these shifts, external dominance persists. Evidence is seen in funding inequalities, dictating research direction, publication hierarchies, and methodological habits that privilege short-term, and crisis-focused analysis over sustained, historically grounded inquiry (Basedau, 2021; Egara et al., 2025).

African-centred frameworks remain marginal in many conversations, and the fragmentation of research continues to obscure broader patterns across the continent's diverse contexts (Basedau, 2020). The result is a field that still struggles to adequately capture African agency and its entanglement with global processes. Against this backdrop, this study poses new questions: How can African Studies cultivate epistemic justice by foregrounding the relational and personal layers of decolonization alongside its structural demands? Kessi et al. (2020) advance a multidimensional lens such as structural, epistemic, personal, and relational that weaves these strands together, compelling researchers to confront material inequalities (access to archives, travel funding, language privileges) that sustain epistemic exclusion while fostering reflexive accountability. A related concern involves the role of comparative analysis. Rather than serving as a neutral mechanism of generalization, comparative frameworks may function reflexively, revealing African forms of agency within global systems, challenging homogenizing narratives of crisis, and tracing longer historical patterns of adaptation and resistance across regions (Basedau, 2021). Equally significant is the need to engage more carefully with embodied identities, including gender, sexuality, and disability, particularly as these intersect within religious and everyday settings. Attention to embodiment exposes the lingering influence of colonial assumptions embedded in the regulation of bodies, while also illuminating alternative social possibilities that emerge from marginalized experiences (Henriksen, 2025; Watermeyer, 2025).

Relatively, the chapter argues for a shift toward epistemic plurality and collaborative knowledge production. Such a reorientation foregrounds African-centred theorizing and seeks research practices capable of engaging the continent's evolving realities while contributing to wider global debates (Gebremariam, 2025;

Khoo, 2024).

Decolonizing Knowledge Production and the Challenge of Western Hegemony

Dismantling epistemic imperialism remains the most difficult barrier to rethinking African Studies. Colonial legacies did not merely conquer territories; they installed enduring hierarchies that cast Africa as a passive terrain for Western theorization, rendering African ways of knowing subordinate or supplementary at best (Falola, 2022; Egara, et al., 2025; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). In the 2020s, this hierarchy manifests in persistent funding flows northward, gatekeeping in high-impact journals, and curricula that still default to Eurocentric analytical frames even when African cases dominate the empirical content.

Movements such as Rhodes Must Fall, Fees Must Fall, and their echoes in Black Lives Matter have sharpened demands for more than symbolic diversification. They insist on uprooting the neocolonial scaffolding of academic practice itself (Meagher, 2025; Kessi et al., 2020). The task exceeds adding African voices to existing canons; it requires interrogating the presumed universality of Western theories and actively elevating paradigms grounded in African lived realities. Concepts like *Ubuntu*, with its emphasis on relational humanness and ethical interdependence, or broader indigenous knowledge systems that prioritize communal, ecological, and ancestral epistemologies, offer robust alternatives that challenge individualistic, extractive models of inquiry (Bhuda & Marumo, 2022; Carstens, 2024).

New questions therefore press forward, thus: How can African Studies cultivate epistemic justice by foregrounding the relational and personal layers of decolonization alongside its structural demands? Kessi et al. (2020) advance a multidimensional lens (structural, epistemic, personal, and relational) that weaves these strands together, compelling researchers to confront material

inequalities (access to archives, travel funding, language privileges) that sustain epistemic exclusion while fostering reflexive accountability.

Pedagogical experiments further illuminate the stakes. Efforts in business schools to dismantle coloniality in global management discourse, or in museums to repatriate and reframe looted artifacts, expose how colonial logics permeate institutional routines and everyday teaching (Decolonising a Business School in Context, n.d.). These sites reveal that decolonization is not an abstract theory but lived disruption of syllabi, citation practices, and collaborative norms.

Over the next decade, the field must therefore commit to inquiries that track decolonial agency in motion: how African intellectuals, activists, and communities are already reclaiming narrative control across literature, policy, peace-building, and digital spaces (Kagoyire, 2025; Andrews & Khalema, 2023). Prioritizing such work means building infrastructures, fellowships, incubators, co-produced journals, that amplify these efforts rather than merely studying them from afar. Only through this deliberate shift can African Studies begin to fulfil its potential as a site of liberated, pluralistic knowledge production.

Embracing Comparative Approaches and Addressing Undifferentiated Views and Methodological Gaps

African Studies has long drawn criticism for painting the continent in broad, often bleak strokes, reducing 54 nations to a singular story of fragility, corruption, or perpetual crisis while side-lining evidence of institutional deepening, tech-driven entrepreneurship, cultural dynamism, and quiet governance successes (Basedau, 2020). Matthias Basedau's incisive 2020 diagnosis remains sharply relevant here, when he posited that the field suffers from (1) heavy external (mostly Western) dominance in authorship and framing; (2) a persistent habit of undifferentiated, negatively tinted

generalizations; (3) rare deployment of rigorous causal-identification techniques; and (4) an over-reliance on micro-level, short-term case studies that obscure broader patterns and the long duration of historical processes.

Comparative methodologies, especially when reframed through the lens of Comparative Area Studies, provide a corrective force. By systematically juxtaposing African cases—both intra-continental (e.g., contrasting electoral violence in Nigeria and peaceful power transitions in Ghana) and cross-regional (e.g., state capacity building in Rwanda versus Vietnam), researchers can expose causal mechanisms, test generalizability, and reveal specificities that single-country immersion or sweeping continental narratives miss. This mixed-methods orientation deliberately blends insider ethnographic depth with outsider analytical distance, yielding more robust insights into pragmatism—what works, why, and under what conditions. The shift opens pressing questions for the decade ahead. How can comparative frameworks expose Africa's thickening global interconnections in an age of information revolutions, where digital platforms reshape political mobilization, remittances, and knowledge flows alike? Recent reflections on power, epistemology, and trust in African geopolitics highlight how intensifying digital and infrastructural ties (from Chinese-financed undersea cables to pan-African data hubs) force a rethinking of agency, dependency, and epistemic authority in international relations (Kaag, 2025).

Parallel debates in development studies reinforce the case for methodological pluralism. Tensions between reformist pathways that tweak existing global orders and radical visions that challenge them underscore the need to move beyond binary framings toward hybrid, context-sensitive approaches (Behuria & Sumner, 2025). Future comparative work should therefore target macro-level transformations such as demographic youth bulges, rapid urbanization, green-energy transitions, and structural economic

shifts, while foregrounding Southern-led experiments. Innovations emerging from Ghana's digital-public-goods ecosystem or South Africa's just-energy-transition coalitions offer concrete sites for cross-context learning that can challenge Northern-centric models.

Ultimately, embracing comparison is not about homogenizing anew but about rendering visible the continent's internal diversity and its active role in reshaping global norms. This requires resources in multi-country datasets, collaborative teams spanning the continent and beyond, and training in causal-inference tools that respect local complexities rather than flattening them. Only then can African Studies escape the trap of undifferentiated portraits and contribute sharper, more equitable explanations to both scholarly and policy conversations.

Integrating Digital Methodologies such as AI, DH, and African Futures

The digital era arrives in African Studies not as neutral progress but as a double-edged intervention. It unlocks unprecedented access to fragmented archives, endangered languages, and performative traditions while simultaneously threatening to reproduce colonial extraction through biased datasets, unequal infrastructure, and corporate control over data flows. AI and digital humanities (DH) tools now routinely process vast corpora, digitized newspapers, oral recordings, and colonial records, yielding pattern detection and visualizations that once demanded decades of manual labour and sacrifices (Madore, 2025; Madore et al., 2026 workshop proceedings). Yet adoption has raced ahead of critique in the sense that natural language processing can transcribe and translate African oral epics, enabling immersive, multimedia retellings that respect communal authorship and tonal nuance rather than flattening them into text (African Oral Storytelling in the Digital Age, 2025). At the same time, off-the-shelf models trained predominantly on Global North corpora embed linguistic hierarchies, misrecognize African scripts, or erase cultural context,

risks amplified when low-resource languages lack representative training data (Niala, 2024).

Decolonial DH praxis counters this by insisting on community governance such as participatory design of archives, co-creation of datasets, and protocols that vest ownership with source communities rather than distant platforms (Madore, 2026). Recent gatherings, such as the 2026 Hannover workshop “Charting New Territory: Digital Humanities and AI in African Studies,” have prioritized axes of evaluation tailored to African conditions, sustainability of local infrastructure, protection against extractive scraping, and methodological innovation that honours relational epistemologies over individualistic quantification. This push extends to reframing AI itself. Frameworks of *ancestral intelligence* challenge Silicon Valley universalism by grounding technological imagination in African historical knowledge systems, e.g., the *Ubuntu*-derived ethics of interdependence, communal decision-making protocols, or savannah-inspired lessons in collective survival that prioritize ecological and social harmony over optimization at all costs (Ancestral Intelligence in the Age of AI., 2026). Such perspectives demand that AI should serve as a tool for amplifying silenced voices, not replacing them, whether in preserving endangered languages through community-led models or in analysing historical injustices without perpetuating new forms of epistemic violence.

Key questions therefore arise, that sharpen African Studies for the decade: How do these tools fundamentally reshape epistemological commitments in African Studies, shifting from text-centric authority to multimodal, performative knowledge, and what enforceable safeguards (data sovereignty clauses, open-source mandates, African-led auditing) prevent ethical drift? Sustaining this integration requires interdisciplinary alliances such as linguists partnering with coders, elders guiding prompt engineers, and institutions investing in pan-African compute

resources rather than outsourcing to foreign clouds. Only through such grounded, reflexive labour can digital methodologies help African Studies not merely adapt to technological futures but actively co-author them on equitable terms.

Intersecting the Embodiment of Gender, Sexuality, Disability, and Beyond

Rethinking African Studies demands reckoning with bodies as active sites of knowledge, power, and resistance; places where colonial residues, religious doctrines, and globalizing forces converge and clash. In African evangelical communities, where bodily discipline often anchors moral and spiritual authority, recent scholarship uncovers how the body intersects with gender norms, sexual regulation, and disability experiences in ways that both constrain and unexpectedly open radical possibilities (Henriksen, 2025). By applying queer theory, trans perspectives, intersex lived realities, and crip theory to these contexts, researchers reveal how evangelical emphasis on bodily “wholeness” and heteronormative purity can be subverted from within, thereby exposing fissures where non-normative bodies and desires challenge dominant scripts and gesture toward more capacious futures.

This embodied lens forces a confrontation with colonial legacies that continue to shape identity formation such as missionary-era pathologization of African bodies lingers in contemporary discourses that frame disability as moral failing or cultural deficiency rather than structural outcome. New inquiries therefore press- How can African Studies centre disability perspectives to dismantle these deficit framings and instead trace disability's entanglement with socioeconomic violence like poverty, inaccessible infrastructure, extractive labour markets that disproportionately mark certain bodies as “abnormal”? Shifting the analytic from cultural stigma to material inequality reframes disability not as individual tragedy but as a product of historical and ongoing exclusions (drawing on broader African disability

scholarship, e.g., emerging work in the African Journal of Disability and AfriNEAD networks, 2024-2025).

Parallel lines emerge in migration studies, where decolonial methods like photo-voice and mobile diaries capture youth digital cultures across borders. These participatory tools foreground young Africans' agentive navigation of globalization, self-representation through selfies, memes, and encrypted chats, while also exposing how colonial epistemologies still shape what counts as “authentic” voice or legitimate mobility (Uzuegbunam, 2025). Such approaches link intimate, embodied storytelling to larger geopolitical currents such as climate displacement, visa regimes, and digital divides.

These intersections do more than add themes; they fracture conventional boundaries between personal experience and macro-analysis, insisting that African Studies attend to how bodies are governed, marked, and reimagined amid religious fervour, structural neglect, and transnational flows. By amplifying queer, crip, and decolonial readings of embodiment, the field can surface overlooked radical potentials which include forms of belonging, care, and defiance, that reshape not only local social worlds but the discipline's own theoretical horizons. For the next decade, prioritizing these embodied inquiries means building collaborative spaces where lived bodily realities drive theory rather than merely illustrating it.

Conclusion

As African Studies enters the next decade, it must confront its internal tensions while embracing external complexities. By prioritizing decolonization, comparative methodologies, digital innovations, and embodied intersections, the field can generate questions that centre African agency and pluralism. This requires increased resources for multi-disciplinary research and sustained dialogue, as evidenced in ongoing conferences on mobility and

entrepreneurship (Centre for Migration Studies - UG, 2026; EDHE Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education, 2026). Finally, rethinking the discipline means fostering a responsive, equitable framework that not only reflects Africa's diversity but actively shapes its futures.

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24

FROM REPRESENTATION TO TRANSFORMATION: GENDER INCLUSIVITY AND THE FUTURE OF APAS

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INTRODUCTION

The tenth anniversary of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) marks a significant milestone in the advancement of APAS and African-centred scholarship. Part of the reason for the creation of APAS is to dismantle colonial epistemologies and restore the dignity of African thought systems. To promote rigorous research on African philosophy, metaphysics, religion, culture, politics, development, etc. To make Africans proud of their identity, and many other reasons. APAS has contributed to the consolidation of intellectual spaces dedicated to the study of Africa from within its own epistemic frameworks. As the association reflects on its first decade, however, celebration must be accompanied by critical evaluation. There are always two sides to the coin, just as Heraclitus established that “the universe is made up of conflicts and clashes of opposites.”¹⁹ Thus, institutional maturity demands assessment of her achievements and also a careful investigation of its internal structures and ethical commitments. One of the most pressing concerns in contemporary African academia is the issue of gender inclusivity.

Gender inclusivity is essential for several reasons. First, it

¹⁹Joseph Omoregbe (19910. *A Simplified History of Western Philosophy*. Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited. Ikeja, Lagos. P.11

enhances diversity within the workforce, which is a known driver of innovation. Diverse teams bring different perspectives, experiences, and ideas, which can lead to more creative problem-solving and better decision-making. Second, gender inclusivity promotes fairness and equity, fundamental to a positive organisational culture. When employees feel treated fairly and their contributions are valued, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and committed to the organisation's success. Finally, gender inclusivity is increasingly recognised as critical to achieving long-term sustainability.

Despite growing participation of women in higher education across the continent, structural inequalities continue to shape access to leadership positions, research visibility, publication opportunities, and decision-making spaces. Academic institutions, including scholarly associations, play a crucial role in either reproducing or transforming these patterns. This paper argues that while gender representation is an important marker of progress, it is insufficient as a measure of genuine inclusivity. What is required is a shift from mere presence to structural and epistemic transformation. By examining APAS through a gender-inclusive perspective, the study aims to contribute constructively to its ongoing evolution, proposing pathways for its second decade to embody deeper commitments to gender justice and inclusive scholarly practices.

The future of APAS and the broader African continent hinges on the successful integration of gender inclusivity into its policies and practices. The 2025 African Transformation Report from the African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET) emphasises that gender equality is not only about fairness for women, but it also benefits societies and economies where power is shared. The reports highlight that closing gender gaps fuels Africa's economic transformation and that deliberate policies integrating women into

high-value sectors and decision-making roles are critical.²⁰ It also notes that gender equality alone is insufficient to drive economic transformation, and that policy reforms, legal protections, and greater representation of women in governance and economic leadership are necessary. The report calls for a shift in perceptions and policies to help build a gender-inclusive economy.²¹

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF GENDER, GENDER INCLUSIVITY, REPRESENTATION VS TRANSFORMATION

GENDER: “The concept of gender, as we now use it, came into common parlance during the early 1970s. It was used as an analytical category to put a line of demarcation between biological sex differences and the way these are used to inform behaviours and competencies, which are then assigned as either 'masculine' or 'feminine'.”²² “A feminist stance understands gender as a system of privilege and oppression; it also assumes that gender is socially constructed, and is deeply interested in mapping out how, where, and to what effect.”²³ “In the social constructionist understanding of gender, then, gender is performative, that is, something you 'do' rather than something that is built into or programmed into you.”²⁴

INCLUSIVITY/ GENDER INCLUSIVITY: The word Inclusivity could have different meanings. In this context, it could be defined as cultivating the attitude and practice of interacting appropriately

²⁰ African Centre for Economic Transformation (ACET) 2025. “Gender Equality and Economic Transformation: Lessons from Africa”. Retrieved from <https://acetforafrica.org/atr2025/>. Sourced 26/02/2026.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan (2017). *Concepts in Gender Studies: Key Concepts in Gender Studies*. 2nd edition. SAGE Publications Ltd., London. P. 57

²³ Christie Launius and Holly Hassel (2018). *Threshold Concepts in Women's and Gender Studies: Ways of Seeing, Thinking, and Knowing*, Second Edition. Routledge: Taylor & Francis New York. P. 31

²⁴ Christie Launius and Holly Hassel (2018). *Threshold Concepts in Women's and Gender Studies: Ways of Seeing, Thinking, and Knowing*, Second Edition. Routledge: Taylor & Francis New York. P. 3.

with all individuals, especially males and females, by creating a suitable, conducive, and welcoming environment that accommodates each other for peaceful coexistence. Inclusivity involves showing respect, “sensitivity, empathy, and a commitment to fairness and respect in all interactions.”²⁵ Gender inclusivity means creating environments where everyone is identified, feels respected, valued, and supported. Gender inclusivity is a concept that transcends mere equality. According to Maryville University, it is a notion that all opportunities are open to a particular sex, social gender or gender identity without stereotypes or bias. It is equated with gender equality, which the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) defines as women and men, as well as boys and girls, enjoying the same rights, resources, opportunities, and protection.²⁶

REPRESENTATION VS TRANSFORMATION:

Representation does not have an identifiable meaning. It is applied in different but controlled and discoverable ways in different contexts. It is not a vague or shifting, but a single, highly complex concept that has not changed much in its basic meaning since the seventeenth century. From the etymological origins, representation indicates re-presentation, which means a making present again. Except in its earliest use, however, this has always meant more than a literal bringing into presence, as one might bring a book into the room. Rather, representation, taken generally, means the making present in some sense of something which is nevertheless not present literally or in fact. Now, to say that something is simultaneously both present and not present is to utter a paradox, and thus a fundamental dualism is built into the meaning of representation. It has led some writers, notably a group of German

²⁵ScienceDirect (2025). Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/inclusivity>. Sourced 11/03/2026.

²⁶Onwudiegwu, Ogonna Annette (2023). Gender Inclusivity as A Strategy to Drive Innovation and Creativity in Nigeria. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4754053> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4754053>

theorists, to regard the term as shrouded in mystery, a complexio oppositorum. But there is no need to make mysteries here; we can simply say that in representation, something not literally present is considered as present in a nonliteral sense.²⁷ While transformation means “a complete change in the appearance or character of something or someone, especially so that that thing or person is improved”.²⁸

GENDER AND AFRICAN ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS: HISTORICAL MARGINALISATION AND STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

APAS, being African-based, has created an opportunity to research the genesis or rather the origin, of gender inequality, especially as regards academia. Africans, before the arrival of the colonial Masters, had their informal systems of education. What we identify as formal education today was invented by colonial masters. Therefore, the question of gender inclusivity within African academic institutions cannot be adequately understood without reference to the colonial masters. The historical marginalisation of women in the production and dissemination of knowledge was the product of the colonial masters. This is because much of Africa's intellectual history, formal scholarly spaces were shaped by colonial educational structures that privileged male participation. For example, early mission schools, colonial universities, and professional institutions were largely accessible to men, while women were often directed toward domestic education or excluded from advanced scholarly training. “Colonialism came with many strange values and ideas that distorted the social position of the women in Nigeria, including the belief that women were only meant to play the role of housewives, an idea that was introduced

²⁷Hanna Fenichel Pitkin (1967). *The Concept of Representation*. University of California Press, Ltd., London, England. Pp. 5-9.

²⁸Cambridge Dictionary: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/transformation>

by Victorian England.”²⁹ As a consequence, the foundations of modern African academia were laid within a gendered structure that systematically limited women's participation in intellectual life.

Interestingly, the understudied work of Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, a Nigerian scholar, Yoruba by tribe, has pointed to the incommensurability of the westernised phenomenon of gender with African conceptions of personhood and social identity. Oyèwùmí's work has challenged the idea of gender as a universal identity and subject position, not by arguing for a distinct form of gender embodiment that is African in its phenomenology, but by historically and conceptually demonstrating that gender is a product of Western social constructs, and not universally related or applicable to African social schemas.³⁰ She has consistently drawn attention to the historical processes that contributed to this imbalance in our academic institutions. For instance, Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí argues that colonial administrative and educational systems imposed rigid gender hierarchies that were not always reflective of precolonial African social arrangements. According to her analysis, colonial modernity institutionalised gendered divisions that significantly shaped access to education and public authority, thereby affecting women's participation in intellectual and academic spaces. Similarly, Amina Mama, a Nigerian-British author, notes that African universities have historically mirrored broader societal power structures in which patriarchal norms often influence recruitment patterns, promotion structures and research recognition.³¹

²⁹Solomon I. Ifejika & Olayiwola V. Ojo (2024). “Gender Equity and Women's Inclusion in Governance Processes in Nigeria: Why Was the National Gender Policy's Affirmative Action Unable to Engender Desired Change?”. *The International Journal of Community Diversity* ISSN: 2327-0004 (Print), ISSN: 2327-2147 (Online) Volume 24, Issue 1, <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-0004/CGP/v24i01/51-73>

³⁰Rantsho A Morak (2018). “On Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, colonial Afro-masculinities and the subjection of African cultural praxis”, in *Inxeb*. DOI: [10.17159/2617-3255/2018/n32a6](https://doi.org/10.17159/2617-3255/2018/n32a6).

³¹Hamid, (2022). “Women in Academia: Amina Mama”. Retrieved from <https://duchessinternationalmagazine.com/author/hamid/>

Although the expansion of higher education after independence created new opportunities for women across the continent, disparities have persisted within universities and research institutions. Women's participation has increased significantly at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels; however, their representation within senior academic ranks, editorial boards, research leadership, and scholarly associations remains comparatively limited. Molar Ogundipe-Leslie has described this phenomenon as a structural challenge rooted in institutional cultures that continue to privilege male academic authority. These structural constraints are further compounded by unequal access to research funding, limited mentorship opportunities, and the persistence of gendered expectations surrounding domestic and caregiving responsibilities.³² Beyond the issue of representation lies the challenge of epistemic marginalisation. Some Feminist scholars, such as Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, Amina, Winifred, etc., believe that women's perspectives and research concerns often receive less visibility within dominant academic discourse. Some scholars have observed that the marginal presence of women within knowledge-producing institutions can lead to the exclusion or undervaluation of gendered experiences in scholarly interpretation. Consequently, the call for gender inclusivity in African academia involves not only increasing the numerical participation of women but also transforming the intellectual frameworks through which knowledge is produced, validated, and disseminated. Transformation is very important and needs attention.

However, it is also very important to acknowledge that in recent

³²Asikia Karibi-Whyte (2018). "Contributions of Ogundipe-Leslie to African Feminism". Retrieved from <https://www.scribd.com/document/385129491/Understanding-African-Feminism>

decades, African universities and scholarly networks have begun to recognise the ethical and epistemic necessity of greater gender inclusivity. Efforts to promote women's scholarship, encourage gender-focused research, and strengthen mentorship structures have gradually reshaped the academic landscape. These developments reflect a growing recognition that inclusive knowledge production enriches intellectual inquiry and strengthens the credibility of African academic institutions. It is within this broader historical and institutional context that the activities and future direction of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) must be situated and critically examined.

FROM REPRESENTATION TO TRANSFORMATION

Adequate representation and participation of women in mainstream society is widely recognised as a key to inclusive development in the modern era. "There is no doubt that, in recent years, many academic institutions have taken deliberate steps to increase the numerical presence of women in scholarly spaces, such as conferences and research associations. Moreover, many universities have become more aware of the importance of gender balance in panels, publications, and academic participation. We often hear people emphasising this loudly today, urging gender sensitivity when organising programmes. While such developments represent significant progress, scholars of gender justice have warned against equating representation with genuine inclusivity. The mere presence of women within institutional spaces does not automatically ensure meaningful participation, influence, or epistemic authority.

Representation, when treated as an end in itself, risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative. Women may be present within academic forums but remain underrepresented in positions where key intellectual and institutional decisions are made, such as editorial leadership, keynote platforms, policy formulation, and

research agenda setting. Feminist theorists have long emphasised the limitations of symbolic representation. For instance, Nancy Fraser argues that justice requires not only the recognition of marginalised groups but also their parity of participation in social and institutional decision-making processes. In her words, she argues that “neither redistribution alone nor recognition alone can suffice for remedying injustice in today's world. It proposes a critical theory of recognition that identifies, and supports, only those forms of identity politics that can be coherently combined with a politics of social equality”.³³ Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth further expressed that

recognition alone cannot bear the entire burden of critical theorising. By itself, it is not sufficient to capture the normative deficits of contemporary society, the societal processes that generate them, and the political challenges facing those seeking emancipatory change. To ask that of recognition is to overextend the concept, distorting it beyond recognition and depriving it of critical force. Such an approach, I have argued here, can provide neither a suitable empirical reference point, nor a viable account of culture, nor a defensible theory of justice. What is needed, in contrast, is clear: Critical Theory should situate recognition as one dimension of a perspectival- dualist framework that also encompasses distribution.³⁴

Similarly, Iris Marion Young maintains that inclusion must involve restructuring institutional processes that have historically privileged dominant groups. When representation becomes purely

Nancy Fraser, (1997). *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the “Postsocialist” Condition*. Routledge, New York & London. P. 6. Nancy Fraser, in using the words representation and transformation, acknowledged that these words, although they differ importantly from one another, are preferable to her to refer to them by the generic term “recognition”.

Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth (2003). *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political—Philosophical Exchange*. Translated by Joel Golb, James Ingram, and Christiane Wilke. Verso. London New York. P.233

symbolic, the underlying structures that sustain inequality often remain intact.³⁵

Within African/Nigerian academic contexts, this distinction between representation and transformation is particularly significant. The observation so far shows women may participate in academic forums while remaining underrepresented in positions where intellectual and institutional agendas are set. In such circumstances, representation without structural change risks becoming token inclusion rather than genuine empowerment. “Tokenism is the practice of including women or other marginalised groups in workplaces solely to create the appearance of diversity, without providing them with real influence, equal opportunity, or meaningful participation in decisions.”³⁶

On the other hand, transformation involves a deeper reorganisation of institutional structures, intellectual priorities, and leadership pathways. Rather than focusing solely on numerical balance, transformative inclusivity aims to ensure that women scholars can shape scholarly discourse, influence institutional directions, and contribute fully to the development of knowledge systems.

Within the Association for the Promotion of African Studies, such transformation might involve several interconnected commitments. Firstly, deliberate efforts to establish gender-balanced leadership structures can help ensure that decision-making processes reflect diverse scholarly perspectives. Although APAS is trying in this regard, there is nothing wrong with a woman becoming the president of APAS. Secondly, mentorship initiatives

³⁵ Young, Iris Marion, (2002). *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford; online edn, Oxford Academic, <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198297556.001.0001>, accessed 15 Mar. 2026.

³⁶ Sangharsh Munot (2025). “The A–Z of Women and Work: A Year-End Glossary | T for Tokenism”. Retrieved from <https://www.changeincontent.com/t-for-tokenism-women-workplace-inclusion/>. Sourced 15/03/2026

supporting emerging female scholars can enhance long-term participation and intellectual growth within the association. Thirdly, prioritising research themes that explore gender, identity, and social justice in African contexts can broaden the intellectual scope of African studies.

ACTIONABLE PRINCIPLES FOR GENDER INCLUSIVITY IN THE SECOND DECADE OF APAS

For the Association for the Promotion of African Studies to deepen its commitment to gender inclusivity in its second decade, a number of actionable principles may be considered. First, institutional intentionality. Gender inclusivity should be integrated into the association's strategic vision and organisational culture. This involves consciously promoting gender-balanced participation in conferences, editorial boards, research collaborations, and decision-making bodies. Intentional policies can help prevent the persistence of unexamined structural inequalities. As mentioned above, women are presently involved in the decision-making of APAS. The emphasis is on making it a policy. Second, leadership inclusivity. Ensuring equitable representation of both men and women in leadership positions within the association can help broaden perspectives in institutional decision-making and promote a more inclusive intellectual environment. Third, research prioritisation. Encouraging scholarly engagement with gender-related themes within African philosophy, culture, politics, and development can deepen the intellectual scope of African studies and highlight the relevance of gender perspectives in interpreting African realities.

CONCLUSION

The first decade of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies represents an important chapter in the future of African-centred scholars. Through conferences, scholarly networks, and intellectual engagements, the association has meaningfully

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Sangharsh Munot (2025). “The A–Z of Women and Work: A Year-End Glossary | T for Tokenism”. Retrieved from <https://www.changeincontent.com/t-for-tokenism-women-workplace-inclusion/>.

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Solomon I. Ifejika & Olayiwola V. Ojo (2024). “Gender Equity and Women's Inclusion in Governance Processes in Nigeria: Why Was the National Gender Policy's Affirmative Action Unable to Engender Desired Change?” *The International Journal of Community Diversity* ISSN: 2327-0004 (Print), ISSN: 2327-2147 (Online) Volume 24, Issue 1, <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-0004/CGP/v24i01/51-73>

Young, Iris Marion, (2002). *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford; online edn, Oxford Academic, <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198297556.001.0001>,

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WOMEN, CONFLICT, AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP: REFRAMING INTELLECTUAL AUTHORITY IN AFRICAN STUDIES THROUGH BUCHI EMECHETA'S *DESTINATION BIAFRA* AND THE APAS VISION

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Introduction

Authority and power are concepts that are conventionally associated with leadership and, by extension, implicitly masculinized within many social and institutional contexts. In academic institutions and scholarly associations, intellectual authority is deeply entangled with the politics of voice, recognition, representation, and institutional control. Although women scholars have contributed substantially to the intellectual and educational development of African societies, their visibility and recognition within academic power structures continue to lag behind their scholarly output. This persistent imbalance reflects broader systemic inequalities that mirror women's ongoing struggles for equity, recognition, and meaningful participation in ethical leadership within the academy (Hill, 2000).

Building on this premise, this chapter interrogates the marginalization of women's intellectual authority through a critical reading of Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra*. Set within the context of war and political crisis, the novel offers a compelling framework for examining how women's agency is enacted within, and in resistance to, patriarchal configurations of power. This literary analysis is situated within the institutional vision of the

Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS), which seeks to advance African scholarship by connecting elements of African heritage as instruments of self-awareness and liberation.

This chapter argues that the realization of such a vision requires a fundamental reframing of intellectual authority, one that moves beyond tokenistic inclusion, to recognize women as epistemic agents, ethical leaders, and active stakeholders within both academia and society at large. Despite growing scholarly acknowledgement of women's agency, their authority remains structurally marginalized within academic associations. Black feminist theory provides a critical lens for understanding this contradiction by demonstrating how patriarchy, colonial legacies, and institutional hierarchies intersect to silence women's voices, especially those of African women (Nnaemeka, 2004).

The central problem addressed in this chapter, therefore, lies in the disjuncture between women's demonstrated leadership and intellectual contributions as reflected in literary representations such as *Destination Biafra* and their continued underrepresentation in positions of decision-making and epistemic authority within academic institutions. This raises critical questions: Why does institutional recognition fail to align with epistemic contribution? What structural transformations are required if the goals of self-awareness and liberation are to be meaningfully realized?

This chapter advances the hypothesis that a Black feminist reading of *Destination Biafra* reveals women's agency and ethical leadership as central to navigating and humanizing conditions of conflict, thereby challenging patriarchal constructions of authority. Consequently, women's marginalization within academic associations is not a reflection of limited intellectual or leadership capacity but a product of entrenched structural and epistemic biases. Reframing intellectual authority through a Black feminist lens demonstrates that inclusive, ethically grounded leadership

models rooted in women's lived experiences are essential to the transformation and advancement of African Studies and indeed APAS as an academic association.

Theoretical Framework: Black Feminist Theory

This study is anchored in Black feminist theory as both an epistemological and analytical framework. *Black Feminist Thought*, as articulated by scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins (2000) and Obioma Nnaemeka (2004), emphasizes the intersection of gender, race, class, and historical context in shaping Black women's experiences and modes of knowledge production. Central to this theoretical tradition is the recognition that Black women occupy unique positions of marginalization, which simultaneously generate distinctive forms of insight, resistance, and intellectual creativity.

Black feminist theory challenges dominant patriarchal and Eurocentric paradigms that marginalize women's voices and delegitimize their intellectual authority. Within intellectual associations, this framework is particularly significant because it repositions African women not merely as passive members but as producers of knowledge and agents of social transformation. It emphasizes agency, lived experience, relational ethics, and resistance as critical categories for understanding both social reality and intellectual practice (Collins, 2000). Applied to *Destination Biafra*, Black feminist theory facilitates a critical reading of how women's leadership and moral authority are constructed within the extreme conditions of war. It also provides the conceptual tools necessary to interrogate the structural marginalization identified in this study specifically, the disconnect between women's epistemic contributions and their institutional recognition within APAS and similar academic formations. In doing so, the framework directly supports the argument that women's marginalization is structurally produced and that alternative models of ethical leadership rooted in women's

experiences can reconfigure intellectual authority in the Association.

Methodological Justification

The use of qualitative literary analysis as a lens for institutional critique is both deliberate and methodologically grounded. African literature has historically functioned as a critical site for theorizing social realities, particularly in contexts where formal political or academic discourse may obscure or normalize structural inequalities (Tajjiou, 2024). Literary texts such as *Destination Biafra* do not merely mirror society; they interrogate, contest, and reimagine its power relations. Within a Black feminist framework, literary narratives serve as legitimate epistemological resources that point out marginalized voices and alternative modes of knowledge production. Interpreting Emecheta's novel therefore provides a rigorous basis for examining analogous dynamics within academic institutions. By drawing parallels between the gendered configurations of authority depicted in the novel and those operating within APAS, this chapter positions literary critique as a productive method for understanding and challenging institutional marginalization.

Synopsis of *Destination Biafra*

Written by Buchi Emecheta, *Destination Biafra* is a political and feminist novel set against the backdrop of the Nigerian Civil War. The narrative explores the intersections of war, gender, and power through the experiences of its central character, Debbie Ogedemgbe. Debbie is the educated daughter of a powerful and corrupt Nigerian politician. Trained in England and commissioned as a Nigerian army officer, she occupies a rare and uneasy position as a woman within a male-dominated military and political structure. As Nigeria plunges into political instability and armed conflict, she is assigned a diplomatic mission to negotiate peace with the secessionist region of Biafra.

Her journey becomes both physical and transformative. Travelling through war-torn regions, Debbie encounters the devastating human consequences of conflict, including violence, displacement, hunger, civilian suffering and death particularly among women and children. She also witnesses the moral failures of political and military leaders on all sides, whose ambition, corruption, and ethnic loyalties sustain the war (Emecheta, 1982). Through these experiences, Debbie undergoes a profound ethical awakening. Initially aligned with elite power structures, she becomes increasingly critical of patriarchy, corruption, and neocolonial interference. While the novel exposes her vulnerability, including her exposure to gendered violence, it simultaneously highlights her capacity for resilience and moral leadership. Ultimately, *Destination Biafra* rejects heroic narratives of war and instead presents conflict as the tragic outcome of institutional failure, offering a feminist re-evaluation of leadership and authority.

Narrative Strategies and the Reconfiguration of Authority

A close reading of *Destination Biafra* reveals Emecheta's deliberate dismantling of conventional narratives of power. Debbie Ogedemgbe is constructed as a liminal figure; simultaneously an insider within elite political circles and an outsider due to her gender and developing ethical consciousness. This dual positioning allows the narrative to expose the contradictions inherent in patriarchal authority. Emecheta consistently contrasts nationalist rhetoric and military heroism with the lived realities of suffering and displacement. Through Debbie's journey, authority is relocated from institutional rank to experiential knowledge. Leadership is no longer defined by hierarchy or coercive power but by the capacity to respond ethically to human suffering. Importantly, the text resists idealizing women's agency. Debbie's vulnerability stresses the persistence of patriarchal violence even within spaces of apparent inclusion. Agency is therefore presented not as absolute empowerment but as negotiated resistance, a theme

that aligns closely with Black feminist articulations of power and constraint (Nnaemeka, 2004).

War, Gender, and the Ethics of Leadership

Several interrelated themes emerge from the narrative that collectively challenge dominant constructions of authority. War is depicted not as a site of national glory but as a profound moral failure. Political and military elites are driven by personal ambition and ethnic allegiance, resulting in catastrophic human consequences. Within this context, women's agency emerges as a critical counter-narrative. Women are not represented solely as victims; they are caretakers, witnesses, negotiators, and moral interpreters of violence. Debbie's leadership exemplifies an ethics grounded in empathy, accountability, and care, qualities that contrast sharply with masculinist models of authority premised on control and violence (Gilligan, 1982). The novel further situates gendered oppression within broader structures of neocolonial power. External actors, particularly former colonial powers, who are directly or indirectly implicated in sustaining the conflict, highlighting the interconnectedness of local and global systems of domination.

A Black Feminist Reframing of Authority

Viewed through a Black feminist lens, *Destination Biafra* emerges as both a critique of epistemic exclusion and a call to rethink how intellectual authority is constructed and legitimized. Black feminist theory accentuates lived experience as a vital source of knowledge, challenging dominant intellectual traditions that privilege abstraction, detachment, and ostensibly "objective" perspectives while discounting experiential ways of knowing (Collins, 2000). Within this framework, authority is not derived solely from institutional position or formal power but from ethical engagement with social realities.

Debbie Ogedemgbe's authority in *Destination Biafra* is grounded

precisely in her immersion in the lived realities of war. As she encounters displacement, hunger, violence, and moral collapse, her understanding of the conflict diverges sharply from the accounts produced by political and military elites. These encounters enable her to interpret events with a depth and ethical clarity unavailable to those insulated by privilege. This narrative positioning reflects a core Black feminist assertion: that marginalized or liminal locations can generate critical insights into the operations of power and domination (Collins, 2000; Harding, 2004).

Intersectionality further deepens this reading. Debbie's identity as a woman, a member of the political elite, and a participant in a postcolonial state shape her experiences in complex, and sometimes contradictory, ways. While her class and education grant her access to elite spaces, her gender simultaneously exposes her to vulnerability, exclusion, and violence. This intersectional positioning allows Emecheta to interrogate multiple systems of domination; patriarchy, class privilege, and colonial legacies, without collapsing them into a single axis of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). As a result, the novel offers a layered critique of authority that reflects the intertwined nature of social hierarchies in postcolonial contexts.

Moreover, *Destination Biafra* advances an ethics of care as an alternative model of leadership. Debbie's actions are shaped by attentiveness to human suffering, moral responsibility, and relational accountability. This stands in stark contrast to masculinist models of leadership centered on domination, strategic calculation, and the exercise of coercive power. From a Black feminist perspective, such an ethics of care is not a sign of weakness but a form of strength; one that reframes authority as the capacity to sustain life, recognize vulnerability, and act ethically in conditions of crisis (Gilligan, 1982; Nnaemeka, 2004). In this sense, Emecheta redefines authority itself, repositioning it as an ethical practice rather than an institutional entitlement.

Intersectionality: Conceptual Clarification and Application to *Destination Biafra*

A critical extension of this analysis requires the incorporation of intersectionality, a foundational concept within Black feminist theory. Introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, intersectionality refers to the ways in which multiple axes of identity such as gender, race, class, ethnicity, and historical location interact to produce complex and overlapping systems of power, oppression, and privilege (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Rather than treating these categories as separate or additive, intersectionality emphasizes that they are mutually constitutive. In other words, individuals experience marginalization and authority in ways that are shaped by the simultaneous and interlocking operation of these identities.

Within African literary and socio-political contexts, intersectionality offers a particularly nuanced framework for analysis. It enables an understanding of how colonial legacies, ethnic affiliations, gender hierarchies, and class structures converge to shape lived experience in postcolonial societies (Mama, 1995; Oyěwùmí, 1997). This approach moves beyond single-axis explanations of inequality and allows for a more textured engagement with both exclusion and differential access to power.

Applied to Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra*, an intersectional reading illuminates the complexity of Debbie Ogedemgbe's position within the narrative. Debbie cannot be understood solely through the category of gender; rather, her experiences and authority are shaped by the interaction of several intersecting identities.

First, gender situates Debbie within a deeply patriarchal system that limits her authority and renders her vulnerable to gender-based violence. Despite her military rank and formal education, she

remains subject to forms of bodily and symbolic violence from which her male counterparts are largely shielded. Emecheta thus exposes the fragility of women's authority in masculinized institutions, even when women appear to occupy positions of power (Emecheta, 1982).

Second, class and elite status afford Debbie access to political and military spaces that are typically closed to women. As the daughter of a powerful chief, she benefits from elite networks that facilitate her diplomatic mission and visibility within state structures. However, this privilege is neither stable nor complete. Her legitimacy is repeatedly questioned within male-dominated hierarchies, revealing that class advantage does not neutralize gendered exclusion but instead requires constant negotiation (Nnaemeka, 2004).

Third, education and Western exposure position Debbie within a transnational framework of knowledge production. Her training in England equips her with confidence and analytical tools associated with colonial forms of authority, yet it also distances her from local realities in the early stages of the novel. Her journey through war-torn regions becomes a process of epistemic unlearning and re-education, as lived experience challenges inherited colonial and elite worldviews (Collins, 2000; Emecheta, 1982).

Fourth, ethnicity and postcolonial national identity situate Debbie within a country fractured by colonial legacies and ethnic tensions. The Nigerian Civil War itself is an embodiment of these intersecting forces, shaped by colonial boundary-making and post-independence struggles for power. Debbie's movement across regional and ethnic divides exposes her to the uneven effects of war on different communities, highlighting how conflict intensifies existing social inequalities (Achebe, 2012).

Taken together, these intersecting identities place Debbie in a

paradoxical position. She is simultaneously empowered and constrained, privileged and marginalized. Her authority is therefore contingent rather than absolute, emerging through negotiation rather than institutional guarantee. This complexity is central to Emecheta's critique of simplistic and masculinist narratives of power that flatten women's experiences into singular categories of victimhood or empowerment.

Intersectionality also deepens the analysis of other women in the novel, particularly those from non-elite backgrounds. While Debbie experiences marginalization within elite structures, non-elite women bear the compounded burdens of poverty, displacement, sexual violence, and social precarity. Their suffering reveals the limitations of analyses that isolate gender from class, ethnicity, or material conditions, and features the uneven distribution of vulnerability among women themselves (Crenshaw, 1991; Mama, 1995).

Importantly, *Destination Biafra* demonstrates that intersectionality is not only a framework for understanding oppression but also a lens for recognizing differentiated forms of agency. Debbie's leadership emerged through her intersecting identities. Her ability to navigate multiple social locations; elite and marginalized, national and transnational, allows her to perceive the ethical failures of political and military leadership with heightened clarity. In this sense, Emecheta aligns with Black feminist thought in presenting marginality as a potentially productive site of critical insight (Collins, 2000).

When extended to the institutional context of the APAS, intersectionality functions as a powerful diagnostic tool. Women's marginalization within academic associations cannot be explained by gender alone. Factors such as academic rank, geographic location, institutional prestige, linguistic background, and access to research funding intersect to shape who attains visibility and

authority. For example, a senior male professor from a well-resourced institution may wield significantly greater influence than a highly productive female scholar from a less privileged institution, regardless of scholarly merit (Morley, 2013).

Applying intersectionality to APAS therefore reveals that achieving gender equity requires more than numerical representation. It demands sustained attention to the layered and uneven experiences of women within the association. Without such attention, diversity initiatives risk reproducing existing hierarchies under the guise of inclusion. Policies aimed at equity must therefore be attentive to structural complexity, ensuring that leadership and recognition do not remain concentrated among already privileged groups.

In sum, intersectionality strengthens the chapter's central argument by demonstrating that women's marginalization and their capacity for leadership must be understood within a broader matrix of power relations. Buchi Emecheta's *Destination Biafra* offers a compelling literary articulation of this reality, providing both a critique of exclusion and a framework for reimagining intellectual authority in African Studies.

Institutional Reading: Implications for APAS

The insights derived from *Destination Biafra* have important implications for understanding the dynamics of intellectual authority within the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS). The novel's sustained critique of exclusionary power structures resonates strongly with the challenges faced by women scholars in academic associations and institutions more broadly. Much like the women in Emecheta's narrative who play indispensable roles in sustaining life and social cohesion during conflict yet remain excluded from formal decision-making, women in academia often make significant intellectual and organizational contributions while remaining underrepresented in

visible positions of authority. (Morley, 2013).

One striking parallel lies in the structural and often unintentional marginalization of women. In academic contexts, women frequently contribute extensively to research, teaching, mentorship, and institutional labor, yet their presence in prestigious roles such as keynote speakers, lead panelists, or agenda-setters at conferences remains disproportionately limited. This disparity is not indicative of a lack of intellectual competence or leadership capacity but rather reflects systemic biases embedded in institutional cultures and evaluative practices. (Acker, 2006; Morley, 2013).

Closely related to this marginalization is a persistent disjuncture between contribution and recognition. Across academic associations, women frequently occupy positions such as vice presidents, vice secretaries, or committee chairs, where they shoulder extensive responsibilities behind the scenes. Their labor is particularly visible during conferences, where women often serve as members of local organizing committees and logistical coordinators. However, these contributions rarely translate into symbolic authority or epistemic recognition, as women remain disproportionately absent from highly visible roles such as keynote or lead speakers (Benschop & Brouns, 2003). This pattern mirrors the dynamics depicted in *Destination Biafra*, where women's ethical clarity and practical leadership exist alongside their exclusion from formal power.

The contrast between Debbie Ogedemgbe's ethical insight and the moral failures of male political leaders in the novel further unsettles conventional assumptions about authority. Emecheta makes clear that positional power does not guarantee competence, integrity, or vision. Authority, in this sense, is shown to be contingent not on hierarchy but on ethical responsibility and responsiveness to human suffering (Emecheta, 1982). When applied to academic

associations, this insight raises critical questions about the criteria used to define and allocate intellectual authority. Who is authorized to speak for the field, and on what grounds? Which forms of knowledge are rendered visible and valuable, and which remain marginalized? And what values underpin institutional leadership?

Destination Biafra also offers a compelling framework for rethinking leadership within academic associations such as APAS. The model of ethical leadership exemplified by Debbie emphasizes accountability, reflexivity, and attentiveness to lived realities. For APAS, this implies the urgent need to move beyond symbolic gestures of inclusion toward substantive structural transformation. Leadership and representational frameworks must be intentionally reconfigured to reflect the diversity and depth of scholarly contributions within the academia. This includes adopting transparent procedures for selection and decision-making, ensuring equitable representation in high-visibility intellectual spaces, and actively supporting the professional development of women and early-career scholars (Acker, 2006; Morley, 2013).

Such measures are not merely corrective but transformative. They enable the association to align its institutional practices with its stated intellectual and ethical commitments, particularly its vision of self-awareness and liberation. Applying a Black feminist framework to institutional practice allows APAS to move from tokenistic inclusion toward genuine epistemic justice. Women's leadership, in this context, should not be treated as an exception or accommodation but as integral to the association's intellectual vitality, ethical credibility, and future relevance (Collins, 2000; Nnaemeka, 2004).

Conclusion

The analysis of *Destination Biafra* demonstrates that women's agency and ethical leadership are not peripheral concerns but central to understanding conflict, governance, and social

transformation. Through the character of Debbie Ogedemgbe, Buchi Emecheta articulates a model of authority grounded in lived experience, moral responsibility, and care for human life. In doing so, the novel directly challenges patriarchal constructions of power that equate authority with domination, hierarchy, and exclusion.

When these insights are applied to the context of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS), they reveal the urgency of confronting structural inequalities that continue to limit women's access to intellectual leadership. Reframing intellectual authority through a Black feminist lens does more than acknowledge women's contributions; it enriches the academia as a field by incorporating diverse epistemologies, ethical frameworks, and modes of leadership. Ethical leadership within academic associations and institutions must therefore move beyond rhetorical commitments to inclusion and enact structural changes that fully recognize, support, and institutionalize women's intellectual labor.

As Emecheta's narrative compellingly illustrates, ethical leadership requires the courage to confront uncomfortable truths and to reimagine power in ways that prioritize justice, inclusion, and human dignity. Such a transformation is not merely a matter of equity; it is essential to the credibility, relevance, and future sustainability of African Studies as a discipline committed to liberation, self-awareness, and social responsibility.

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SECTION VI:

Digital Futures, Technology, and Knowledge Preservation

26

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, CULTURAL PRESERVATION, AND AFRICAN KNOWLEDGE TRADITIONS: INSTITUTIONAL PATHWAYS FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF AFRICA STUDIES (APAS) AND EMERGING DIGITAL INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence has entered Africa not as a neutral tool but as a transformative regime that reshapes how knowledge is produced, owned, and circulated (Gikunda, 2023; Ilo, 2025). In sectors such as archives, education, tourism, and the arts, AI systems increasingly mediate what counts as heritage and culture, embedding external priorities within digital infrastructures. For societies marked by histories of epistemic dispossession, this shift is ontological and political: it concerns who speaks for African pasts and imagines African futures. African knowledge traditions – music, proverbs, ritual, ecological practice – are living epistemic orders grounded in communal logics of truth and transmission. Without African ethical frameworks such as Ubuntu, AI risks flattening these traditions into decontextualised data (Kirui et al., 2025).

Within asymmetrical global power structures, AI may either deepen data colonialism or enable digital sovereignty (Rajwais et al., 2025; Chipembele et al., 2025). This tension calls for institutional mediators. APAS can collaborate with innovation ecosystems to embed African philosophical concepts of relationship, responsibility, and sacredness into AI governance,

ensuring that philosophy becomes constitutive of Africa's digital cultural future rather than merely advisory.

AI and Cultural Heritage Preservation

The encounter between artificial intelligence and African cultural heritage is not merely technical but philosophical: it brings computational logic into contact with living worlds of meaning. African scholars warn that AI may either sustain or erode memory, language, and ritual continuity (Oveh et al., 2025). The central question is whether heritage is treated as extractable data or as relational inheritance linking the living, the ancestral, and the unborn.

In Nigeria and beyond, AI tools – natural language processing, image recognition, smart archives – offer possibilities for revitalizing endangered languages and transforming archives into interactive spaces (Schellnack-Kelly & Modiba, 2024). Yet African philosophical perspectives stress that heritage is sacred, governed by communal custodianship and spiritual intention, which AI cannot replicate (Agoi et al., 2025).

Thus, AI-based preservation must be normatively grounded in cultural protocols and community control. In collaboration with innovation ecosystems, APAS can help embed African ethical concepts into AI governance, ensuring preservation safeguards living cosmologies rather than merely digitized fragments.

African Knowledge Traditions and Digital Risks

African knowledge traditions are not mere repositories of information but relational ontologies that unite personhood, spirit, community, and environment. Music, proverbs, ritual, and ecological practices function as living epistemologies validated through communal authority and intergenerational transmission (Roya & Ngcobo, 2023). When mediated by AI systems largely

designed outside Africa, the risk is not only content loss but distortion of indigenous grammars of knowing. Scholars describe this as digital colonialism: dominant AI architectures privilege Western epistemologies, marginalizing African languages and symbolic systems or reducing them to extractable “training data” (Ayana et al., 2024). Such dynamics intensify epistemic injustice and commodify identity and memory.

Here the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) assumes critical relevance. Beyond critique, APAS can institutionalize African philosophical resources – Ubuntu, communal custodianship, and indigenous standpoint theory – as normative constraints on AI design and governance. By convening scholars, policymakers, and technologists, APAS can transform African knowledge traditions from vulnerable data sources into authoritative co-architects of Africa's digital future.

Institutional Collaboration Models

For the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS), institutional collaboration must move beyond ad hoc partnerships toward a durable normative architecture in which African knowledge traditions actively shape technological infrastructures and governance regimes. Philosophically, this entails repositioning African institutions as primary sites of epistemic authority – so that AI does not merely “apply” to culture but is structured by African categories of personhood, community, and sacred responsibility (Gwagwa et al., 2021).

APAS has already laid groundwork through its international conferences, peer-reviewed publications, and transnational scholarly networks, which convene philosophers, social scientists, and cultural theorists across Africa and the diaspora. By foregrounding African-centered research agendas and fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, APAS has strengthened institutional visibility for African epistemologies within global debates. These

platforms provide a foundation for deeper engagement with digital innovation ecosystems.

African innovation research emphasizes coordinated collaboration among universities, industry, government, and communities (Owor et al., 2025; Stephen & Aigbavboa, 2025). Within such multi-helix ecosystems, APAS can function as an epistemic orchestrator – translating Ubuntu, communal custodianship, and intergenerational ethics into binding AI design principles. Going forward, APAS can formalize partnerships with innovation hubs and archives, develop culturally grounded AI ethics curricula, establish advisory boards that include traditional custodians, and promote community-governed data trusts for heritage preservation.

Through these structured mechanisms, collaboration becomes philosophically substantive: African metaphysical and ethical concepts are embedded in funding criteria, policy frameworks, and platform architectures. Under APAS leadership, digital ecosystems would not merely preserve African cultures but become sites where African knowledge traditions co-author the trajectory of AI and technological modernity on the continent.

APAS and Innovation Ecosystems

APAS can only enter the AI era faithfully if it is understood not as a conventional academic association, but as a **custodian of African epistemic sovereignty** within rapidly evolving innovation ecosystems. African AI and digital transformations are currently orchestrated largely around logics of efficiency, scale, and market disruption, expressed through hubs, accelerators, and data-driven platforms in education, agriculture, finance, and health (Chisom et al., 2024). In contrast, African knowledge traditions prioritise continuity, relationality, and intergenerational responsibility. The philosophical task for APAS is to **bend the grammar of**

innovation so that ecosystems become spaces where African ontologies shape, rather than merely survive, AI-driven change.

APAS as Epistemic Anchor in AI Ecosystems

Contemporary analyses of Africa's AI ecosystem – comprising start-ups, universities, state actors, and global partners – warn that without decisive intellectual leadership, it risks reproducing cognitive imperialism and structural dependency (Owor et al., 2025). AI systems are frequently imported as completed paradigms, relegating African institutions to implementation rather than authorship of datasets, ethical frameworks, and evaluative standards (Chisom et al., 2024).

In this context, the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) must move from participation to stewardship. Drawing on its established conferences, peer-reviewed platforms, and continental scholarly networks, APAS is uniquely positioned to define the philosophical grammar of African AI. It can formalize AI ethics working groups grounded in Ubuntu and communal responsibility, shape curriculum reforms that train culturally literate data scientists, and issue position papers that influence national and regional AI policy frameworks.

Moreover, APAS can institutionalize structured dialogue among technologists, elders, artists, and policymakers – ensuring that African languages, cosmologies, and heritage systems are embedded at the design stage of digital infrastructures. In doing so, APAS does not merely “anchor” AI ecosystems; it reorients them, transforming African institutions from adopters of technology into architects of a distinctly African normative horizon for global AI governance.

From Deficit Narratives to Afrocentric Innovation

Dominant analyses of Africa's AI landscape frequently rehearse a

“deficit narrative,” emphasizing infrastructure gaps, limited skills, and regulatory delay (Owor et al., 2025). While these challenges are real, such framing risks casting Africa as a perpetual technological follower. Emerging scholarship instead affirms the continent's capacity to generate Afrocentric, ethically grounded digital futures shaped by Ubuntu, communalism, and ecological sovereignty (Da Silva, 2024; Gikunda, 2023).

APAS must assume intellectual leadership in this paradigm shift. Drawing on its conferences, journals, and transnational scholarly networks, APAS can redefine innovation discourse by positioning African communities as co-architects – not beneficiaries – of AI. It can institutionalize Afrocentric AI ethics frameworks, influence curriculum reform to integrate African languages and narrative epistemologies into digital education, and shape policy dialogues in agriculture, climate adaptation, and cultural industries.

By foregrounding indigenous ecological knowledge and communal reasoning as co-equal intelligences alongside machine learning, APAS can dismantle deficit thinking and advance a model of innovation rooted in African metaphysics and intergenerational responsibility.

APAS as Moral Infrastructure

Across education, agriculture, digital trade, and biomedical research, scholars agree that ethical governance – not mere technical capacity – determines whether AI entrenches inequality or promotes shared flourishing (Owor et al., 2025; Da Silva, 2024). The decisive question is therefore institutional: who defines the moral horizon within which AI develops?

APAS must assume this defining role. As a continental intellectual body with established conferences, peer-reviewed publications, and transnational scholarly networks, APAS possesses the authority to articulate binding normative frameworks for African

AI ecosystems. It can draft continental AI cultural rights charters, shape data sovereignty principles rooted in communal custodianship, and issue policy directives that embed Ubuntu, dignity, and intergenerational responsibility into national and regional AI strategies.

Beyond policy influence, APAS can institutionalize long-term formation: developing AI ethics curricula grounded in African metaphysics, certifying interdisciplinary research clusters, and convening structured forums where technologists, elders, jurists, and artists co-author governance models. In this capacity, APAS does not merely advise innovation ecosystems – it legitimizes and orients them. By providing ethical architecture, epistemic continuity, and philosophical depth, APAS transforms AI from a reactive import into a morally guided African project, ensuring that technological advancement unfolds within a distinctly African civilizational vision of intelligence and human flourishing.

Conclusion

The convergence of artificial intelligence, cultural preservation, and African knowledge traditions ultimately discloses a deeper philosophical question than technological adoption: it concerns the authority to define reality, memory, and meaning in an increasingly algorithmic age. The evidence emerging from African and Nigerian contexts demonstrates that AI expands humanity's technical capacity to remember while simultaneously risking new forms of epistemic dispossession. Smart archives, algorithmic curation, and immersive platforms promise unprecedented preservation of languages, rituals, and artistic expressions; yet, when guided by externally derived epistemologies, these same systems may silently reorganize African lifeworlds according to alien categories of value, efficiency, and ownership. Thus, the central issue is not technological participation but epistemic sovereignty – who determines the philosophical grammar within

which AI operates.

Philosophically evaluated, AI reveals itself as a site of ontological negotiation. African knowledge traditions do not treat memory as inert data but as relational continuity linking ancestors, the living, and future generations. When culture is reduced to datasets detached from communal validation and sacred context, preservation becomes paradoxically a form of loss. The ambivalence identified across archives, education, and creative industries therefore reflects a structural tension between computational abstraction and relational ontology. AI can democratize access and stimulate innovation, yet without African ethical orientation it risks reproducing digital colonialism under the language of progress.

Decolonial and Ubuntu-centered debates sharpen this insight by exposing the myth of technological neutrality. Every intelligent system embodies assumptions about personhood, knowledge, and community. If African philosophies remain peripheral to design and governance, responsible AI discourse risks becoming an extension of ethical colonialism – regulating harm without transforming the epistemic foundations that generate it. The philosophical task is therefore constructive rather than merely critical: to articulate normative frameworks in which communal stewardship, relational personhood, and ecological responsibility function as first principles of technological development.

Within this horizon, the **Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS)** emerges not simply as an academic body but as an indispensable moral and epistemic institution for Africa's digital future. By convening scholars, cultural custodians, technologists, and policymakers, APAS can translate African philosophical resources into operational norms for AI ecosystems – shaping

archival standards, educational models, cultural governance, and data sovereignty frameworks. Its role is to ensure that African thought does not enter digital modernity as preserved heritage alone but as an active source of conceptual innovation capable of redefining intelligence itself.

In conclusion, the future of AI in Africa depends on whether institutions such as APAS succeed in transforming technological ecosystems into philosophically grounded communities of practice. When anchored in African epistemologies, AI ceases to be an external force acting upon culture and becomes a medium through which African societies reinterpret memory, creativity, and knowledge on their own terms. The ultimate promise, therefore, is not technological inclusion but civilizational authorship: a digital modernity in which African knowledge traditions do not merely survive technological change but guide its moral direction, ensuring that innovation remains accountable to human dignity, communal flourishing, and intergenerational continuity.

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DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN SCHOLARSHIP: THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF AFRICAN STUDIES (APAS) IN THE AGE OF TECHNOLOGY

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Introduction

The landscape of global knowledge production is undergoing a seismic shift, driven by the relentless integration of digital technologies into the fabric of academic life (Nanbak A. J 2025). For the African continent, this "digital turn" represents more than a mere change in medium; it is a critical juncture for epistemic liberation. Historically, African voices have been marginalized by the high costs of traditional publishing and the gatekeeping of Western-centric academic hierarchies. Today, the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) stands at a threshold where the digital ecosystem offers the tools to dismantle these barriers. However, this transition is not without its paradoxes. While digital platforms promise a democratization of knowledge, they also introduce new risks of digital dependency and structural exclusion. This chapter argues that for APAS to fulfill its mission in the 21st century, it must move beyond the role of a passive observer. By critically navigating the "digital divide" and adopting a proactive strategic roadmap, APAS can harness technology to ensure that African scholarship is not just a participant in the global discourse, but a primary architect of its future.

To explore the intersection of Africanity and the Digital Age, as African scholars, we must therefore look beyond technology as a mere tool and see it as a site of philosophical and cultural negotiation. To treat African studies with the respect it deserves, there is the need to give special priority to the concept of "Afro-digitality"-where traditional values like Ubuntu (relationality) and "incompleteness" can seamlessly meet the fluid and interconnected nature of the internet.

2. Dismantling the digital divides through the use of African ontological world views

2.1 Relationality and the "Digital Juju"

In his recent work (2024) Francis Nyamnjoh, argues that we can reimagine the human condition through the lens of African ontologies. Using African philosophical concepts of "incompleteness" and "potency", he maintains that Africa has philosophical concepts that are naturally suited to the digital world. He likens ICTs to "Juju," where humans and things are intricately entangled, transcending physical boundaries. Nyamnjoh argues that being "complete" is an illusion, and a dangerous one at that. To be complete is to be finished, closed, and static. Instead, he posits that humans, spirits, and things are inherently incomplete. Our incompleteness allows for interdependence; because we are incomplete, we naturally seek out others to fill our gaps. This makes "conviviality" (living together) a necessity rather than a choice. Furthermore, being incompleteness allows us to be porous. We are constantly influenced by our environment, our ancestors, and our tools.

2.2 Ontological concepts of “incompleteness” and “potency” as gateways for APAS Scholars

As explained above, the concepts of “incompleteness” and “potency” carry much meaning in African philosophy than is given

by the western thought. What this means is that African ontology rejects the notion of boundary where autonomy is the hallmark as is found in Western ontological concept of freedom. The idea of boundary is foreign to the African where he is subjectively interwoven with his neighbors and his environment. The notion of “incompleteness” therefore challenges the Western “Cartesian” idea of the autonomous, self-sufficient individual. Another concept of great significance in African ontology that is of relevance to the African scholar as pointed out by Nyamnjoh (2024) is “potency”. He explains that if incompleteness is the gap, potency is the energy found within the gap. Potency is the capacity for transformation and the power to transcend boundaries. according to him potency is not about static power or authority it is about power of becoming. Nyamnjoh describes beings as the “frontiers” entities that exist in the “in-between”. potency for him is what allows a person to navigate between the physical and the spiritual or the local and the global. He further maintains that we are not one thing but that we are the potency to be many things.

Why APAS Scholars should leverage on Nyamnjoh's Africa's philosophical concepts as a pathway to redefining Africa's image as distinct from the West yet equal in showcasing its worldview is essentially because Nyamnjoh's view aptly suits the goal and purpose of the association: promotion of African studies. This is most timely as it focuses on core interests of APAS in the following areas:

i) The “Permanent Beta” State: In the digital world, software and profiles are never “finished.” They are in a state of constant updates, patches, upgrades, and iterations. This is incompleteness in action. Just as Nyamnjoh posits, the human being is continually in a state of incompleteness, in the same way technological drive is always seeking for enhancement. Again, a human being is always

in a state of becoming and in like manne, a social media profile is a "frontier" space; it is never a complete representation of a human, but an evolving project that requires interaction (conviviality) with others to have meaning. As African philosophy maintains that an individual is never a whole, but a unit in the mass inter-relational beings, so also there is an overlapping interdependence in digital tools. This perspective can serve as a tool in the hands of APAS scholars and other African scholars in their effort to contextualize African Philosophy within the global space.

ii) Digital Ubiquity and Potency: African ontology holds that the individual is never a whole but a constituent in the larger ecosystem. He is integrally connected to the physical and spiritual environment where every bit of his action has consequential impact on others. The environment serves as the launchpad for the becoming of the individual. In the same way, the internet grants us the potency to be in multiple places at once where we able to achieve many things simultaneously. Through avatars, handles, and digital footprints, we transcend the physical limitations of our bodies. We can inhabit different "worlds" (gaming, professional, social) simultaneously, embodying the "composite identity" Nyamnjoh describes.

The African scholar and digital platforms: how to maximize for the promotion of African studies

It is an undeniable reality that the 21st century has ushered in a digital transformation that is fundamentally reshaping the landscape of higher education and research across Africa (Bates, 2019). This progress can help position Africa within global map of regions fertile and open to digital embrace. For African scholars, this shift provides a critical opportunity to overcome historical marginalization within global knowledge systems, which have traditionally privileged outputs from high-income countries

(Okafor et al., 2022). By leveraging digital platforms, researchers on the continent can enhance their visibility, foster international collaborations, and ensure that locally generated knowledge informs regional and global policy (Amboka et al., 2024). Although APAS has contributed immensely to this growth in the last ten years, the room is still wide open for the association to calibrate itself into a veritable platform for reshaping the future of Africa. Apart from APAS, a few of the digital platforms that are helping to place African worldview on the global map include:

i) *African Journals OnLine (AJOL)*: AJOL is the world's largest online collection of African-published, peer-reviewed scholarly journals (Okafor et al., 2022). Established to increase the global and continental visibility of African research, it currently hosts over 500 journals, more than half of which are Open Access (AJOL, 1998; Okafor et al., 2022). African scholars can leverage AJOL by prioritizing it as a primary indexing and publication venue for contextually relevant research. Because AJOL uses the Journal Publishing Practices and Standards (JPPS) system to assess quality, publishing in AJOL-hosted journals provides a mark of legitimacy that counters the "obscurity" often associated with regional publishing (Amboka et al., 2024; AJOL, 1998). Furthermore, scholars can use AJOL to access localized data and peer-reviewed studies that address specific continental challenges in health, climate, and education—resources that are often missing from Western-centric databases (AJOL, 1998).

ii) *ResearchGate*: ResearchGate is a prominent academic social network that allows researchers to share their work, track citations, and engage in professional discussions (Scott & Swanepoel, 2018). It serves as a digital bridge, connecting scholars across the Global South and North through shared research interests (Teferra, 2022). To maximize impact, African scholars should maintain active

profiles and upload full-text versions of their papers; where copyright permits-to facilitate "green" open access (Scott & Swanepoel, 2018). ResearchGate's "Stats" feature provides researchers with granular data on who is reading their work and where those readers are located, which can be used to identify potential collaborators for South-South or North-South projects (Teferra, 2022). Engaging in the platform's Q&A sections also allows scholars to establish themselves as subject matter experts in indigenous knowledge systems or regional developmental issues (Akinwale, 2020).

iii) Google Scholar: Google Scholar is a widely accessible bibliometric tool that indexes scholarly literature across an array of publishing formats and disciplines (Amboka et al., 2024). It is particularly vital for African scholars whose journals may not yet be indexed in traditional databases like Scopus or Web of Science (Amboka et al., 2024; Okafor et al., 2022). Scholars should curate a Google Scholar Profile to ensure all their publications are correctly attributed. This is crucial because Google Scholar significantly improves the discoverability of African-authored papers, leading to increased usage and citation potential (Ankrah & Atuase, as cited in Amboka et al., 2024). By monitoring their h5-index and citation counts, scholars can provide empirical evidence of their research impact for promotion and tenure applications, even when publishing in local journals that lack high "Impact Factors" in Western indices.

iv) Academia.edu: Similar to ResearchGate, Academia.edu is an academic social media platform used for sharing research and networking (Scott & Swanepoel, 2018). It has become increasingly popular among African library and information science educators as a tool for instant dissemination of research findings (AJOL, 2020). Scholars can use Academia.edu to circumvent the high costs

and lag times of traditional publishing cycles. By uploading pre-prints and working papers, African researchers can receive immediate feedback from the global community, which can refine their work before formal submission (AJOL, 2020). Additionally, the platform's "Follow" feature allows scholars to keep abreast of the latest trends in their fields, ensuring they remain "consumers and producers of research" rather than just passive recipients of information (Nanbak A. J 2025).

v) *Africa Open Science Platform (AOSP):* AOSP is a mission-driven initiative designed to coordinate Open Science activities across the continent by providing the necessary digital infrastructure and tools for data-intensive research (Okafor et al., 2022). It addresses the "digital divide" by fostering a community of practice around data sharing and e-infrastructure (Moeti, 2024). Scholars can leverage AOSP to transition toward Open Science practices, which are increasingly required by global funding agencies (Okafor et al., 2022). By utilizing the platform's data repositories, researchers can preserve their datasets—such as those related to African biodiversity or linguistics—making them "findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable" (FAIR). This not only prevents the "brain drain" of data to foreign institutions but also positions African scholars as leaders in collaborative, multi-national projects (Moeti, 2024; Okafor et al., 2022).

The way forward for APAS: Maximizing Digital Modalities for growth and Global Presence

Going forward, the following are recommendations to safeguard the growth and global impact of APAS:

i) *Enhancing Innovation and Research Performance:* Digital platforms serve as a catalyst for "innovation performance" by allowing associations to acquire vital information and discover new research partners (Nanbak A. J 2025).). By leveraging these

tools, APAS can: *Democratize Knowledge*: Digital libraries and open-access repositories can offset the "knowledge deficit" often found in Africa by reducing disparities in access to research, and *Facilitate Real-Time Collaboration*: Digital tools enable scholars to work together on projects and discuss ideas in real time, regardless of their physical location across the continent (Nanbak A, J (2022).

ii) Building Virtual Communities of Practice (VCoPs): APAS can use digital platforms to transition from a static membership list to an active Virtual Community of Practice. Also, it can improve its capacity building by embracing initiatives like the Africa Cancer ECHO which show that VCoPs can provide accessible, multidisciplinary alternatives for professional development and peer learning. Secondly, it can serve as a platform for Career Growth: APAS can facilitate the "cross-fertilization of ideas" and provide mentorship opportunities that are crucial for the association's next generation of scholars.

iii) Overcoming Infrastructure and Access Barriers: While the potential in APAS is high, research highlights that the "digital divide" remains a challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa (Asunka, 2008). To be effective, the APAS digital strategy should: *Prioritize Inclusivity*: Ensure that digital transformation integrates principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) to cater to members with varying levels of infrastructure access (Babalola & Genga, 2024). APAS should also adopt *Mobile-First Approach*: Given the prevalence of mobile devices in Africa, adopting M-Learning (Mobile Learning) and mobile-friendly platforms can improve engagement by meeting members where they are.

iv) Strategic Organizational Evolution: According to report by African Union (cited in Universe PG, 2024), digital transformation

is a "strategic imperative" for African organizations to remain competitive globally. Also, APAS should adopt a *Performance Metrics*- Implementing digital management systems can allow the association to assess performance through both financial and non-financial measures, such as staff talent and innovation output (TQFB, 2025). Again, it should leverage digital tool on *Operational Efficiency*. Automation of repetitive processes and real-time data analysis can help the association make informed decisions for its second decade.

Conclusion: Reclaiming the narrative through technological sovereignty - Towards an Epistemic Renaissance

The digital age does not merely offer the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) a new set of tools; it offers a new frontier for intellectual sovereignty. As this chapter has demonstrated, the transition from analog traditions to digital ecosystems is fraught with structural challenges- from the persistent "digital divide" to the subtle threats of data colonialism. Yet, these hurdles are not insurmountable. By adopting a proactive strategic roadmap that prioritizes Open Access, digital literacy, and collaborative virtual hubs, APAS can effectively bypass the historical gatekeepers of the Global North.

The future of African scholarship depends on the continent's ability to own its narrative in the digital sphere (Nanbak A. J 2022). It is no longer enough to be "searchable"; African knowledge must be influential, accessible, and self-sustaining. As APAS embraces this technological evolution, it does more than archive the past-it empowers a new generation of scholars to engage with the world on their own terms. Ultimately, the fusion of African scholarly rigor with digital innovation promises an epistemic renaissance, ensuring that the "Age of Technology" is defined not by the silencing of African voices, but by their global resonance and leadership.

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FROM CULTURAL PRESERVATION TO DIGITAL PROTECTION: THE ROLE OF EDUCATION AND CYBERSECURITY AWARENESS IN STRENGTHENING APAS'S INTER-GENERATIONAL AFRICAN RESEARCH AGENDA

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1. Introduction

The security of African culture and intellectual heritage has traditionally been anchored on oral culture, written documents, artifacts, sacred sites, and epistemic systems. Traditionally, knowledge transfer from one generation to the next has been anchored on custodianship and community validation (Ajala et al., 2025). However, in recent times, the rapid migration of knowledge to cyberspace has significantly affected knowledge security. Currently, research products, written documents, philosophical discourse, and culture are located in cyberspace, virtual communication platforms, digital libraries, and cloud storage systems. These are vulnerable to cyber-attacks.

For the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS), whose objective is to reconstruct, represent, and promote African-centered knowledge across generations (APAS, n.d.), digital vulnerability is not limited to the security of knowledge systems from cyber-attacks. Rather, it is located on philosophical and civilizational planes. For instance, when knowledge systems are moved from the physical to the virtual platform without adequate

security measures, there is a high probability of security breaches in knowledge data. Such security breaches include intellectual property theft, digital manipulation, ransomware attacks, and algorithmic marginalization. These security breaches not only affect knowledge systems but also epistemic sovereignty (Obiokafor, 2024). Epistemic sovereignty refers to the authority and power of African knowledge producers over knowledge systems.

The consequences of digitalization are far-reaching. The digitalization of African manuscripts, philosophical works, historical documents, and cultural stories increases their accessibility and global prominence. However, in the absence of cybersecurity awareness, the increased prominence of the digitalized artifacts may result in exploitation and marginalization. Therefore, the concept of preservation requires a paradigm shift. Preservation is no longer the sole responsibility of conserving and documenting artifacts; the concept of digital protection requires integration into preservation.

This chapter argues that the concept of digital protection is the new concept of preservation. In the new knowledge environment, cybersecurity awareness is no longer peripheral in the sustenance of African studies; it is central. Therefore, it requires integration into the research agenda of APAS. Through the integration of cybersecurity education into the research agenda, APAS will be able to advance its vision of intellectual self-awareness and liberation of Africa (*APAS*, n.d.; Yassine & Maleh, 2022). Therefore, APAS advocates for digital protection as a means of preservation of African intellectual heritage in the contested cyberspace environment.

2. Cultural Preservation in African Scholarly Traditions

African philosophical traditions have a strong foundation in communal sharing of knowledge, transmission of knowledge

across generations, and communal identity as a fundamental concept in knowledge production (Ajala et al., 2025). In some African knowledge production systems, knowledge is not only an abstract concept but also a reality. Hence, cultural preservation in these systems does not only entail the preservation of knowledge in archives or databases but rather focuses on the transmission of knowledge. In this regard, APAS can be recognized as a strategic initiative aimed at promoting African-centered philosophical inquiry. Consequently, APAS undertakes scholarly activities in the following domains:

- ❖ **Epistemology:** the production and validation of knowledge in Africa.
- ❖ **Metaphysics:** the concept of being, reality, causations, and personhood in Africa.
- ❖ **Axiology:** the concept of ethics and value structures in Africa.
- ❖ **Logic:** the articulation of reasoning in Africa.

These domains are not only fundamental in the production of knowledge in Africa but also critical in reconstructing and representing African intellectual heritage in a manner consistent with the notion of authenticity and self-definitions. However, the manner in which these traditions have been engaged with in recent times has undergone a dramatic transformation in the digital age.

Knowledge production in Africa in recent times is marked by the development of digital knowledge production systems, including:

- ❖ Online archives that house theses, manuscripts, and other materials
- ❖ Digital scholarly journals that publish research on African philosophy
- ❖ Online conferences that facilitate scholarly discourse across international boundaries
- ❖ Cloud-based research collaborations that facilitate inter-

institutional partnerships

Although these technologies improve accessibility and outreach, they also create systemic vulnerabilities. In the absence of adequate cybersecurity, digital repositories and research infrastructures become vulnerable to:

- ❖ Unauthorized access to sensitive and unpublished research materials
- ❖ Data tampering that has the potential to alter historical and philosophical records
- ❖ Theft and unauthorized appropriation of intellectual property, including indigenous knowledge
- ❖ Ransomware that can affect operations in institutions
- ❖ Digital misinformation that has the potential to alter African narratives

The issues raised here are not only about disruptions in digital technologies, but they also have significant implications for knowledge. For example, tampering with digital archives can alter historical truth, theft and unauthorized use of research materials can alter scholarly ownership, and digital misinformation can alter cultural authenticity. Digital insecurity, therefore, has significant implications for knowledge and knowledge systems in Africa.

3. Cybersecurity Awareness as Digital Self-Awareness

Cybersecurity awareness has been defined as a group of practices related to technology, including passwords, avoiding phishing, multi-factor authentication, data encryption, and network security. These practices, though very important in managing cybersecurity, only address one aspect of the implications of cybersecurity on knowledge and ethics (Obiokafor, 2024). From an African philosophical perspective, cybersecurity awareness is viewed as digital self-awareness, which is described as “a form of self-consciousness in which the self is related to a cyberspace

environment.”

African philosophy has an in-depth and rich concept of self-awareness, which is viewed as an essential aspect of individual autonomy, dignity, and freedom. Knowing oneself means that one is self-conscious in an environment that is related to others in terms of ethics and metaphysics. In the digital world, self-awareness means that one is conscious of one's intellectual products, culture, and dissemination of research data in a non-neutral global technological environment that is related to issues of power and geopolitics (Aguboshim & Obiokafor, 2020; Obiokafor, 2024). Digital self-awareness has several dimensions:

- ❖ **Digital risk awareness:** This is an awareness of all the risks that are related to cyber issues in academic institutions, research data, and culture.
- ❖ **Manipulation and misinformation awareness:** self-consciousness about digital information that has the potential to alter Africa's history, philosophy, and identity.
- ❖ **Intellectual assets protection:** protecting manuscripts, data sets, indigenous knowledge systems, as well as co-authored research from unauthorized use.
- ❖ **Ethical digital behavior:** prudent management of data, respect for intellectual property rights, as well as prudent sharing of sensitive digital information.

The philosophical reinterpretation of these principles is a manifestation of the objectives of APAS which are to link Africa's heritage to self-awareness and liberation. In a digital environment, self-awareness and liberation mean more than political and cultural freedom; it means epistemic liberation in cyberspace. Digital liberation means:

- ❖ Epistemic emancipation from colonialism in a digital age.
- ❖ Institutional ownership of research data sets, archives, as well as African origin creative works.

- ❖ Ownership and authenticity of digital narratives about Africa's history and philosophy.

Without a level of cybersecurity awareness, the digitization of knowledge and information has the potential to become a new form of epistemic colonialism of Africa's knowledge systems. In this regard, digitization must be pursued as a form of digital liberation as well as intellectual participation in the global arena.

4. Education as the Strategic Bridge

Education is the primary institutional tool through which the embedding of cybersecurity awareness can be systematized in the research environments of Africa. Although the normative case for digital protection is rooted in philosophical inquiry, it is through education that the case for protection is made concrete. Education is the tool through which the abstract concept of protection is made concrete, and it is through education that the concept of protection is made a part of the fabric of academic inquiry (Aguboshim et al., 2021). In the case of APAS, whose role is to reconstruct and pass on knowledge from one generation to another, education is the strategic bridge that links the preservation of culture with the protection of the digital.

4.1 Curriculum Integration

The most direct method of embedding cybersecurity awareness is through the curriculum. There are a number of ways through which Africa-centered curricula can be integrated with existing philosophical and research-oriented approaches by:

- ❖ Developing a module that fosters a critical engagement with the digital, with a focus on the dissemination of knowledge through algorithms and digital platforms.
- ❖ Ethical data stewardship based on axiology, which emphasizes the importance of moral responsibility in the handling of research data, indigenous knowledge, and

community-sensitive knowledge.

- ❖ Digital research protection strategies that include intellectual property rights, safe collaboration tools, and the integrity of the archive.

The incorporation of these elements into African philosophy studies, history, and culture will result in the contextualization of cybersecurity awareness based on African epistemology and ethics instead of being a purely technological construct without any connection to the identity of the people.

4.2 Capacity Building for Researchers

Apart from the academic curriculum, capacity building is a crucial aspect for researchers who are currently engaged in the study and research of African studies. It is imperative for academic institutions and research associations to provide capacity building for researchers that will protect individual and academic intellectual property (Aguboshim & Obiokafor, 2020). This includes the training of researchers on how to:

- ❖ Safeguard digital archives from unpermitted access and data corruption.
- ❖ Safeguard unpublished manuscripts and drafts from cyber intrusion.
- ❖ Safeguard virtual research platforms from cyber intrusion.
- ❖ Safeguard academic virtual research platforms from international academic collaborations.
- ❖ Safeguard against the spread of misinformation campaigns that seek to distort the truth about Africa and African philosophical constructs.

4.3 Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer

Another characteristic of the vision of APAS is the intergenerational aspect. For the intellectual heritage of Africa to be sustained, the next generation of scholars must not only be

grounded in the philosophical approaches to knowledge (*APAS*, n.d.). These include epistemology, metaphysics, logic, and axiology. They must also be grounded in the realities of digital knowledge management. Intergenerational knowledge transfer in the digital age means that the next generation of scholars must be able to respond to the following challenges:

- ❖ Awareness of the emerging cyber threats to academic institutions.
- ❖ The ability to engage in secure digital collaboration.
- ❖ The ability to differentiate between right and wrong in handling culturally sensitive digital materials.

For knowledge to be transferred, it must be protected. Without digital security measures, knowledge may be compromised. This is because the archive may be compromised, the research may be tampered with, and the culture may be destroyed. Education becomes the bridge between the philosophical approach to knowledge and the digital security approach. Education becomes the bridge that not only sustains knowledge but also guarantees the security of the intellectual heritage of Africa.

5. Aligning Cybersecurity with APAS Core Values

Cybersecurity awareness is closely related to the core values of APAS. It emphasizes that cybersecurity is not just a technical issue; it is a moral issue that involves the values of the institution. By embracing cybersecurity as part of its values, APAS ensures that cybersecurity is part of its research culture, research direction, and research identity (*APAS*, n.d.).

Commitment

Commitment demonstrates a high level of commitment to the security of African intellectual property such as manuscripts, archives, and research data. This is achieved through continuous training and provision of the necessary resources. Timeliness emphasizes the importance of taking proactive measures to counter

new cyber threats.

Teamwork

Teamwork demonstrates that everyone has a role to play in cybersecurity. This involves not just experts in cybersecurity but also scholars, administrators, and students.

Innovation

Innovation promotes the development of African-centric cybersecurity that takes into consideration the African environment. This eliminates the reliance on foreign cybersecurity models.

Total Quality and Flexibility

The total quality principle ensures that cybersecurity is part of the quality management system. This enhances the integrity, authenticity, and credibility of research data.

By making the link between cybersecurity and APAS's values, cybersecurity moves beyond being a mere administrative activity to become a key element in the integrity of the institution. It enhances the security and sustainability of African intellectual heritage in the digital world.

6. A Framework for the Digital Protection of African Scholarship

This chapter introduces a three-layer framework for enhancing digital protection in African scholarship, particularly in APAS. The framework is meant to transform cultural preservation into a digital protection approach that incorporates cybersecurity into academic systems, institutional frameworks, and philosophical ideologies. It comprises awareness, institutional protection, and philosophical integration.

The first layer is awareness; it focuses on developing basic cybersecurity skills among students, scholars, and administrators. It seeks to protect against cyber risks through understanding cyber risks such as phishing attacks and ransomware attacks. It also promotes good authentication practices, protects research data, and guards against misinformation. This layer focuses on human security; it recognizes that humans are a weak link in cybersecurity (Obiokafor & Mbonu, 2025).

The second layer is institutional protection; it involves developing guidelines for systemic cybersecurity. It comprises data governance guidelines, digital archiving best practices, and intellectual property protection mechanisms. The guidelines also address how data is stored, accessed, and protected to ensure research integrity and continuity while avoiding potential breaches of data and misuse of research materials (Aguboshim & Obiokafor, 2020).

The third layer is philosophical integration. This layer ensures that cybersecurity is integrated into African epistemology and ethical considerations. This means ensuring that cybersecurity is not seen as an external entity but rather an integral part of African research (Yassine & Maleh, 2022). This ensures that cybersecurity is positioned as an ethical imperative, a collective cultural imperative, and an extension of African knowledge systems.

The three layers ensure that cybersecurity is institutionalized and positioned within APAS's mission of protecting African intellectual heritage.

Conclusion

As the APAS commemorates a decade of progress in the advancement of African-centered scholarship, the move from cultural preservation to digital protection has emerged as both a strategic imperative and moral duty. Although digital protection

has helped to increase the visibility of African manuscripts, philosophical works, historical archives, and collaborative research, these have also been vulnerable to substantial cyber risks that threaten their integrity, authenticity, and ownership.

As this chapter has emphasized, the protection of African intellectual heritage in the current digital-driven knowledge ecosystem is no longer simply about preservation; rather, it is about protection against substantial cyber risks that threaten the integrity of African knowledge systems, including data breaches, intellectual property theft, misinformation, and archives manipulation, among others. These risks have significant epistemic implications, including the distortion and commodification of African narratives in the digital world.

One of the arguments presented in this chapter is that cybersecurity awareness is not only unrelated to African philosophical thought; rather, it is deeply connected to it. Education has emerged as the critical interface that seeks to connect cybersecurity awareness to African-centered scholarly approaches. In this regard, education helps to transform cybersecurity from simply a technical imperative to an extension of African philosophical ideas, especially those related to knowledge, ethics, and collective responsibility.

In embedding cybersecurity awareness into its inter-generational vision, APAS enhances its potential to function as a leading research institution in Africa. Finally, cybersecurity for African knowledge systems ensures their safety, authenticity, and strength so they may be passed on to posterity with accuracy in an increasingly complex digital world.

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IMAGINING APAS AT 20: VISIONS, STRATEGIES AND PROSPECTS

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1. Introduction

The history of global scholarship has too often positioned Africa as an object of study rather than a sovereign producer of theory. From anthropology to development studies, Africa has frequently been narrated through borrowed conceptual vocabularies, external metrics of validation, and publication infrastructures largely domiciled outside the continent. It is against this historical background that the emergence of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS) becomes philosophically significant. Founded in 2016 by Very Rev. Fr. Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu, OSA, APAS was conceived as an intellectual platform for reconstructing, representing, and promoting African history, culture, philosophy, and multidisciplinary scholarship along African-centred lines. Its first academic convergence and international conference was held at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria in 2016. Since then, conferences have been held at Unizik, Awka multiple times, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Kenya and now in May, 2026, will be held at Veritas University, Abuja

The significance of APAS lies not merely in its existence as an academic association, but in its institutional ambition to become a platform where African scholars generate, circulate, and globalize original thought. Through journals such as the *Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development (JASSD)*, annual international conferences, and a growing network of scholars and policy actors, **APAS** is already participating in the slow but necessary reconfiguration of Africa's epistemic future. This paper, therefore, imagines APAS at 20 in the year 2036, asking how it can evolve into Africa's leading epistemic and political knowledge hub.

2. Conceptual Clarifications

The conceptual terms used in this study require elucidation:

What is meant by “epistemic power” is the institutional power to decide what constitutes legitimate knowledge, which voices are amplified, and which theories are archived in the global world. Here, we reiterate Michel Foucault's foundational idea of power and knowledge being co-constitutive.¹

What is meant by “epistemic sovereignty” is Africa's power to self-define its own research interests, concepts, methodologies, and publication cultures without subordination to any other intellectual hegemony. What is meant by “institutional visibility” is the visibility of academic production in indexed databases, citation networks, global conferences, and policy channels.

What is meant by “political relevance” in the context of APAS is the translation of academic research into public reason, governance reform, democratic ethics, ecological stewardship, and development praxis. These are key terms because the stakes of APAS's future are civilisational in nature: it is a question of the institutional means through which Africa speaks authoritatively to itself and to the world.

3. Problem Statement

The problem that is being addressed in this study is the continued epistemic and structural disadvantaged position of African

scholarship in global knowledge systems. The disadvantaged conditions that scholars in Africa have continued to experience include poorly funded universities, poorly equipped research libraries, high article processing fees, inconsistent journal cycles, poorly developed digital infrastructures, and low inclusion in global elite citation indexes. As Paulin Hountondji notes, much of what is produced in Africa is still affected by what he calls “extraversion,” which is “an orientation of intellectual production that is turned outward toward external validation rather than inward toward Africa's own needs.”² This is further compounded by the hegemonic positions of Scopus, Web of Science, Elsevier, and Taylor & Francis, which, though academically beneficial, still reflect structural inequalities in access.

The paradox is that Africa produces vast amounts of knowledge about its own social, political, and environmental realities. However, much of that knowledge is still under-theorized, under-cited, and institutionally invisible in global knowledge systems. The question is, then, what role APAS could play in addressing this crisis by 2036.

4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study blends the power/knowledge perspective with the hermeneutic approach. The direct implication of power and knowledge developed in the thesis of Michel Foucault³ offers the conceptual tool to grasp the significance of the absence of neutrality in the systems of indexing, the editorial board, and the publication networks. In fact, to control the publication channels is to control the truth itself. The hermeneutic dimension of the study, drawing on the philosophical reflections of Hans-Georg Gadamer, enables APAS to be read as a text in the process of history,⁴ a tradition with the mission of conferences, journals, and philosophical production that reveals the horizon of Africa's self-understanding. Through this process of fusion of horizons, APAS is revealed as an institution and a

philosophical answer to Africa's long process of liberation, at least epistemically and other futuristic follow-up

5. Literature Review

The question of Africa's epistemic future is an issue that has commanded considerable scholarly attention. A significant part of the literature on Africa's epistemic future is concerned with the structural marginalization of knowledge in global intellectual systems. A key work in this regard is Paulin Hountondji's critique of what he calls "extraversion."⁵ Hountondji's work is significant in that it posits that much of what has been produced in Africa in terms of knowledge in the past has been oriented toward external constituencies, foreign research agendas, and metropolitan validation systems. This is highly relevant in regard to the contemporary state of journals in Africa, which still have much work to do in terms of being recognized in dominant global systems.

In a more general decolonial sense, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's work on how coloniality survives in global intellectual systems in terms of language, thought, and meaning is highly relevant.⁶ Ngugi's work on how domination survives in global intellectual systems in terms of language is highly relevant in regard to the concerns of this work. Achille Mbembe's work on how Africa's future is tied to reclaiming the narrative on Africa is also highly relevant in regard to the concerns of this work.⁷

Within African philosophy proper, Innocent Asouzu's theory of *Ibuanyidanda*⁸ has greatly advanced the logic of complementarity in response to fragmented rationalities and exclusionary binary oppositions. This is particularly significant because, in conformity with the APAS vision and in consonance with the intellectual legacy of its founder, the APAS perspective is already imbued with a complementary world view that emphasizes inclusion, relationship, and wholeness.

Specifically, with the emerging body of scholarship in *Igwebuike* philosophy, the discourse has moved beyond metaphysics to cover other areas such as epistemology, governance, education, conflict management, law, and national development. Kanu's own works on *Igwebuike* as a trend in African philosophy and its implications for national development have already secured its status as an ideology of inclusion and social participation.⁹ Further works by Jude Onebunne, Ejikemeuwa Ndubisi, Anetoh Bonaventure Chike, Vincent Onwudinjo, among others, have taken *Igwebuike* to cover areas such as logic, jurisprudence, and epistemology and beyond.¹⁰

6. Africa's Epistemic/Political Challenges and Western Subjugation

Africa's epistemic challenges cannot be understood in isolation from its political history. Colonialism's dispossession of lands and peoples entailed a fundamental rearrangement of epistemological power relations. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's discussion of linguistic and cultural domination is a prime example of how colonial modernity's epistemological projects dislocated indigenous epistemologies in favour of colonial epistemologies.¹¹ Currently, these epistemological power relations are evidenced in forms of citation dependency, theory dependency, funding conditionality, and the prestige economy of Northern journals. While African issues may dominate global debates on migration, biodiversity, religion, democracy's fragility, AI ethics, and public health, in most cases, African scholars are not at the centre of setting the agenda

Africa's epistemic subjugation has political implications because knowledge informs political decisions, governance, and global perceptions of political legitimacy. Should African institutions not play a significant role in setting the agenda in these debates, then political decisions risk being externally scripted. APAS's interdisciplinary focus in philosophy, political science, education, anthropology, international relations, and religious studies places it

in a unique position in intervening in these debates.

7. Imagining APAS at 20 (2036)

By 2036, APAS has the potential to become Africa's leading multidisciplinary citation and policy thought ecosystem. Its vision will be to become Africa's most respected platform in:

- Theory production
- Interdisciplinary dialogue
- Journal excellence
- Policy translation
- Continental conference diplomacy
- Scholar mentorship
- Knowledge export

Its existing journal architecture is already a strong foundation.

JASSD continues to publish in-depth issues with a wide scope of disciplines, such as philosophy, governance, artificial intelligence, religion, and indigenous knowledge systems.

The vision for 2036 will be a reality where APAS is recognized alongside other most respected global scholarly bodies as Africa's authoritative voice in interdisciplinary knowledge production

7.1. Strategies and Prospects: APAS in the Frontiers of Africa's Epistemic/Political Relevance

The path to 2036 calls for deliberate strategies. First, APAS journals must focus on DOI, ORCID, Crossref, and Scopus/Web of Science. Second, APAS conferences must become policy laboratories, transforming conference results into briefs for the African Union, ECOWAS, legislative bodies, and civil society. Third, APAS must build a continental digital knowledge commons, an open repository of articles, data, indigenous concepts, conference results, and policy memoranda. Fourth, strategic alliances with African, European, Asian, and Latin American universities must

make APAS a centre of South-South and South-North scholarly interchange. These strategies would elevate APAS from publication relevance to epistemic-political influence.

8. Igwebuiké Philosophy as an African Theoretical Framework for Global Epistemic Relevance

One of the most intellectually promising ways in which APAS can achieve global recognition is in the application of *Igwebuiké* philosophy as a transdisciplinary African theoretical framework.

What is *Igwebuiké* philosophy? *Igwebuiké* is a philosophy developed by Prof. Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu. At its heart, *Igwebuiké* is a philosophy of complementarity, solidarity, relatedness, and ontological mutuality. At its deepest level, *Igwebuiké* philosophy is a counter-ontology of atomistic ways of thinking; rather, a world in which beings, institutions, and systems find meaning in their interconnectedness.¹² What is the value of *Igwebuiké* philosophy to a global audience? The value of *Igwebuiké* philosophy lies in its logic of complementarity. What is the value of *Igwebuiké* philosophy in political theory? *Igwebuiké* philosophy is a corrective to adversarial democracy and winner-takes-all democratic culture. The logic of mutual belonging in *Igwebuiké* philosophy can be extended to constitutional dialogue, inclusive democracy, federal negotiation, minority rights, and participatory citizenship in fragile democracies in Africa and in polarized democracies in the West struggling with social fragmentation.

In the peace and conflict studies field, the *Igwebuiké* philosophy can inform the communitarian grammar of reconciliation. In this way, the *Igwebuiké* philosophy can transcend its African context to capture the interest of the global audience concerned with peace and conflict studies. In the context of AI ethics and digital governance, the *Igwebuiké* philosophy can inform an African response to the challenges posed by individualism in artificial intelligence. The *Igwebuiké* philosophy challenges the

individualism of artificial intelligence by focusing on the social consequences of innovation in the field. In this way, the *Igwebuike* philosophy shifts the focus from the means-to-ends approach in artificial intelligence to the value of human dignity.

In the context of environmental philosophy, the *Igwebuike* philosophy can inform a new understanding of biodiversity. The principle of complementarity in the *Igwebuike* philosophy can provide profound insights into the relationship between the flourishing of the ecosystem and the flourishing of humanity. In this way, the *Igwebuike* philosophy can inform the APAS 2026 conference on *biodiversity, conservation, and public health*. In this context, the issue of ecology is not just about policy; rather, it is about the moral relationship between humans, animals, lands, cultures, and future generations.

In public health and bioethics, *Igwebuike* can strengthen African communitarian models of care, especially in areas such as pandemic response, indigenous healing knowledge, public trust, vaccine ethics, and healthcare justice. Its emphasis on shared responsibility aligns strongly with contemporary global health governance.

In economics and development studies, its logic can support inclusive growth models that resist extractive capitalism. Kanu's own extension of *Igwebuike* into national development already demonstrates how it can shape welfare policy, infrastructure justice, and people-centred development.

From the point of view of logic, it can accommodate a paradigm for inclusive growth, which rejects the extractivist variants of capitalism. The extension of *Igwebuike* by Kanu in national development already points to its potential in shaping welfare, infrastructure, and human-centered development.

The implications, therefore, are that Igwebuike, as a concept, should not only be confined to the classrooms of African philosophy. By 2036, APAS can make *Igwebuike* a globally exportable theoretical framework, like *Ubuntu*, dependency, or postcoloniality, which can be achieved through:

- International translations,
- Comparative philosophy symposia,
- AI and ethics workgroups,
- Public policy institutes,
- Environmental governance collaborations,
- Legal theory work,
- Integration with global curriculum.

This can make APAS not only a platform for publishing African scholarship but for exporting African concepts that have the potential to reshape global thought in the image of Africa itself.

9. Conclusion

Imagining APAS at 20 is, in this sense, significantly an exercise in imagining Africa's epistemic future. What is lacking in African scholarship today is not intelligence, but powerful institutions with the potential to project intelligence on a global scale.

This research has demonstrated that APAS has the philosophical identity, journal culture, multidisciplinary depth, and continental connectivity required to become Africa's most revered epistemic and political voice by 2036.

If APAS is able to build on its journals, spread Igwebuike philosophy worldwide, enhance its policy connectivity, and intensify its global scholarly networks, APAS at 20 will be the academic association through which Africa finally speaks in its own voice to a global audience.

Endnotes

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 10. Various African scholars like Jude I. Onebunne, “Igwebuikéology: A Fundamental Approach to African Philosophy,” *Tolle Lege* 2, no. 2 (2020); Ejikemeuwa and Onwudinjo, “Igwebuiké vs Relativism, the Quest for Truth” published in *Igwebuiké Research Institute*, have written extensively on Igwebuiké Philosophy, further complementing Kanu's foundational positions and strengthening the frontiers of Igwebuiké as an African framework of complementarity.
 11. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*, 4-6
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The Book

This book marks a significant milestone in the life and journey of the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS. Founded in 2016 from a compelling vision to promote, preserve, and advance African thought, culture, and identity... it has grown into a vibrant scholarly movement with far-reaching influence across Africa and the diaspora. This book in your hand is both a celebration and a reflection... celebrating ten years of committed scholarship, institutional resilience, and intellectual camaraderie, while critically engaging the origins, foundations, and future prospects of APAS... offering a rich tapestry of interdisciplinary perspectives. It is a testament to the collective effort of scholars... a shared commitment to intellectual excellence, cultural affirmation, and the re-centering of Africa in global knowledge production... It is our hope that this book will serve not only as a record of past accomplishments but also as a catalyst for future scholarship. Scholars, students, and readers alike are invited to engage with the ideas presented herein, to interrogate them, and to build upon them in the ongoing quest for an authentic and transformative African intellectual tradition ... I warmly commend this book to a wide audience of readers: scholars, researchers, students, policymakers, and all who are committed to the advancement of African studies. ... The chapters contained herein are not only intellectually stimulating but also profoundly relevant to contemporary debates about identity, development, and knowledge production in Africa and beyond ... In celebrating ten years of APAS, we celebrate more than an institution; we celebrate a movement... rooted in the conviction that Africa must speak for itself, define itself, and shape its own intellectual destiny.

Professor Ejikemeuwa J. O. Ndubisi

President, APAS



*A Publication of the
Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS)*



ISBN: 978-8252-36-28