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THE RELEVANCE OF AFRICAN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS IN PEACEBUILDING AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT (THE CASE OF THE CAMEROON ANGLOPHONE CRISIS): A PHILOSOPHICO- ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

All races are gifted with a unique nature and ways of knowing things (Anyanwu, K. C. & Ruch, E. A. 1981). Based on the above premise, it is clear that concepts like knowledge, language, religion, emotions, perceptions and some other ideas make African epistemology or indigenous knowledge distinct and unique. The idea of African indigenous knowledge or African Epistemology is thus based on the fact that to know, to speak the truth, to validate reality and indeed rationality can be understood and interpreted using African categories and concepts provided by the African cultural and traditional experiences without recourse to Western or any other conceptualization. K. C. Anyanwu and E. A. Ruch put it simply that the idea of African Indigenous knowledge stems from the fact that Africans are able to interpret and apprehend reality within the African context (Anyanwu, et.al, 1981). To this effect, is the argument that there is a distinctive African way of perceiving and reacting to the world, which falsifies the purport and long held believe of the European supremacy of their knowledge over the Africans. This article: ***The Relevance of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Peace and Conflict Management (The case of the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis): A Philosophico-Anthropological Perspective***, explores African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) as vital frameworks for peacebuilding and conflict management, with a central particular focus on the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis. Using philosophical and anthropological lenses, it interrogates the epistemological foundations of indigenous approaches to conflict resolution and or management, situating them within a broader African cultural heritage and lived realities. The central argument in this article is that, African Indigenous Knowledge Systems rooted in communal values, restorative justice and participatory dialogue, offer sustainable alternatives to Western centered conflict management models that often fail to resonate with African socio-political contexts. The article uses comparative analysis with particular reference to the South African model of reconciliation through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Rwandan model of *Gacaca* courts. Both approaches show how indigenous mechanisms grounded in *Ubuntu* Philosophy and community-based adjudication can foster healing, accountability and reintegration after violent conflict. These case studies provide a lens through which the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis can be re-examined, highlighting the potential of indigenous practices such as palaver sessions, council of elders, and traditional arbitration to mediate tensions between communities and the state.

Methodologically, adopted for this article is an interpretive approach, analyzing cultural and philosophical underpinnings of African conflict resolution systems. The article argues that peace in Cameroon requires not only political negotiation but also cultural re-rooting in indigenous epistemologies that prioritize collective harmony over adversarial confrontation. By bridging philosophy and anthropology gaps, the article underscores the relevance of AIKS in contemporary African conflicts management and or resolution, advocating for their integration into national and regional peacebuilding strategies for the end of the Cameroon Anglophone crisis, whether today or in future. Ultimately, the paper concludes that the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis cannot be sustainably resolved through external or purely legalistic interventions. Instead, a hybrid model that incorporates indigenous African approaches drawing lessons from South Africa's reconciliation ethos and Rwanda's community justice offers a culturally resonant pathway toward peace, reconciliation and social cohesion.

Keywords: Africa, Indigenous, Knowledge, System, Epistemology, Conflict Management Culture, Truth and Reconciliation, Peace, Conflict, Anglophone, Crisis, Gacaca Courts.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The question of whether Africans have a philosophy has been discussed and debated for several decades in various forums by differing scholars. This long debate incessantly reveals many realities about the African people which have been masked by western mentalities. This appears very clearly when Emmanuel Etta affirms that Africa's rich cultural and intellectual traditions have long been systematically denied (Etta, 2019). Despite debates about African Philosophy, the general trend of thought has been that there is indeed such a thing as African philosophy. **Kwame Nkrumah defines African philosophy as "A synthesis of traditional systems of thoughts, the new ideas developed by African intellectuals and the cultural heritage of the African people"** (Nkrumah, 1970). Didier Khaphagawani and Jeanette Malherbe extensively elaborate thus: "To affirm the existence of an African philosophy is to suggest the existence of an African epistemology African epistemology can be regarded as a subset of African philosophy" (Didier, et.al., 1998). Since African philosophy encompasses all forms and types of philosophizing, it makes sense therefore to talk of an African epistemology. **Hence, in order to study African epistemology, it is right to make reference to African philosophy and anthropology in matters of politics and peace building.**

We must not lose sight of that fact that epistemology is the study of knowledge, that is, how we know what we know. Thus, African epistemology deals with what the African means and understands when he makes a knowledge claim. This consists of how the African sees or talks about reality. Before the advent of colonialism, Africans had their own ways of acquiring knowledge and solving conflicts which was unique to them, but colonisation suppressed and denigrated these knowledge systems and methods of peacebuilding labelling them as local and unscientific. They deliberately imposed Western systems and upheld them as the standard with which other systems or model were to comply. Overt Nwosimiri laments that the colonial experience by Africans was characterized by the forceful imposition of Western education and knowledge systems. This resulted in the endorsement of the Western education, knowledge systems and peacebuilding as the perfect systems for Africa (Nwosimiri, 2022). This confirmation also resulted in the dismissal of African knowledge systems as indigenous knowledge systems, cultures and traditions were downgraded as inferior to the colonizers' and deemed unscientific. Experiencing this unfortunate treatment of Africa, Abosede Priscilla Ipadeola laments thus: "The African people were made to distrust and despise their indigenous epistemological structures and to see the epistemological structures of the colonial powers as being superior, more complex and more valid." (Ipadeola, 2017). Therefore, there is the need to bring to the consciousness of Africans their indigenous knowledge systems which have long been regarded as none existence and best seen as primitive and unscientific unfit to solve any of African's problem.

Anslem Jimoh opines that African epistemology is concerned with what Africans mean and understands when they make knowledge claims. For him, this overwhelmingly consists of how Africans see or talk about reality. Africans conceive reality as a single system in which personality is expressed in concrete consubstantiation of spirit (Jimoh, 2017). Therefore, there is the need to refute the Eurocentric view that Africans have no form of epistemology.

In addition, the persistence of violent conflicts across Africa which is indicative of the failure of the Eurocentric systems underscores the urgent need for culturally grounded approaches to peacebuilding and conflict management. The Cameroon Anglophone Crisis, which has persisted since 2016, epitomizes the limitations of externally imposed or purely legalistic solutions that fail to resonate with local realities. This article situates the crisis within a philosophical and anthropological context. It argues that African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS) provide a vital epistemological and practical framework for sustainable peace.

Indigenous African conflict resolution practices such as palaver sessions, councils of elders, and restorative arbitration are rooted in communal values, oral traditions, and philosophies of interconnectedness. They emphasize reconciliation, truth-telling, and reintegration rather than adversarial confrontation. To illustrate their relevance, this article draws comparative insights from the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Rwandan Gacaca Courts. Both models demonstrate how indigenous-inspired mechanisms can address mass violence, foster healing, and rebuild fractured societies.

By bridging Philosophy and Anthropology, the paper explores how Cameroon can adapt these models to its own cultural context, integrating indigenous epistemologies into national peacebuilding strategies. The central thesis is that peace in Cameroon requires not only political negotiation but also cultural re-rooting in African traditions of justice and reconciliation.

CHAPTER ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGY

1. VARIOUS DIMENSIONS OF AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGY

Here, we shall tackle the various dimensions of African epistemology which will include: ontological foundations of African epistemology, the Idea of an African Communitarian Epistemology, Metaphysical Foundations of African Epistemology, and the uniqueness of African epistemology. These form the core of his idea of African epistemology, which is based on his assumption that a theory of knowledge is about the way we come to understand reality, which consists of how we acquire, articulate, and justify our knowledge claims about reality.

1.1 ONTOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGY

The link between ontology and epistemology is significant in African thought. Ontology is the study of being and existence; what things are and how they relate to each other. In many African societies, the way people understand existence influences their beliefs about knowledge. This means that how individuals perceive the world around them directly affects how they learn and share information. This explains why African epistemology is closely linked to African ontology. Anslem Jimoh makes this clear when he says that a people's ontology delineates their distinctive worldview and distinguishes them from others; informing their particular mode of perception. In addition, he emphasises the fact that this theory is a continuum of being; asserting that African ontology implies the presence of spiritual components of nature that influence human experience and perception (Jimoh, 2018). Just as humans, spiritual beings are seen as possessing some awareness of nature that assist them to respond to perception. Consequently, Anslem Jimoh states:

African ontology does not fractionise reality into the rational, empirical, and mystical. Instead, it conceives reality as a unity and harmony of all that is. It provides a vision of totality where every aspect or mode of being makes meaning in relation to other aspects or modes of being (Jimoh, 2018).

From the above, it is recognized that to fully grasp the knowledge of any being is to study it in its entirety, as African epistemology is grounded in its ontology.

One key idea in African ontology is the importance of community. Òkè Moses argues that in many African cultures, individuals see themselves as part of a larger community. As a result, knowledge is often viewed as something collective rather than individualistic. This communal approach suggests that what one person knows is valuable only when acknowledged and shared by the whole group. Knowledge is built through collective experiences and shared understandings (Moses, 2005). Thus, the

ontological foundations of African epistemology highlight that knowledge is not just a collection of facts. Instead, it is about relationships, community, and spirituality. Understanding this perspective allows for a richer appreciation of African knowledge systems and their contributions to the broader understanding of knowledge in the world today.

1.2 METAPHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS OF AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGY

According to Peter A. Ikhane, the epistemological views of indigenous Africans is in accord with ontology; such that African epistemology may be taken as the view that knowledge is the understanding of the nature of reality, and apprehension of what is (Ikhane, 2017). Similarly, Subairi B. Nasseem justifies this position by stating that though Africa is sociologically diverse and culturally pluralistic, the expression 'African epistemology' makes reference to the perception of reality which was common to the cultures of Africa. This perception of reality he insinuates expresses the ontological belief that reality is a harmony of beings, of forces that permits a cultural thematic approach to conceiving African epistemology as elucidating the relatively similar epistemological experiences of indigenous Africans by drawing on the affinity of the metaphysical conception of reality of the African past (Nasseem, 2002). The aforementioned assertion justifies the fact that wholism and inseparability of the individual from his culture in the process of knowledge acquisition in Africa is peculiar and unique.

Equally, Knowledge acquisition in Africa is not separated from nature or regarded as separate entities. Christopher C. Anyanwu's opinion that Africans hold that there can be no knowledge of reality if individuals detach themselves from nature. He intimates also that knowledge comes from the cooperation of human faculties and experiences (Anyanwu, 1984). To buttress this point, Bartholomew Abaniku maintains that in the process of attaining knowledge through experience, subject-object distinction is minimal; and if it exists at all, the focus of consciousness is the subject and other individual things, which are objects of knowledge existing for the subject and not existing for themselves (Abaniku, 1994). The emphasis laid on the metaphysical foundations of African thought pattern and the inseparability of the subject-object relationship, other philosophers introduce the idea of uniqueness in African epistemology.

1.3 THE UNIQUENESS OF AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGY

In establishing the uniqueness of African epistemology, Anslem Jimoh declares that experience of reality is completely different from those in other worldviews; their inseparability of the epistemic subject from object gives some uniqueness in African epistemology (Jimoh, 2018). In relation to this, Peter A. Ikhane thinks that the African way of knowledge acquisition regards understanding as characterising indigenous African worldview. This culture for him is prior to the infusion of non-African cultures such as those of Christianity and Islam. Thus, research on ancient African civilisation in his estimation, suggests that Africans perceive the world differently from imposed cultural values (Ikhane, 2017). Additionally, Innocent Onyewuenyi argues that the dynamism in 'being' accounts also for uniqueness in African epistemology. For him, the African philosophical thought sees 'being' as dynamic; conceiving knowledge or wisdom for Africans as consisting how deep one understands the nature of forces and their interactions (Onyewuenyi, 1991). Innocent Onyewuenyi explains further that this dynamic metaphysics takes into cognisance the idea of hierarchy and the relationship existing between the epistemic subject and object (Onyewuenyi, 1991). Anyanwu buttresses this as self-vivifying or animating the world or mind, so that the soul, spirit or mind of the self is also that of the world (Anyanwu, 1993).

1.4 IDEA OF AN AFRICAN COMMUNITARIAN EPISTEMOLOGY

Martin Kusch opines that communitarian epistemology claims that "communities rather than individuals are the primary bearers of knowledge." (Kusch, 2002) This contrasts the Western individualistic conception of knowledge, in which the individual is the key possessor of knowledge. From Kusch's theorising, Anslem Jimoh insinuates, that African indigenous epistemology as a distinctively epistemic system, considers a social and communitarian epistemology that espouses cultural and situated positions of knowledge firmly established on the communitarian ontological notion of a continuum (Jimoh, 2017). This implies that communities and cultures contribute enormously to the African deposit or wealth of knowledge. Equally, Michael Onyebuchi holds that the idea of a communitarian epistemology, which is specifically African is predicated on the ontological communitarian dimension that characterises the Africans. It explores in his estimation, indigenous ways of knowing to particular traditional Africans, whose primary thrust is specific ways and means by which they arrive at and justify their understanding of reality (Onyebuchi, 2008). Furthermore, African communitarian epistemology must be understood as an African theory of knowledge that explains how knowledge and truth are socially and collectively generated. In this view, individual's knowledge is vindicated in and by the community. This emphasises the dialectics, cooperation, and togetherness which makes knowledge a derivation of chain relationship; and therefore, a holistic and integrative grasp of phenomena. However, this symbiotic connection should not be misinterpreted on the basis that since the society plays an important role in what the individuals know, the individual's rationality

is relegated or subjected to the communitarian enterprise. For if this is the case, then the individual is incapable of reasoning on his own without the community.

Another dimension held by Chemhuru Munamoto is that the nature of African communitarian epistemology is basically constructed on the African understanding of the human person, which permeates African thoughts. Since the human person is closely related to the community, the community becomes the cornerstone in African thoughts system. He further illustrates, that for Africans, the human person is a communal being, highlighted by the concept of *Ubuntu*. Hence, he insists that Africans perceive, interpret, and make meaning out of interactions among several beings in reality (Munamoto, 2018). Because of this interconnectedness experienced between human persons and the community, Munamoto avers that Africans conceive reality as a unitive whole where the experiential, rational, religious, intuitive, symbolic, mythical, and emotional interconnects, to provide an inclusive understanding of phenomena (Munamoto, 2018). This implies that African communitarian epistemology understands reality without limiting itself only to the experiential. Thus, the holistic approach of knowledge through the perspective of communitarian epistemology provides the knower (African) with an integral grasp of reality, which makes a way for theories of justification.

CHAPTER TWO

AFRICAN INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial, indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs) were used by societies in Africa and other parts of the world for various purposes. This largely depended on the needs of the society. The term “indigenous” mean original, first, native to a place or original people to an area. While, the term “knowledge” could be understood as a personal belief that is justified and with the capacity to influence one’s thinking, action and behavior. Munyaradzi Mawere holds that indigenous knowledge systems can be defined as local and original knowledge that is unique to a given culture or society (Mawere, 2011). Therefore, African indigenous epistemology is concerned with identifying the conditions under which Africans are said to know. It is those forms of knowledge that the people of the formerly colonized African countries survived on before the advent of colonialism (Mawere, 2011). Some of these include Taboos and Witchcraft.

2.1. TABOOS AS AN AFRICAN INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGICAL SYSTEM

The tradition of taboos has been a common practice in many African societies. African indigenous epistemology encompasses beliefs, customs, and taboos that guide social behavior and maintain harmony within communities (Emmanuel, 2019). Taboos are prohibitions or restrictions that are deeply embedded in the cultural and spiritual life of African societies. Bozongwana Wallace, in his exploration of *Ndebele Religion and Customs*, emphasizes the functional role of taboos in maintaining social cohesion and moral conduct. He holds that taboos are not merely prohibitive but are instructive; teaching members of the community about appropriate behavior and the consequences of transgressions (Wallace, 1990). He elucidates that Taboos serve as a form of informal education, instilling societal values and norms in individuals from a young age. By adhering to taboos, members of the community affirm their cultural identity and continuity of traditions (Wallace, 1990). The Violation of taboos often results in social sanctions, which reinforce conformity to societal norms.

Equally, Gausset Quentin opines that taboos are not merely arbitrary prohibitions but are based on a deep understanding of the natural and social norms of the community which helps in maintaining social order (Quentin, 2011). He argues that taboos are deeply rooted in the practical and symbolic understanding of the natural and social world. They reflect the community’s collective wisdom that are designed to protect and promote the well-being of its members. Munyaradzi Mawere on his part holds firmly that taboos are both “real” and “false.” False taboos are those which are only meant to keep check on children. These are empty threats to help control child’s behavior. On the other hand, real taboos are those which when violated by any person, young or old, the violator and his/her family suffer serious consequences. If one violates such taboos, he or she will suffer serious consequences. He therefore argues that taboos especially the “real taboos” in African societies should be reinstituted as Indigenous knowledge systems that help to establish a morally sound society, a one characterized by peaceful, environmentally, morally responsible and caring members (Mawere, 2011). They are false because their violation does not result in any consequence. To buttress this point, Maxwell Kadenge in conformity with Munyaradzi Mawere asserts that in traditional African society, taboos serve as codes of conduct and indigenous knowledge systems that help in preserving the natural environment, peace, order and the integrity of

African societal structures (Kadenge, 2010). He underscores that he who violates these taboos suffers serious social consequences. This is even made clearer when he says;

Social consequences brought about by shunning these indigenous knowledge systems have manifested themselves in various forms including the rise in crime rates, inexplicable deaths, misfortunes and diseases, moral decadence, ecosystem/environmental degradation and extinction of some wildlife. This connotes that taboos invoke the community to enjoin respect for sacred things, and even more, the individual to avoid unnecessary contact with the things enshrouded in taboos (Kadenge, 2010).

According to him, taboos are not to be violated by anybody in the community, once it is violated by any individual in the society, no matter who ever, he or she suffers serious societal consequences. To be free from these societal consequences, every African must strive not to violate these taboos.

2.2 WITCHCRAFT AS AN AFRICAN INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGY

In many African cultures, witchcraft is understood as a spiritual skill of being able to carry out certain unfriendly activities in disembodied form. Most Africans have always conceived witchcraft from a negative point of view. Though masked in mystery and with negative connotations in many African cultures, there are a number of epistemological, medicinal and social benefits that witchcraft practice could add to society if the practice is considered an indigenous knowledge.

Different African epistemologists have different ways they see witchcraft. Munyaradzi Mawere defines witchcraft as “A practice that involves the use of potentially harmful medicines, charms, magic and any other supernatural means either to cause some positive effects such as wealth accumulation and social power or negative consequences such as psychological or physical harm” (Mawere, 2011). Munyaradzi Mawere argues in favour of witch-taming, stating that witch taming refers to a situation where witchcraft is captured and adopted, and the indigenous knowledge which has been abused, could be used in manifold ways to support Africa’s human development agenda (Mawere, 2010). It is interesting to note that Munyaradzi Mawere is interested not on the act of the witchcraft but on the knowledge that is used to carry out the act. For example, he is not so interested on the fact that witches can travel round the world by the use of a tin of sardine to do harm, but he is interested in the knowledge that they use to travel round the world. Based on this argument, Munyaradzi Mawere asserts that health professionals, traditional healers and policy planners can draw knowledge from this indigenous knowledge and integrate it with other scientifically generated information to indigenously manufacture curative medicine, herbs and healing practices for the good of the indigenous people (Mawere, 2010). For him, it is this tenet that makes witchcraft qualify as indigenous African knowledge. Equally, Remi Prospero Fonka views witchcraft as inseparable with divination. For him, these are African indigenous knowledge systems that are inseparable. He holds that it is unjust to examine divination and witchcraft as separate concepts or entities because divination as an art to determine witchcraft (Fonka, 2024). For him, Divination and witchcraft embrace varied forms of knowledge like perceptual knowledge, common sense knowledge, advanced age knowledge, inferential knowledge, mystical knowledge, oral tradition, and holistic knowledge, which cannot be separated from each other (Fonka, 2024).

Though these philosophers’ attempt to present witchcraft in a positive sense especially through what Munyaradzi calls Witch taming, there are some writers who have not seen anything positive in witchcraft. Umeh George-Franklin and Ezeaka Felix hold that, a witch is someone who cast spells and performs mystical acts to demonize and hurt people or influence and limit their potential success (Franklin, et.al., 2024). They assert that “the fact that witchcraft is mystical, occultic and secret makes the phenomenon difficult to investigate. It is a nut too hard to crack. Because of its secret nature, it’s not easy to identify the real witch or wizard” (Franklin, et.al., 2024). This clearly contradicts Munyaradzi’s theory of “witch taming” because for Umeh and Ezeaka, it is by its very nature ordained for evil (Franklin, et.al, 2024). If it was for good, it would not be called witchcraft. Edward Uzoma Ezedike on his part makes it even clearer when he says;

It must be stated that a substantial part of the mystery surrounding witches derives from the veil of secrecy behind which they live and practice their art. Consequently, any attempt to understand witchcraft must penetrate this veil of ignorance. To do so require that one must, of necessity, acquire the relevant knowledge about witchcraft and the mode of operation of witches. But how possible is this? (Uzoma, 2024).

For him, it is an impossibility to study witchcraft as Munyaradzi propounded because it is enshrouded in what he calls the veil of secrecy which they live and commit their evil acts. So, for him, to penetrate this veil is practically impossible

Though with this negative view of witchcraft by these philosophers, the fact remains that witchcraft is an indigenous knowledge which been misused in many African communities and thus, connotes a negative observation. If it used for the good of Africans and not to destroy the integrity of Africans, it will help in the sustainable development of many African societies.

2.3 CATEGORIZATION OF AFRICAN INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION

Numerous Eurocentric scholars viewed African Indigenous knowledge systems as being primitive and regressive. In response to these views, it is important to note that African philosophers possess the necessary expertise to engage in discussions about the traditional ways of knowing in Africa. African indigenous epistemology contains four basic ways of knowing. These are divination, revelation, intuition, and reason. These are separated into the categories of supernatural, natural, and paranormal.

2.3.1 THE SUPERNATURAL WAYS OF KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION IN AFRICA

In African epistemological view, the term supernatural is considered a way of knowing the unknown through mystical means, which transcends physical realities. The indigenous supernatural ways of knowing are in two variations namely; divination and revelation. For purposes of clarity, we shall look at the two variations separately.

2.3.1.1 Divination as an African way of Knowledge Acquisition

Divination is a significant aspect of African indigenous epistemology, serving as a means of accessing knowledge and understanding reality through spiritual and metaphysical insights (Mawere, 2011). Although divination practices continue worldwide, little research has been done on this system of knowledge. John Mbiti's observation on this point remains valid when he says "With few exceptions, African systems of divination have not been carefully studied, though diviners are found in almost every community" (Mbiti, 1990). Remi Prospero Fonka defines divination as "a belief in some supernatural influence, where diviners are viewed as encompassing knowledge or the power and ability to know from three principal sources: God, ancestors, and evil spirits" (Fonka, 2024). For him, divination revolves around the practice of interpreting omens, leading to discovery of the will of the gods in natural phenomena and it is central to people's lives in African societies. Equally, Munyaradzi Mawere on his part sees divination as a way of exploring the unknown in order to provoke answers to questions beyond the range of ordinary human understanding (Mawere, 2010). Based on this definition, we can see that diviners are specialists in divination who are able to move from a boundless to a confined realm of existence in their divinatory practices. This movement makes diviners to excel in wisdom and insight, imagination, fluency in language and knowledge of cultural traditions which they use in their divination processes. Subjects of divinatory inquiry are many. Mawere Munyaradzi presents a series of them. For him, they include;

Complex questions about past events, the present and the future, disasters (past and present) whose causes cannot be explained, things hidden from sight or removed in space, proper conduct in critical situations like healing of illness and diseases, religious worships and making choices of persons for particular tasks (Mawere, 2010).

For Mawere Munyaradzi, the diviners in African society are seen to give answers to all questions that are beyond human understanding. They are able to do this because they transcend the boundless and move into the realm of the unknown where they have direct communication with world beyond (Mawere, 2010). Also, Philip M. Peek's view that the study of divination systems must assume a central position in our attempts to better understand African the peoples today. He holds that the information necessary to respond effectively to most of the problems troubling the African society is often through a diviner. That is why divination continues to provide a trusted means of decision making and a basic source of vital knowledge for Africans (Peek, 1991). He therefore defined divination as "a standardized process deriving from a learned discipline based on an extensive body of knowledge" (Peek, 1991). For him, the diviner might not necessarily use this knowledge when interpreting a message but they may instead use a broader range of secret knowledge (Peek, 1991).

2.3.1.2 Revelation and Faith as an African way of Knowledge Acquisition

Revelation and faith are another supernatural way that Africans acquire knowledge. Revelation is a form of supernatural knowledge that involves one being aware of the unknown through dreams or visions from a deity or some sort of supernatural source. In order to gain and recognize this as true knowledge, Munyaradzi Mawere asserts that one must have a strong faith in the revelation. For him, "African traditionalists consider faith as a source of knowledge because they (African traditionalists) believe that if they have faith that certain propositions are true, they will certainly be, and the faithful will then have special knowledge they would not have had if otherwise" (Mawere, 2010). A practical example is Knowledge of medicinal plants which are often revealed to the traditionalist through dreams or through some super natural sources. Munyaradzi laments that this this type of herbal knowledge received during dreams was not accepted unthinkingly but was subjected by the authorities of science for being

unscientific. Therefore, Munyaradzi affirms that it is traditionally believed among African traditionalists that the energy that resides in all creation allows a person to interact with the supernatural world during revelation thereby receiving knowledge of the metaphysical epistemology from the ancestors (Mawere, 2010).

2.4 THE AFRICAN NATURAL WAYS OF KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION

In African traditional society, intuition is considered a natural way of knowledge acquisition. It is rather unfortunate that this source of knowledge acquisition has been claimed by some philosophers and religious people and therefore can have diverse meanings to different people depending on their philosophies. African epistemologists understand intuition as a natural feeling or sign in one's body that enable one to be aware of certain facts, truths or events. There are several forms of intuitions like, self-consciousness, abstract thought and the ability to understand the relationship between thoughts, ideas, and feelings. Intuition is often considered a reliable source of knowledge in African indigenous epistemology. According to Ndubuisi Christian Ani, intuition transcends empirical evidence and logical reasoning, involving a deep, instinctive understanding often linked to spiritual and cultural practices. Also, for him, it is not merely a personal feeling but a collective wisdom passed down through generations. This form of knowledge is highly valued in many African cultures, where it is believed to connect individuals to ancestral wisdom and the spiritual realm (Ani, 2013). This intuitive knowledge, for Africans, is a co-operation of all human faculties and experiences. He asserts;

In African epistemology, intuitive knowledge is a co-operation of all human faculties and experiences, a co-operation that does not just consider one's immediate experience but one that goes beyond that to consider one's experience in its entirety. Thus, at the same time, an African sees, feels, imagines, reasons, thinks and intuit. Everything comes together in a single whole in African thought. Thus, in one act of intuition, one grasps the totality of reality (Mawere, 2010).

Ani here is making the idea of intuitive knowledge very clear. According to him, intuitive knowledge in an African perspective is in a global sense. It is the cooperation of all the senses and experiences which all come together to make a single whole in African thought. So according to him, just in one act of intuition, an African is able to grasp the totality of reality. Munyaradzi further asserts that all these forms of intuition are considered above and beyond the regular type of reasoning as argued by the rationalists and sense experience as perpetuated by empiricists. The best example of knowledge attained through intuition can be the reading of weather. One may say: "I have a feeling that it will rain." Mawere Munyaradzi argues that the implication of such a statement is that there is some sort of special kind of knowledge available to the person through the way he feels (Mawere, 2010). Therefore, to consider such knowledge a guess work or fantasy would be wrong because the claims can pass the traditional analysis of knowledge as justified true belief.

2.4.1 THE PARANORMAL WAY OF KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION

African paranormal is demonstrated in proverbs, idiomatic expressions, riddles, and other critical literary genres. Our focus here is on riddles and proverbs respectively. These will be handled separately paragraphs for more clarification.

2.4.1.1 Riddles as African Indigenous Knowledge

African riddles are clever questions or statements that challenge our thinking. They usually use creative language and often contain hidden meanings. These riddles are a form of oral tradition, which means they are passed down from one generation to another by word of mouth. They are found in many African communities, and each culture has its own unique riddles that reflect its values and experiences. Madonsela Stanley holds that Riddles are puzzles or word-play often with a double meaning or veiled answer. Based on this definition, he holds that riddles involve two main aspects namely, reasoning, particularly inductive reasoning skills as implied by puzzles, and recreation as indicated by play (Madonsela, 2020). African riddles have important functions like socialization and recreation. For him, they play a fundamental role of sharpening one's reasoning skills as well as fostering quick mental flexibility, especially as one grapple with different possibilities in the search for correct answers for riddles. Therefore, African riddles sharpen reasoning skills and enable a person to comprehend and clarify reality. Ishengoma Johnson argues that Riddles play a significant role in connecting people within a community. They are often shared during gatherings, celebrations, and storytelling sessions. When people come together to solve riddles, it creates a sense of belonging and unity. Everyone participates, and solving riddles can be a fun and joyful experience. This social interaction strengthens relationships and helps maintain cultural ties (Ishengoma, 2005). Also, for him, Many African riddles reflect the beliefs and values of a culture. They often teach important moral lessons or highlight aspects of daily life. For example, some riddles might focus on nature, animals, or community life, providing insights into how people interact with their environment and each other. By solving these riddles, individuals gain a better understanding of their cultural identity and heritage (Ishengoma, 2005).

2.4.1.2 Proverbs as an African Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous proverbs are creative expressions using the local language, symbols and reasoning processes. These proverbs encapsulate the wisdom, values, and philosophies of African societies, serving as a means of transmitting knowledge, moral lessons, and cultural identity from one generation to the next (Mawere, 2010). Emmanuel Efem Etta and Francis Ibe Mogu lay more emphasis on this as they hold firmly that African proverbs form the core of African epistemology. This is because African epistemology and proverbs are concerned about creating knowledge for the betterment of human existence. They defined African proverbs as phrases, sayings, sentences, statements or expressions of the folk which contains above all wisdom, truth, morals, experience, lessons and advice concerning life and which has been handed down from generation to generation (Etta, et.al., 2012). Though African proverbs have been criticized in many fields by many Eurocentric scholars, Etta and Mogu still hold that African proverbs have a lot to contribute to African epistemology. For them, African proverbs are vital for understanding African philosophy because they were not written down as such. These proverbs are like ancient wisdom and serve as important references. Just as certificates rank students, knowing and using proverbs shows someone's knowledge in traditional societies. They therefore avow that usage of proverbs in any tribe or society implies the application of the wisdom, truth, morals, experience, lessons and advice, contained in such proverbs to issues that enhance the living condition of human beings (Etta, et.al, 2012).

Additionally, Mbi Jerome in the same light with Munyaradzi understands proverbs as a short popular saying that use metaphoric language to express truths or experiences, and they help to explain and support a community's beliefs, customs, wisdom, morality, and cultural practices (Tosam, 2014). According to him, African proverbs came from the creative and imaginative power of individual thinkers before they were appropriated by the rest of the community. To buttress this view, he uses Kom proverbs as examples to African proverbs. Among other things he says;

There are a number of Kom proverbs which highlight profound communitarian and humanistic character of Kom culture. For example, the proverb: *Ninyiñ nin jofî kisi àviñà*, which may be translated as "self-alienation/alooftness is good only for a witch/wizard (Tosam, 2014).

A basic idea that this proverb underscores is the idea that our humanity is a shared one. For the Kom, a human being, is an interdependent being, and is supposed to live, interact and share with other members of the community. If he or she does not, then his or her behavior falls short of the standard of being human. Mawere Munyaradzi on his part defines proverbs as "symbols from an oral culture which help to understand primal religion, local culture and facilitate development projects. Proverbs are passed through generations within the African communities" (Mawere, 2010). They often convey deep meanings, provide guidance and serve as a form of traditional knowledge. Munyaradzi argues that since proverbs are rooted in history and experiences of African societies, they can be seen as a true reflection of African indigenous knowledge. Munyaradzi therefore laments that while Africans have placed great epistemological value on their proverbs, unfortunately, this was not widely shared by Westerners in the past (Mawere, 2010).

CHAPTER THREE

RELEVANCE OF AFRICAN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE TO CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

So far, we have looked at African Indigenous Knowledge, where we have outlined some aspects of African Indigenous epistemology. Now, we are baffled by an important question: Of what relevance is the African Indigenous Knowledge to the contemporary African society? We shall answer this question by looking at the relevance of African Indigenous Knowledge to the contemporary African society. We shall look at areas like: incorporating indigenous knowledge into education curriculum, Epistemic Decolonization, preservation of indigenous knowledge in the face of globalization, and African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and peace and conflict management.

3.1. INCORPORATING AFRICAN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE INTO THE AFRICAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Integrating African indigenous knowledge into education curriculum can be a good step to promote and preserve the indigenous knowledge systems in the contemporary African society. It allows students to connect with their cultural heritage and understand the world from an African view point. In years past, the academia laid emphasis western knowledge and denigrates local knowledge because of the claim that it is primitive and unscientific. Chika Ezeanya-Esiobu makes this clear when he asserts;

In the academia, indigenous knowledge systems have been dismissed as archaic, old and symptomatic of backwardness. Indigenous people's way of life has in the academia and other research oriented and scholarly circles been tendered as simplistic, naïve and even primitive, "reflective of an earlier, and therefore, inferior stage in human cultural progress" and consequently of no relevance to the highly advanced and technologically oriented needs of modern society (Esiobu, 2019).

According to him, many schools and research centres have considered African Indigenous knowledge as old-fashion and not useful. They have called Indigenous ways of life naïve, and even primitive. The call to incorporate African indigenous knowledge systems into the academia in order to be free from this epistemic colonization and value our own ways of knowledge accusation is urgent. According to Lungile Cindi, integrating African Indigenous Knowledge Systems in educational curriculum will result in benefits for students, since it will make education more relevant and effective, providing students with an education that reflects their experiences, unique viewpoints, language and customs (Cindi, 2021). By incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into the curriculum from an educational perspective, students will be prepared for a greater world. To buttress this point, Hassan Kaya and Yonah N. Seleti assert that:

African students and educators share the opportunity to re-evaluate the inherent hierarchy of knowledge systems. This is because African Indigenous Knowledge Systems were historically denigrated by colonialism and other forms of imperialism. Therefore, their inclusion in the formal education system will enable them to recognise and acknowledge the existence of multiple forms of knowledge rather than one, standard, benchmark system based of western values and ways of knowing (Kaya, et.al, 2013)

According to them, African students and teachers have a chance to rethink the idea that some types of knowledge are more important than others. Including this knowledge in schools will help everyone to see that there are many different kinds of knowledge not just one main type based on Western ideas.

One way to decolonise the African educational system is by creating an educational space to regain and apply African indigenous knowledge in formal education so as to develop a curriculum that responds to local circumstances. As noted by Vuyisile Msila: "When Indigenous Knowledge is integrated into the classrooms, students connect better to material taught. The knowledge can be used for their community's sustainable development" (Msila, 2007). It is of utmost importance that Indigenous Knowledge be recognized and valued at the level of the school curriculum and that it be incorporated into the teaching process.

3.1.1. Epistemic Decolonization

Ovett Nwosimiri sees epistemic decolonization as "A call to dismantle the Western way of thinking so as to re-center the knowledge enterprise onto our geo-historical here and now." (Nwosimiri, 2022). According to him, epistemic decolonization is an appeal to move away from Western ideas and refocus on African ways of knowing. Engaging in African Indigenous knowledge is essential for contemporary African society as it serve as a powerful tool for epistemic decolonization. This approach recognizes and values the indigenous knowledge and practices that have evolved within the African cultures over generations. This is equally crucial because Africans need to recognize the importance of their knowledge systems so as to take on board the epistemology that is African. Hence, engaging in African Indigenous Epistemology will help Africans break the epistemic bondage and think their way out of their current situation troubling the contemporary African society. To this, African epistemology is essential because it will cause a shift from Western epistemology to African epistemology. Bernard Matolino makes this clearer when he says:

Engaging in African indigenous epistemology can help African people understand how they can create new forms of agency through a new form of thinking that will enable them to reinvent themselves in the new global order. It will enable them to think beyond the epistemology imposed on them by their former colonial powers. The process of thinking beyond the epistemology imposed on them, I think, "would involve thinking of our situations as requiring more than theorizing about our colonial histories and memories (Matolino, 2020).

Bernard Matolino makes it very clear here that if we engage in indigenous African epistemology, it will help Africans to be able to think beyond the western epistemology imposed on them by the former colonisers, and be able to embrace the epistemology which is African. African epistemology will help release the minds of Africans in various ways by giving them insight into what it means to be an African (Matolino, 2020). Therefore, engaging in African indigenous epistemology as a form of epistemic decolonization will help Africans to open their minds and embrace their epistemology rather than hang on to the imposed western ways of knowledge accusation.

3.2. PRESERVATION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN THE FACE OF GLOBALIZATION

In a world that is becoming increasingly connected through globalization, the preservation of indigenous knowledge holds a vital place, especially in the context of contemporary Africa. Mawere Munyaradzi opines that Indigenous knowledge has always been used to sustain human life and that of the environment since the beginning of history of humanity on the continent to advance the needs and aspirations of the society in question (Mawere, 2010). Faced with globalization, most of the aspects surrounding indigenous knowledge system in Africa are being challenged by the gradual introduction of western values into the contemporary African society. Julius Nyerere Laments;

At present our pupils learn to despise even their own parents because they are old-fashioned and ignorant; there is nothing in our existing educational system which suggests to the pupil that he [she] can learn important things about farming from his [her] elders. The result is that he [she] absorbs beliefs about witchcraft before he [she] goes to school, but does not learn the properties of local grasses; he [she] absorbs the taboos from his family but does not learn the methods of making nutritious traditional foods. And from school he [she] acquires knowledge unrelated to agricultural life. He [she] gets the worst of both systems! (Nyerere, 1968).

Nyerere recognized the fast-growing rate of globalization especially in African education system, which has negatively affected the African children. For him, there is the need to integrate indigenous knowledge into education so as to preserve the African indigenous knowledge in a globalized world.

In today's globalized world, the rich African Indigenous knowledge is at risk of being overshadowed by foreign influences, technologies, and lifestyles. Preserving African indigenous knowledge is crucial for keeping Africa's identity and culture alive. This is in accord with Kwasi Wiredu who stated it very clearly that "In the face of global changes brought about by science and technology, Africans can still eat their cake and have it, through the maintenance of their traditional and communal virtue" (Wiredu, 2007). Thus, Preserving African indigenous knowledge in the face of globalization is about building a future that values diversity and sustainability. By protecting this treasure of wisdom, African societies can maintain their unique identity while contributing to the broader global community. It is a shared responsibility to ensure that this knowledge is not lost but continues to inspire future generations.

3.4. AFRICAN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS; PEACE AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

African indigenous knowledge systems play a significant role in peace and conflict management in contemporary African society. These systems are rooted in traditional practices, values, and wisdom passed down through generations. According to Valentine Ehichioya Obinyan and Faith Gloria Ehimua, indigenous African knowledge systems are designed to focus on building peace. They aim to bring people back together, improve relationships, and make sure everyone lives in harmony. These systems work to fix problems, settle disagreements, and end conflicts, whether it is between family members, in the community, or even with people from outside the community. The goal is to bring balance and ensure peace for everyone involved (Obinyan, et.al, 2017). This explains why in traditional African society, disputes are often resolved in public gatherings, where community members can witness and contribute to the process. This approach helps to educate younger generations about the importance of peaceful conflict resolution and the cultural practices that support it.

Moreover, one key aspect of indigenous knowledge in dispute resolution is the role of elders and community leaders. These respected individuals act as mediators, using their experiences and knowledge of cultural values to guide the process. They encourage open dialogue, where all parties involved can share their perspectives. This is clearer when Adebowale J. Ademowo and Abubakar N. Ahmad asserts;

African indigenous knowledge systems help in conflict resolution, which is the revamping of the positive energy among members involved such as; individuals, families and communities. Hence the role of chiefs, elders, family heads, and others is not only to resolve conflicts but also to anticipate and stop conflicts in the community (Ademowo, et.al, 2017).

Thus, this implies that Chiefs, elders, family leaders, and others in the community play a big part in the process of conflict resolution. This approach fosters understanding and helps to resolve disputes in a way that restores relationships rather than creating divisions.

3.5. HARNESSING AFRICAN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

According to Chika Ezeanya-Esiobu, indigenous knowledge systems, a product of the environment, and which ideally forms the foundation for constructing formal education systems, has been consistently and intentionally relegated to an inferior position

(Esiobu, 2019). This relegation of Africa's indigenous knowledge system needs some harnessing in order to sustain development in Africa. Language expressions, systems of belief, and means of livelihood of a people give meaning to their life; distinguishing them from other groups, thereby constituting indigenous knowledge practice for them. Though this is often termed barbaric and uncivilized, and thus, severally proclaimed irrational, there is still need to harness it for the better development of Africa in general and Cameroon in particular.

Equally, African scholarship must disengage from entirely or largely appealing to western methodologies for validation as aforementioned. This aimed at preventing distortion of plausible systems of knowledge, which indigenous populations have derived from, and continue to find useful in unveiling realities. This resonates with G. Emeagwali and G. S. Dei's contending that: "scholarship has its foundation of the societal-cultural knowledge system, which makes it imperative that academic scholarship recognize local cultural ways of knowing as legitimate sources of knowledge" (Emeagwali-G et.al, 2014). Thus, officially harnessing indigenous knowledge systems, gives it that dignity and guarantees sustainable development in African societies. Consequently, this leads them, to insinuate that:

Ancient African civilizations bore sophisticated knowledge systems deeply embedded in local culture and social politics... Such knowledge has adapted to the times to serve pressing social issues and challenges. Such knowledge has not remained static, neither has it been confined to the shores of the African continent (Emeagwali-G et.al, 2014).

The above explains that African indigenous epistemology constitutes a distinctively African epistemic system, a social, and communitarian epistemology that espouses cultural and situated notion of knowledge. Hence, having a mastery of African indigenous knowledge, rooted in social and cultural realities facilitates the harnessing of integral systems that lead to sustainable development.

CHAPTER FOUR

AFRICAN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (AIKSS) FOR PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

INTRODUCTION

African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKSs) promote peace and conflict management through community-driven processes focused on restorative justice, dialogue, and reconciliation. These systems emphasize Ubuntu, or communal interdependence, and involve community participation to restore harmony, contrasting with Western models that focus on retribution. Key aspects of promoting peace include: Truth-telling, apology, forgiveness, and using customary laws and rituals to address conflicts, leading to more accessible, time-efficient, and culturally relevant solutions that foster peaceful coexistence.

In the area of Restorative Justice, AIKSs prioritize restoring relationships and community well-being, involving victims, offenders, and the community in healing processes. For Communalism and Interdependence (Ubuntu), the principle of Ubuntu fosters compassion, fellowship, and interdependence, encouraging people to view themselves as interconnected and promoting social solidarity. Regarding, sincere dialogue and truth-telling, emphasis is placed on open communication, dialogue, and allowing parties to express their truths to resolve disputes constructively. By way of apology and Forgiveness, these elements are crucial for de-escalating conflicts and achieving reconciliation, helping to mend relationships and promote peaceful co-existence. In terms of flexibility and adaptability, indigenous knowledge offers a flexible repertoire of ideas and actions that communities draw upon dynamically to respond to specific problems.

4.1. INDIGENOUS PEACE PRACTICES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE BUILDING IN AFRICA

Generally, peace building as a systematic way of restoring peace in places or countries that once experience peace and harmony but as result of unmet needs of interests, scarcity of resources, misinformation of information, values, ideologies and culture, in now in conflict are experiencing conflict (Ishola, 2022). The indigenous Africans believe that conflict is part of human's life. They hold conflict being part of man living in a community, thus, Africans developed various mechanisms of dealing with conflict either in preventing or resolving entrench in the traditional management of conflict and peace building. Fidelis Sibanda, a Zimbabwean scholar presents a wise saying called *swallow a stone* as one of the cultural strategies for peace and conflict management used by the ethnic groups in Zimbabwe (Sibanda, 2018). Ordinarily, one cannot swallow a stone but the saying is metaphorically meant to indicate that one or both conflicting parties should just swallow the bitter pill by forgiving and forgetting, and the relationship continues. The instinct and aggressive pronoun 'I' in every individual brings about interpersonal or even

group conflict (Ishola, 2022). The indigenous approach of peace practices is emphasized in the *Ubuntu*; a traditional conflict mechanism is a pointer to the fact Africans had developed a mechanism for conflict management and peace building. Desmond Tutu for example, emphasized that, a person with *Ubuntu* spirit is the one who is open and live peacefully with others and does not feel threatened when others achieved successes because, he or she recognizes that they belong to a greater whole (Tutu, 1999). The Yoruba people of Nigeria have the saying that “friends don’t fight but quarrel” that is, disagree to agree. Also, is the parance that for the people to be in love of one and another is better still than to be in rancor and fear of each other (Ishola, 2022). The above examples and proverbs/wise sayings few as show that African cultures had already developed mechanisms, principles or approaches that entrench peace practices among the indigenous people prior to the western approaches.

In his treatise on Indigenous approaches to conflict resolution and reconciliation among the pastoral societies in Eastern Africa, J. Osamba reported that, when there was conflict among the Twakana people of Eastern Africa, the elders would call a traditional peace conference to resolve the problem. He expresses this in the following words:

The whole community would gather with one common objective- to restore the broken relationship and invigorate the process of healing, such a meeting would be held in a ‘carnival’ atmosphere, punctuated with stories, songs, dance, proverbs and other peculiarities of the communities or people. The name of God and the spirits would be invoked at the meeting. A bull would be slaughtered, its blood collected and sprinkled into the air as a way of binding the community to the peace covenant. As a gesture of reconciliation, the whole group would eat the meat together. Thereafter, feasting, singing, dancing and celebration would continue for several days. The whole society would thus be part of the agreement and anybody that violated it could suffer some calamity (Osamba, 2001).

These peace-building strategies through the leaders, elders and the community members are throughout in Africa, are respected, recognized and are all keyed into by every member of the community because of the authority they command. Their authority is derived from the position they held in the community (Ishola, 2022).

It is important to underline that conflict resolution and peace building in the indigenous Africa community is a mechanism that is effective, reliable and grudge free readily. It is readily acceptable by conflicting parties. The traditional Africans have confidence in the panel meant to resolve conflict. These include elders, chiefs, and priest. The conflicting parties are expected to submit to the indigenous constituted authorities (Ajayi and Buhari, 2014).

4.2. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND PEACE PRACTICE STRATEGIES

Conflict management and peace practices in traditional African societies include truth, communal dialogue, compliance to the ruling, mediation and negotiation led by elders, restorative justice, oath-taking, and rituals of reconciliation like cleansing ceremonies, all emphasizing collective responsibility, forgiveness, empathy, and power-sharing to restore social harmony and unity rather than punishment.

The first and most important strategy is truth. The conflicting parties know that there will be no partiality in judging and the elders themselves understood the wrath of ancestral forces associated with partiality. Similarly, the conflicting parties in indigenous peace practice understand the fact that the transgressors among them will face serious sanction should they be untruthful. Sanctions were imposed on families and or individuals who were seen to have contradicted the customs and traditions of the people in order to deter others from engaging in behaviours that would engender conflict. There are total compliance and enforcement of the tribunal’s final pronouncement. *Ubuntu*- an indigenous peace practice approach common among the people of South Africa is another important strategy. The slogan which means ‘A person is a person through other person’, and ‘I am because we are, we are because I am’ (Issifu, 2015). *Ubuntu* spirit is the one noted for being hospitable, friendly, generous, compassionate, and caring for his fellow human being (Mokgoro, 1997). This is in line with the submission made by John Mbiti, that the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes this existence to the other people including those of the past generation and his contemporaries. He is simply part of whole. The community must therefore make, create, or produce the individual, for the individual can depend in the cooperate group (Omona, 2020). Whatever happens to the individual happens to whole group (Mbiti, 2008).

In addition, there were instituted celebrations of festivals during which the virtues of peace, harmonious living, honesty etc. were extolled in songs. Rituals and scarifies were performed to the village deities and ancestors for peace, protection, good works, fertility (Ajakor, et.al, 2019).

In most culture in African, there are mechanisms, principles or approaches inform of oral culture of proverbs and wise saying, or statements that entrench peace practices among the indigenous people that the west approaches have eroded that prevent conflicts and at the same time sustain the existing peace within the community members.

The above arguments point to the fact that traditional conflict resolution and peace building techniques such as mediation, adjudication, reconciliation, and negotiation as well as cross examination which were employed by Africans in the past, offer great prospects for peaceful co-existence and harmonious relationships in post-conflict periods than the modern method of litigation settlements in law courts.

4.3. MAJOR TECHNIQUES IN INDIGENOUS PEACE PRACTICE PROCESSES IN AFRICA

Just as peace is fundamental to human existence so is conflict unavoidable and inevitable in human's pace. Mindful of the importance of peace and the inevitability of conflict in human society, the Africans had developed indigenous and well-fixed peace practiced on conflict resolution and peace-building long before the emergence of western strategy of peace pedagogies. Utim and Obio reported that the African societies had a well-organized system and institution of governance that enhanced stability and cohesion for the larger African communities (Utin, 2018). In fact, they were once in charge of their own affairs before the coming of European imperialists who took over their ways of life and changed their cultural endowment consciously and uncensoriously (Ajakor, et.al, 2019). Below are some of the techniques in peace processes and conflict resolutions found in the African indigenous knowledge systems.

4.3.1. The Story Telling and Inculcation of Myths

Story telling is a common knowledge system in Africa and constitute one of the techniques and plays a key role in most indigenous conflict resolution and peace building in Africa. The use of proverbs, idioms, folktales and songs to describe the nature of the world and how to live harmoniously was a way of preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in Africa. Again, the relevant story to the conflict will be told to the conflicting parties, with the intention to restore hope and harmony among them. Through the story telling, the individual will immediately begin to learn the gravity of the crime committed and apologized to the other party and the relationship continues (Ishola, 2022). Story telling might look simplistic but it worked so effectively. A story could just be a similar conflict that had taken place, a story about the history of the conflict (if it involves a group of persons or an entire community).

4.3.2. Active Participation of Conflicting Parties and Traditional Institutions in Conflict Monitoring

Tajudeen Odebode Ishola underscores that in conflict resolution and peace building the conflicting parties or disputants were made to actively participate or be involved in the peace process (Ishola, 2022). They will appear in front of such institutions as the family, council of elders, clan, female born of a village charged with the task of conflict monitoring and prevention (Ajakor, et.al, 2019). The essence of the coming together of the community panel/tribunal (elders, leaders and other community stakeholders) is to bring about the restorative justices, togetherness, mutual relationships and co-existence communalities. This will then promote the spirit of pardon, forgiveness, fairness, and openness. The involvement of parties helped to appropriate various ways of addressing the harm and criminality committed against each other and the main causes of the conflict. This will afford the elders to rebuild the relationships for the mutual co-existence of the community (Issifu, 2014:68).

4.3.3. Mutual Respect and Oath Taking

The conflicting parties or disputants are made to understand by way of community panel that the individual right and respect need to be observed. Thus, the indigenous peace practices identify the right and respect of each and individual conflicting parties (Ishola, 2022). They were equally to take oath, meant to establish truth and guilt and discourage dishonest attitude and evil actions in society (Oguntomisin 2004). Conflicting parties were always warned before taking oath on the consequence of doing so on falsehood in order to avoid shame, or even death (Oguntomisin 2004). On the most part, those who consciously engage in falsehood suffered the wrath of the good. In this way, conflicting parties were to do away with interaction and actions that could jeopardize the efforts of the community leaders and elders in peace practice efforts.

4.3.4. Joint Problem-Solving Strategy

Both the community elders, leaders, title hold individual of the community and the relevant stakeholders in the community panels is on restitution not retribution, restoration of friendliness not finding fault, truth saying not bias, dialogue and at times blame not condemnation. It is also on an apology-forgiveness rather than zero sum game, on accommodation not avoidance and on cooperativeness not assertiveness. In indigenous peace practices of joint problem solving, the underline efforts are win-win for the community conflicting parties (Ishola, 2022).

4.3.5. Empowerment and Use of Sanctions

In African indigenous peace building and conflict management systems, one of the reasons for peace practices is to enable the parties involved in a conflict to have a greater influence over the peace initiative process. For this reason, the community panel will let them understand the reasons for the gathering, namely, to restore peace. Therefore, peace for the conflicting parties will mean peace for the community. Thus, each party will be empowered to bring forth that which will help them attain peace amongst them and the community (Ishola, 2022). Conversely, sanctions were often imposed on individuals seen to have contradicted the customs and traditions of the people in order to deter others from engaging in behaviours that would engender conflict (Ajakor, et.al, 2019).

4.3.6. Ritual Treaties and Use of Marriages

Another important element of conflict management and peace practice strategies within the African indigenous systems ritual treaties and use of marriages. Rituals treaties were used to remove fear, and engender trust, blind to avoid war between persons, families and villages. Such treaties and covenants involve powerful deities, which makes it not easy to violate the covenant as violation would bring far reaching consequences (Nwolise 2005).

In the same vein, marriages especially intertribal marriages were one of the means to the prevention, management and resolution of conflict prior to slave trade, colonialism and religion. Marriages reduced intergroup wars as children who possessed mixed blood were used to prevent manage and resolve conflict. Most of those marriages were not just intratribal but intertribal and most times involve the royalty (Ajakor, et.al, 2019).

4.4. AFRICAN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR THE CAMEROON ANGLOPHONE CRISIS

Inspired by the indigenous conflict resolution in Rwanda and South Africa which primarily involves two community-based systems, we herein propose the African indigenous knowledge systems for an end to the Cameroon anglophone crisis and peace building: The indigenous conflict resolution in Rwanda involves the Gacaca courts and the Abunja mediation. Gacaca courts which historically addressed land disputes and other community issues, and the Abunzi mediation committees, which operate as a formal part of the justice system to resolve civil disputes through a restorative approach helped calm the situation in Rwanda. Both systems emphasize restorative justice and community-based solutions, aiming to foster peace, forgiveness, and restitution, though Abunzi is more closely tied to the state's justice need

Like Rwanda, indigenous conflict resolution in South Africa is characterized by its community-centered, oral, and flexible nature, often involving elders and traditional leaders mediating disputes to restore social harmony rather than assign blame to conflicting parties. The important models include mediation, focused on dialogue, mutual understanding, and application of community values like *Ubuntu*, which emphasizes interconnectedness and forgiveness.

4.4.1. An Overview of the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis

What is going on in the English-speaking part of Cameroon, known as the Anglophone Crisis is well captured by a quote from Selena Gould: "The genocide that everyone should have seen coming: How Cameroon anglophone crisis extends colonial forces of domination and consent." Citing an anonymous anglophone lady she writes: "*They burned the houses, raped women and executed people at random. Those who had the chance to flee are hiding in the jungle; we can't tell how many were killed...many. This is a genocide*" (Gould 2019). Drawing from the above quotation, Ebune Raphael in his Doctoral Thesis on: *Understanding the slogan cam-no-go in the light of the anglophone crisis*, writes:

Who doesn't remember that prior to 2016, Cameroon was considered a paradise of peace amongst the turmoil countries in Sub Sahara Central African? Who has not read the United Nation crisis report which says that 1.3 million persons especially from the Anglophone regions of Cameroon need aid, who has not heard that over 437,500 people are internally displaced (Journal du Cameroon, 2019) and over 2000 killed (Aljeera 2018) and many lives affected, all because of what is known as the Anglophone Crisis? Who doesn't hear every day on social media that there is persistent exchange of gunshots between the secessionist fighters and government military in English Cameroon? Who has not heard about the imprisonment of anglophone activists, destruction of Cameroon economy, school boycott in English Cameroon? Who has not heard about lockdowns and ghost towns and human rights abuses in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon? Who is unfamiliar with wanton arrests and killings in the Anglophone regions and displacement of thousands of persons even as this

research is being carried out? All because of the Anglophone Crisis - the quest for Anglophone autonomy (Ebune, 2023).

The Anglophone Crisis also known as Ambazonia War of independence or the civil war in Cameroon is an ongoing conflict in the Northwest and Southwest regions which began following the brutal suppression of the 2016-2017 protests of teachers, lawyers, students and later the anglophone populace to end the marginalization and *Frenchification* of Anglophone Cameroon (Ngoh 2004).

4.4.3. Definition and Causes of the Anglophone Crisis

We recall that the anglophone crisis is the consequence of the anglophone problem, thus the remote causes of the Anglophone problem are also the remote causes of Anglophone crisis. Before delving into the causes of the anglophone crisis, let us attempt a definition of the anglophone problem. The Cameroon Anglophone Problem according Victor Julius Ngoh is the desire of the inhabitants of former British Southern Cameroon; present-day Northwest and Southwest Regions to assert their identity on an equal basis with the Francophone, in the political, economic, social, and the cultural life of the Cameroon nation, stemming from the inability of the successive governments of Cameroon to adequately implement what John Ngu Foncha and Ahmadou Ahidjo expressively stated at the Fouban Conference in July 1961 (Ngoh 2004). Looking at the Cameroon Anglophone Problem critically George Ngwane says: “...*what we of the West Cameroon generation regard as Anglophone Problem is the violation of article 47 of the 1961 federal constitution which dismantled the federal structure of East and West Cameroons* (Wanaku 2017). Nicolas Awasom on his part states:

My argument is straightforward. The Anglophone problem yesterday and today is a problem of upholding the statehood of the people of the former British Southern Cameroons. It is a statehood problem dramatized by the planned and systematic deconstruction of the Anglophone nation-state that merged with La Republique du Cameroun in 1961 (Awasom 2020:273).¹

Although some historians trace the cause of the problem from German annexation and later British and French colonization of Cameroon, recent political analysts and sociologists trace its origin from 1961 ‘when political élites of two territories with different colonial legacies, one French and the other British agreed on the formation of a federal state (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997:220). Contrary to expectations, this did not provide for equal partnership of both parties, let alone for preservation of the cultural heritage and identity of each, but turned out to be merely a transitory phase to the total integration of the anglophone territory into a strongly centralized, unitary state. Gradually, this created an anglophone consciousness; the feeling of being marginalized, exploited and assimilated by Francophone-dominated government of Cameroon (Konings and Nyamnjoh 2003).

Again, looking at the outcome of the 1961 reunification with French Cameroon, the participants at the All-Anglophone Conference in Buea in the 1990s lament:

We have been disenfranchised, marginalized, and treated with suspicion. Our interests have been disregarded. Our participation in national life has been limited to non-essential functions. Our natural resources have been ruthlessly exploited without any benefit accruing to our territory or its people. The development of our territory has been negligible and confined to areas that directly or indirectly benefit Francophones. Through maneuvers and manipulations, we have been reduced from partners of equal status in the Union to the status of a subjugated people (Fonchingong 2013:226; AAC, 1993).

To say that these feelings started in 2016 with the anglophone crisis would be to paint the Anglophone Cameroonians as people who act without thinking. The quest for Anglophone self-determination is the result of accumulated instances of continuous manifestation of attempts to erase the Anglophone colonial language and culture in Cameroon (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997:207–29).

¹ Awason dismisses all arguments that suggest that the Anglophone problem is a linguistic minority problem; a problem of marginalization and the feeling of assimilation by the dominant Francophone culture. He goes on to say some iconic Francophone intellectuals simply dismiss the Anglophone problem as non-existent. Daniel Abwa (191–219) reduces it to a quarrel between individuals. Achille Mbembe (Le Monde, 7 May; 2005) argues that the problem is linked to the totalitarian structure of the post-colonial state and the Anglophones cannot use Anglo-Saxon cultural yardsticks to define themselves because they are not British. A casual look at the kernel and colour of the Anglophone problem would give one the impression that it is apparently not fixed and is constructed within a specific historical bracket. It is therefore too fluid to be time relevant. Within the apparent kaleidoscopic nature and fluidity of the Anglophone problem is a consistency of its precise nature from 1961 to date that can be marketed to interested stakeholders

Summarily therefore, the quest for Anglophone autonomy/self-determination or anglophone statehood being the result of accumulated instances of continuous manifestation of attempts to erase the anglophone colonial language and culture in Cameroon (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997:20729) is the root of the anglophone crisis. Thus, the causes of the crisis revolve around the following: failed form of the federal system, failure of anglophone political elite to form a common front for the destiny of Southern Cameroons, contested state structures, political and social inequalities, marginalization and assimilation, economically inequality.

4.5. APPLICATION OF AFRICAN INDIGENOUS CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND PEACE BUILDING TO THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS

We indicated earlier that traditional societies in Africa are reputed to hold secrets of peacemaking rooted in their culture (indigenous knowledge systems), formed from centuries of customary practices before the advent and disruption by colonization. Generally, conflict resolution and peace building models will include mediation; adjudication; diplomacy, among others (Ben-Mensah, 2004; Ajayi & Buhari, 2014).

Proposing African indigenous systems for conflict management and peace building in the case of the Anglophone crisis is seen important for a number of reasons. While AIKSs are restorative, focusing on healing and reintegration, the western models currently in place often emphasize retribution, blame, and punishment. Concerning community participation, indigenous mechanisms are often more participatory, allowing for genuine community involvement in the resolution process. For, accessibility and Efficiency, Indigenous Knowledge systems are generally more accessible, time-efficient, and resource-friendly than formal state justice systems. The benefits and applications are seen in fostering peace and harmony: By addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting communal understanding, AIKSs help build and maintain peace within communities. Moreover, they lead to cultural preservation, in that they provide a link between ancestral knowledge and wisdom and they help to preserve the cultural heritage of communities. Supporting and re-empowering these traditional mechanisms helps communities regain self-determination and dignity. They are also supplementary to current normal state systems, as indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms can serve as a supplementary and culturally appropriate alternative to state-based or international justice systems.

4.5.1. Mediation.

Mediation is a structured and interactive process involving a third party who assists the disputing parties in resolving their conflict through means of effective communication and convincing appeasement tools and techniques (Bercovitch, et.al, 1996). Mediation ranks as the most popular dispute settling and peace building tool in traditional Africa. The administrators who constitute mediation are usually noble persons (lineage title holders, hereditary elders, priests, traditional warrior chiefs, other elders and leaders or noble persons, in short community stakeholders) known for their wisdom, skills, and trustworthiness in their official spheres or private relations. They are people who normally enjoy excellent reputation within their communities and have the capability to persuade conflicting parties or individuals to attend hearings. Also, known to have excelled in mediation, negotiation, persuasion, conciliation, and advice in conflicts outside of their own kindred or communities. The reason for mediation in African indigenous system is that, it normally avoids explicit parade of power, win-lose mindset, social blemishes, and acrimony that are normally associated with adjudication (Olowu, 2017). Many Cameroonians are convinced that the anglophone crisis would have long come to an end should the government of Cameroon and anglophone leaders have adopted the African indigenous system of mediation by bringing on board reputed individuals (academicians, traditional and religious leaders) and international mediators well vest with the history of Cameroon and who have a sense of justice and fairness and known to have succeeded in other conflict countries or situations. In fact, it was hoped that the Switzerland, Canadian and even the United Nations led mediation or any other credible mediation would have yielded fruits should they have been given a change. Jude Mubah writes the effort of the international bodies especially the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs to mediate the anglophone crisis in the following words:

Although known for its neutrality in global affairs, Switzerland has engaged in a mediation process to end the conflict. In collaboration with the Humanitarian Dialogue (a Swiss NGO), the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs has held several meetings with Cameroon's separatist leaders since 2019. Swiss officials have also traveled to the country, meeting with Cameroon government officials and civil society actors to better understand the dynamics of the conflict. In March 2019, for example, the Swiss president traveled to Cameroon and proposed an initiative to serve as mediator in a bid to end the conflict through an inclusive negotiation process. However, President Biya's reaction was ambiguous. While the United Nations and the United States backed the Swiss-led process, the Cameroon government only implicitly committed to the initiative. This year, President Paul Biya officially suspended its participation in the Swiss mediation effort out of distrust, instead inviting Switzerland

and interested stakeholders to support Cameroon in implementing the resolutions of the largely ineffectual 2019 National Dialogue (Mutah, 2019).

Although the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) clarified its role as mediator in a communiqué on the 27th of June, 2019, stating that it had been “mandated by a majority of the parties to facilitate an inclusive negotiation process” the sudden withdrawal of Paul Biya from the Swiss mediation showed that the government prioritized war and to seek military victory over a negotiated settlement (Mutah, 2019). A recurrent question and frustration raised by many about the Swiss facilitation read thus: ‘Why did the Cameroonian government say yes, if they weren’t going to cooperate? (Interview INGO official, Buea, 2021 & 2022).

Again, on January 30, 2023, Canada’s Foreign Affairs Minister, Melanie Joly, issued an announcement on its role as mediator in a peace process aimed at resolving the ongoing crisis in the Northwest and Southwest Regions, and noted that three pre-talks had already have taken place in Ontario and Quebec to that effect. This move was endorsed by the United States and United Kingdom governments and Cameroonians were very hopeful about this new development. Many analysts opined that the Canadian led peace talks succeeded in bringing more momentum than earlier efforts by Switzerland. However, the government of Cameroon denied claims of entrusting any foreign country with the role of mediator. Anglophone armed separatists responded to the government’s statement with renewed campaigns for violence and attacks on government forces in English speaking regions (Kinkoh & Begealawuh, 2023).

The truth is that African Indigenous conflict management and peace building system as seen already insist that disputants seek mediation because it is considered flexible and adaptable. Mediation helps to achieve a settlement through negotiation, conciliation, persuasion, inducement, and compromise. Mediation in conflict is advocated because disputants usually look for a more congenial and less adversarial conflict settlement to continue to live together amicably (Ben-Mensah, 2004). It is usually private, non-compelling and confidential. Thus, for an end to the Cameroon anglophone crisis, mediation (National and international) with credible people and institutions is absolutely necessary.

4.5.2. Active Participation of Conflicting Parties (Inclusion)

Tajudeen Odebode Ishola writing about African system of conflict resolution and peace building underscores that parties or disputants are made to actively participate or involve in the peace process. The reason being to bring about restorative justice, togetherness, mutual relationships and peaceful co-existence (Ishola, 2022). Active participation is meant also to promote the spirit of pardon, forgiveness, fairness, and openness. For example, to bring an end to apartheid policy in South Africa, the government had to release from prison Nelson Mandela and other members of the African National Congress (ANC), brought them on the dialogue table. To this effect, Tajudeen Odebode Ishola writes:

The first significant steps towards formal negotiations took place in February 1990 when in his speech at the opening of Parliament, de Klerk announced the unbanning of the ANC and other banned organizations and the release of ANC leader Nelson Mandela after twenty-seven years in prison. Mandela proceeded on an African tour, meeting supporters and politicians in Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Libya, and Algeria (Ishola, 2022).

In recent time, Daniel Chapo president of Mozambique standing before an auditorium of delegates, government ministers and opposition figures to declare “the start of a path in which Mozambique looks at itself in the mirror, listens to itself, and projects its future with the strength of its diversity” said: “*All voices count, all hands help to build, and all dreams have their place.*” Chapo, told the representatives of different political parties, including Venancio Mondlane, who was a leading figure in the post-election protests that “Not a single Mozambican is excluded” (Chapo, 2025).

With regard to the anglophone crisis, it is true that while Cameroon enjoyed support from African countries and no country has openly supported the Ambazonian independence movements, many countries however, have put pressure on Cameroon to talk with the separatists (Searcey, 2018).

The Head of State, President Paul Biya on 10th September 2019 announced the holding of a Major National Dialogue on the situation in the North West and South West Regions. The Cameroon government was praised for the move but critics opined that the dialogue was only a three-week interval between the dialogue’s announcement and its start. This, it was underlined, did not give enough time for pre-dialogue consultations and preparations required for the process to be successful. The Cameroonian dialogue suffered from the absence of key separatists, federalists, activists and opposition figures vital stakeholders in the Anglophone Crisis. Separatist leaders boycotted the dialogue process, refusing to participate in any deliberations or commit to its outcomes. The lack of trust in government’s intentions and concerns for security and safety led to separatists and federalists

alike declining invitations to participate in the week-long talks (African news, 2019, Cameroon Intelligence Report, 2019, Hansrod, 2019).

Chris Begealawuh underscores that Cameroon's national dialogue failed to incorporate diverse views or address the root causes of the conflict. The government meticulously avoided discussions around federalism or separation. Efforts to persuade the government to conduct the dialogue on neutral territory with third-party mediation as a way of fostering greater inclusion were rejected. As a result, the dialogue served merely as a smokescreen for international observers, with no genuine intention of finding a lasting solution (Begealawuh, 2026).

4.5.3. Truth and Reconciliation

We indicated earlier that story telling is one of the common knowledge systems in Africa and constitute a very important technique in indigenous conflict resolution and peace building. Story telling is about the truth told in proverbs, idioms, folktales and songs to describe the nature, history, causes and consequences of the conflict. The indigenous Africans believe in telling the truth for a lasting peace and reconciliation. During the conflict resolution and peace building process disputants are made to take oath, meant to establish truth and to discourage dishonesty (Oguntomisin, 2004). Worthy of note is the fact that conflicting parties are always warned before taking oath on the consequence of doing so on falsehood.

Although the concept of truth and reconciliation has a very recent history, it is an adaptation of the story telling and oath taking conflict and peace building technique. Talking about truth and reconciliation for conflict resolution and peace building a shot from the indigenous system, Kisiangani Emmanuel writes:

It has particularly been regarded as a remarkable and influential instrument for transitional justice especially where new and perceived democratic regimes take over leadership from previously authoritarian systems. Truth Commissions have mostly been pursued as a basis for national reconciliation and regarded as an alternative to the western politics and technique of vengeance and total retribution (Kisiangani, 2004).

Both South Africa and Kenya countries which experienced conflict and gross human rights violations though in varying degrees engaged the idea of truth and reconciliation. South Africa engaged the idea of truth and reconciliation after its transition from apartheid to democracy in 1994, while the new government in Kenya introduced the same thought after the electoral victory in 2002. Despite criticisms from some quarters the system has proven to have worked in both countries and other African countries.

For an end to the anglophone crisis, the researcher underscores that the history of the country must be told truthfully and objectively, especially how the French and English Cameroons came together after independence to form a single state. The truth about the causes of the crisis should be laid bare. Conflicting parties (Cameroon government and pro-independence activists must commit to speak the truth, vogue for peace and reconciliation. Thus, the need for truth and reconciliation commission involving both parties and mediators. Tajudeen Odebode Ishola talking about adding value to the truth and reconciliation system of conflict resolution encourages the integration of indigenous approaches to conflict resolution and peace practices by African governments in the following words:

The governments in African countries should promote integration of indigenous approaches of peace practices through the establishment of an independent and vibrant ministry of culture and peace development that will facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties in each country and regions of Africa (Ishola, 2022).

It must be mentioned here that in recent time, indigenous approaches to conflict resolution and peace building have mostly been implored in conflict regions as the basis for national reconciliation and regarded as alternative to politics of vengeance and total retribution (Kisiangani, 2004). They are philosophically guided by the need to integrate emotional and substantive concerns in the process of building sustainable peace. They also underline the essential for creating dynamic and conflict responsive mechanisms that respond to the subjective realities shaping people's needs. Seen as mechanisms for peace building, indigenous approaches transcend the tradition of signing peace agreements and embrace an innovative way for social reconstruction.

4.5. INDIGENOUS DISPUTE RESOLUTION: GACACA COURTS SYSTEM AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT.

When we think about conflict resolution today, what immediately comes to mind is the Western system; with police, courtrooms, lawyers, and judges, that is, the United Nations and Western Mediation. However, across the African continent, communities have long had their own ways of settling disputes, that don't involve guns, police sirens, or endless court appeals (Malan, 2005). These indeed are indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms that have played a crucial role in maintaining peace and harmony for centuries in Africa. The indigenous methods prioritize reconciliation, dialogue, and restoration, and they are built on the values, beliefs, and structures of traditional African societies (Ugorji, 2019). In a world where formal legal systems are often expensive,

slow, and disconnected from cultural realities, traditional systems offer grounded and often quicker alternatives as seen in the case of Rwanda.

Confronted with the challenges of conflict resolution and peace building, the Rwandan government and its citizens and members of the Pan African wave thought that it was better to return to their tradition to explore and invigorate the conflict resolution and peace building system and process their ancestors used to resolve conflicts in their various communities. This was the beginning of the process that led to the creation of Gacaca courts system in Rwanda (Ugorji, 2019). Thus, they adopted the Gacaca courts approach, which is “a traditional Rwandan method of conflict resolution used to settle land-based disputes, property damage, marital and inheritance rights issues, at indigenous level” (Malan, 2005).

By way of an elaborate definition, Gacaca Courts were a community-based justice system established in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide, which claimed the lives of approximately 1000,000 people, primarily Tutsi, within 100 days (Des Forges, 1999). The genocide left Rwanda’s judicial system incapacitated: courts were destroyed, judges and lawyers killed or exiled, and prisons overcrowded with suspects. Faced with the impossibility of prosecuting all perpetrators through conventional courts, Rwanda turned to a traditional mechanism of dispute resolution *gacaca*, meaning “justice on the grass” and adapted it to modern transitional justice needs (Clark, 2010).

The Rwandan Patriotic Front led by President Paul Kagame initiated a National Unity and Reconciliation Commission with the goal of “reconstructing the Rwandan identity, as well as balancing justice, truth, peace and security in the country, championed the creation of Gacaca courts” (Ugorji, 2019). The Gacaca system was formally launched in 2002. It relied on community participation, with locally elected judges (*inyangamugayo*, meaning “persons of integrity”) presiding over cases. The courts were tasked with: Establishing the truth about what happened during the genocide, accelerating trials to reduce prison overcrowding, promoting reconciliation through confession, apology, and forgiveness, and reinforcing unity by involving communities in justice (Government of Rwanda, 2002). Cases were categorized by severity into three categories: Planners, organizers, and leaders of genocide (handled by conventional courts) formed category one. Category two was made up of perpetrators of killings and serious assaults. Lastly, Category three constituted property crimes, looting, and destruction. This categorization allowed Gacaca to focus on the bulk of cases, while the most serious crimes remained under national or international jurisdiction (Corey & Joireman, 2004).

By way of emphasis, the Gacaca courts involved community members, including local elders, to determine the truth, identify perpetrators, and promote healing and community cohesion through truth-telling and confession (Malan, 2005). The presentation reveals that the Gacaca courts played an important role in promoting interethnic understanding, national unity and reconciliation after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Therefore, we are convinced that if there is some calm now in Rwanda, it is largely thanks to the fact that there was a recourse to the indigenous conflict resolution and peace building system.

4.5.1. Important Questions to the Gacaca Courts Approach

For lasting peace, unity and cooperation among the Rwandans after the genocide, fundamental questions and considerations that inspired or necessitated recourse to the traditional conflict resolution and peace building system and process in Rwanda were posed. Questions like how the Hutus, Tutsis, and Twas could live together in peace and harmony as Rwandans after the massacre of about one million Tutsi and their Hutu sympathizers, and with a high level of trauma, pain, anger, hatred, boiling animosity, refugee crisis, and loss or damage of property, featured on the discussion tables. Another important question was how to reconstruct a new national identity in the post 1994 genocide era. Also, an important puzzle was the kind of punishment to be meted on perpetrators to appease, soothe, and comfort the victims. Importantly was the model of dispute resolution to be adopted which will create the conditions for the emergence of a new narrative. A narrative that will be different from the hateful narrative spread through the media, especially by Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines. They were also to consider ways by which reparations, trauma healing, and possibly, forgiveness and reconciliation could take place. Finally, they felt it compelling to adopt a method of conflict resolution that has the potential for building bridges between the Hutus and the Tutsis for the emergence of a national unity and national identity card as an antithesis of the Belgian government’s tactic of divide and rule during its divisive ethnic identity cards?

4.5.2. Other consideration to the to the Gacaca Courts Approach

In addition to the questions that ought to be genuinely answered for lasting peace and reconciliation, other issues had to be taken in to consideration. The first was the fact that, the notion of justice after genocide implies that the perpetrators should be arrested, tried and sentenced. Secondly, considering the fact, the problem with the case of Rwanda like many cases in Africa, was the high number of people accused of participating in the genocide at different levels and in various capacities. Consideration also that

according to Mark Malan “with one hundred and twenty thousand people accused of war crimes in prison, experts calculated that it would take three hundred and fifty years before all defendants would be tried if the official judicial system and procedures would be pursued unaltered” (Malan, 2005).

Mindful also of the fact that, relying solely on the formal national courts and the international criminal tribunal (which was created specifically for the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi) for justice could make the process unnecessarily long, and as usual, slow. Considering as well that, by the nature and operation of the judicial system, the outcomes are designed to satisfy only the abstract legal and retributive principles, deter further occurrence of genocide, and remove the bad guys from the society by giving them a life sentence. Lastly, bearing in mind the fact that, the agents of change within the formal judicial system (the judges) may not be trusted by the parties; and the cost of the process is usually expensive that with little or no budget after the genocide, Rwanda could not have afforded the cost of holding formal judicial (court) trials for more than one thousand two hundred people initially identified (Malan, 2005).

After taking into consideration some fundamental questions and reflections, the Gacaca courts system engaged the means of lasting change, peace and harmony. To this effect, the Gacaca courts made a diagnosis of the conflict by framing the problem, intervention and goal framing, method of engaging the problem and lastly, how change and peace and harmony is to be realized (Shapiro’s (2002).

We are convinced that this process when applied to the anglophone crisis will help bring lasting peace in the North West and South West Region and indeed all of Cameroon.

4.5.3. Diagnosis/Problem Framing

Ethnic conflicts and indeed conflict in general often arise as a result of denial of one kind or another; refusal to acknowledge the problem; denial of access to basic human needs, denial of identity differences, of autonomy, security challenges and equality, compounded by the autocratic rules, divide and rule policies by governments and military crackdown. The base therefore of any conflict management and lasting resolution is not merely diagnosis but indeed acknowledging the problem. Thus, working towards the notion of positive peace, peace that promotes reconciliation and coexistence on the basis of human rights, social, economic and political justice is first and foremost recognition of the problem and causes. A recognition that there is an Anglophone Cameroon colonial identity and upholding anglophone statehood of any kind (Federation, genuine decentralization or self-determination) would be the beginning of a lasting solution to the anglophone crisis. Dealing with issues of marginalization, assimilation, discrimination will bring about inclusion and peace.

A blame game attitude has never been a solution to any conflict. What it does is to strip out empathy, stops conflicting parties from exercising compassion and prevents any form of collaboration. It provokes retaliation, hurtful and divisive comments. The government of Cameroon, the anglophone politicians, the separatist leaders should pay attention to issue of common understanding and cooperation rather than differences.

In addition, there is need for survivors of the anglophone crisis to live together in peace and harmony as Cameroonians after the killing of thousands of Cameroonians. Also, there is serious need for coexistence between those who are locked up, hunted to be locked up, those persecuted, both in and out of the country and those affected by the crisis and those whose relatives were killed during the crisis.

Identify high level of trauma, pain, anger, hatred, boiling animosity, refugee crisis, and loss or damage of property in the wake of the crisis. Moreover, victims need to know the truth about what happened and perpetrators need a safe space to confess. Those waiting trial for bearing criminal responsibility for their participation in the killings” need to be identified and treated fairly. Time and cost of holding formal judicial court trials for more hundreds and thousands of people initially identified

4.5.4. Intervention and Framing & Goals

Intervention Framing and Goals requires the use of non-adversarial and restorative justice system and processes. It also requires the revitalization and incorporation of the traditional customary dispute resolution system and processes mentioned above. Also, the establishment community-based courts or Gacaca-like courts and holding hearings. The need to elect community members from the grassroots levels based on their proven records of “integrity, conduct, and lack of involvement in the crisis to serve as Judges. Hold hearings in all the affected communities.

4.5.5. Achievements and Criticisms of Gacaca approach

Between 2002 and 2012, Gacaca tried nearly two million cases (Clark, 2014). Its achievements include: Reducing prison overcrowding: Many suspects were released after confessions and community service sentences. Truth-telling: Survivors and perpetrators confronted each other, creating a collective narrative of the genocide. Reconciliation: The process emphasized reintegration rather than exclusion, fostering coexistence in communities.

Despite successes, Gacaca faced criticisms, defendants often lacked legal representation, and judges were not legally trained, what is known as due process concerns (Human Rights Watch, 2011). The second criticism is that of political manipulation. Some argue the system reinforced the ruling party's narrative, marginalizing dissenting voices (Buckley-Zistel, 2006). The third criticism is trauma risks, public testimonies sometimes traumatized survivors, and reconciliation was uneven across communities.

Scholars view Gacaca as a hybrid model of transitional justice blending traditional practices with modern needs. It is praised for innovation but critiqued for compromising legal standards. As Clark (2010) notes, "Gacaca was less about legal justice than about social reconstruction" (Clark, 2010).

4.6. APPLYING THE GACACA COURTS SYSTEM TO THE CAMEROON ANGLOPHONE CRISIS.

The Gacaca Courts System, developed in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide, offers valuable lessons for addressing complex conflicts through community-based justice and reconciliation. Rooted in traditional practices, gacaca emphasized truth-telling, accountability, and reintegration, enabling communities to process millions of cases outside the formal judicial system. In the context of the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis, where grievances over marginalization and violence have deeply fractured society, applying a gacaca-inspired approach could foster dialogue, rebuild trust, and promote reconciliation at the grassroots level. By adapting indigenous mechanisms of conflict management, Cameroon may find pathways to balance justice with healing, ensuring that peace is not only negotiated but also sustained within communities. It would involve community-based tribunals to handle conflict-related crimes, aiming to speed up prosecutions and foster truth-telling.

4.6.1. Community-based Justice in Cameroon

The Anglophone crisis has overwhelmed Cameroon's judicial system, much like Rwanda after the 1994 genocide. Conventional courts seem unable to process the sheer volume of cases involving human rights abuses, arbitrary arrests, and community-level violence. This situation makes community-based justice mechanisms a viable alternative. Drawing inspiration from Rwanda's Gacaca courts, Cameroon could adapt similar structures to its own cultural traditions of dispute resolution, emphasizing reconciliation and reintegration rather than punitive justice (Clark, 2010; Corey & Joireman, 2004).

4.6.1.1. Traditional Justice Practices in Cameroon

Cameroon has a rich history of customary courts and chieftaincy-led dispute resolution, especially in rural communities. Chiefs, elders, and religious leaders traditionally mediate conflicts, emphasizing consensus and restoration of harmony (Fisiy, 1992). These practices resonate with the Gacaca philosophy of "justice on the grass," where communities collectively deliberate on wrongdoing and prescribe reparative measures. Customary law is particularly strong in the Northwest and Southwest Regions, where village councils and traditional rulers command legitimacy. These structures could be formalized into community tribunals, with elected or appointed elders acting as judges, similar to Rwanda's *inyangamugayo* (persons of integrity).

4.6.1.2. Accessibility and Legitimacy

One of the strengths of Gacaca was its accessibility. Trials were held in open spaces, free of charge and involved community participation (Clark, 2014). In Cameroon, adopting this model could reduce barriers to justice for rural populations and enhance legitimacy by rooting justice in local traditions. It will also help counter perceptions of bias in state-controlled courts, which Anglophones often view as instruments of Francophone domination (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2003).

4.6.1.3. Truth-Telling and Collective Memory

Community-based justice emphasizes truth-telling as a foundation for reconciliation. In Rwanda, survivors and perpetrators confronted each other publicly, creating a shared narrative of the genocide (Buckley-Zistel, 2006). In Cameroon, similar processes could allow victims to voice grievances and demand accountability. It could also help encourage perpetrators to confess, apologize, and seek forgiveness. They could help build collective memory that acknowledges atrocities, preventing denial and historical erasure (Nfi, 2014).

4.6.1.4. Restorative Sanctions

Instead of lengthy prison terms, community tribunals could impose restorative sanctions, by offering community service (e.g., rebuilding schools destroyed during the conflict). Reparations to victims' families could be done through symbolic acts of reconciliation, such as public apologies or peace ceremonies. This approach aligns with Anglophone traditions of restorative justice and could facilitate reintegration of ex-combatants (Amnesty International, 2017).

For this to be successful, the government must avoid instrumentalizing community justice to suppress dissent. Because ongoing violence or conflict could undermine tribunal operations, government must end the violence on both sides. Rwanda's Gacaca faced criticism for weak defense rights therefore, Cameroon approach must integrate or adopt stronger protections (Human Rights Watch, 2011) and the system must reflect Anglophone traditions not simply replicate Rwanda's model. It should be recalled that scholars argue and affirm that community-based justice can complement formal courts in transitional contexts. As Philip Clark notes, "Gacaca was less about legal justice than about social reconstruction" (Clark, 2010). Applying this insight to Cameroon suggests that justice must be locally owned, culturally resonant, and oriented toward rebuilding fractured communities.

4.6.2. Truth-Telling and Reconciliation in Cameroon

One of the most transformative aspects of Rwanda's Gacaca courts was their emphasis on truth-telling and reconciliation. Survivors and perpetrators confronted each other in public, creating a shared narrative of the genocide and laying the groundwork for coexistence (Buckley-Zistel, 2006; Clark, 2010). In Cameroon's Anglophone crisis, where mistrust between communities and the state runs deep, a similar emphasis on truth-telling could help rebuild fractured social bonds.

4.6.2.1. The Role of Truth-Telling

Truth-telling is central to transitional justice because it acknowledges victims' suffering and prevents denial. In Rwanda, public confessions allowed communities to reconstruct events collectively (Clark, 2014). In Cameroon, truth-telling could mean documenting atrocities committed by both state forces and separatist militias (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Also, it could mean providing victims with recognition and validation of their experiences (Amnesty International, 2017). Again, it could also mean establishing a historical record that counters propaganda and selective narratives (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2003).

4.6.2.2. Reconciliation through Dialogue

Reconciliation requires more than punishment; it demands dialogue and forgiveness. Rwanda's Gacaca facilitated reconciliation by encouraging perpetrators to confess and apologize, while victims could grant forgiveness (Corey & Joireman, 2004). In Cameroon, reconciliation could be fostered through community hearings where victims recount experiences and perpetrators admit wrongdoing. Also, symbolic acts such as peace ceremonies, apologies, and reparations could be established for both parties. Lastly, collective memory-building, ensuring that atrocities are remembered but not used to perpetuate cycles of revenge shouldn't be left out (Nfi, 2014).

4.6.2.3. Cultural Resonance in Cameroon

Anglophone communities already practice reconciliation through traditional councils and religious institutions. Chiefs and elders often mediate disputes, emphasizing harmony and reintegration (Fisiy, 1992). Integrating these traditions into a Gacaca-style system would enhance legitimacy and cultural resonance. Churches, which play a central role in Anglophone society such as the mainstream churches, could also serve as facilitators of truth-telling and reconciliation (International Crisis Group, 2017). These can be done not without challenges. There is firstly the risk of trauma risks. Public testimonies may traumatize survivors if not carefully managed (Buckley-Zistel, 2006). The government might attempt to control narratives, undermining impartiality (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Also, there is the possible risk of fragmentation of separatist groups in that multiple factions may resist reconciliation efforts, complicating dialogue (International Crisis Group, 2017). However, scholars argue strongly that reconciliation is not a one-time event but a long-term process. As Clark (2010) notes, that: "Gacaca was less about legal justice than about social reconstruction." (Clark, 2010). Applying this to Cameroon suggests that reconciliation must be embedded in community life, supported by cultural traditions, and safeguarded against political interference.

4.6.3. Restorative Sanctions in Cameroon

In Rwanda's Gacaca courts, restorative sanctions were central to rebuilding communities after the genocide. Instead of relying solely on imprisonment, perpetrators were often sentenced to community service, reparations or symbolic acts of reconciliation (Clark, 2010). This approach balanced accountability with reintegration. In Cameroon's Anglophone crisis, where thousands of

individuals have been implicated in violence, adopting restorative sanctions could help heal communities while avoiding the pitfalls of punitive justice.

4.6.3.1. Community Service

Community service was widely used in Rwanda, where perpetrators rebuilt homes, schools, markets, hospitals and other infrastructure destroyed during the genocide (Corey & Joireman, 2004). Similar measure could be applied in Cameroon, similar measures. Perpetrators could be engaged to rebuild schools, hospitals closed or destroyed during the conflict. Repairing roads and bridges damaged by fighting could be another form of community service as a form punitive justice. Supporting displaced persons through agricultural or housing projects as a form of sanction could serve a huge purpose. Such sanctions would directly benefit communities while reintegrating offenders into productive roles (Amnesty International, 2017).

4.6.3.2. Reparations to Victims

Restorative justice emphasizes compensating victims rather than isolating perpetrators. In Rwanda, offenders often returned stolen property or provided financial compensation (Clark, 2014). In Cameroon, reparations could take the form of financial compensation for families of victims by the government or NGOs and perpetrators. Follow up for the restoration of property seized or destroyed during the conflict should be taken seriously including individual houses where military bases have been established. Community funds to support widows, orphans, and displaced persons should quickly be established (Human Rights Watch, 2021). All this would acknowledge victims' suffering and provide tangible redress to the anglophone crisis.

4.6.3.3. Symbolic Acts of Reconciliation

We mentioned earlier that symbolic acts are powerful acts and gestures in restoring social harmony. Rwanda used public apologies, peace ceremonies, and memorialization (Buckley-Zistel, 2006). In Cameroon, symbolic acts could include, public apologies by perpetrators in community gatherings. They could include also peace rituals led by chiefs, elders, and religious leaders and memorial services to honor victims and foster collective healing (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2003). These acts would reinforce cultural traditions of reconciliation and help communities move forward.

4.6.3.4. Reintegration of Ex-Combatants

Restorative sanctions are particularly relevant for ex-combatants. Instead of long prison terms, they could undergo rehabilitation programs combining vocational training, counseling, and community service (International Crisis Group, 2017). Reintegration reduces the risk of recidivism and strengthens community resilience.

4.6.4. Combination of International and Local Justice Models for Cameroon

While community-based tribunals modeled on Rwanda's Gacaca courts could address the bulk of cases in Cameroon's Anglophone crisis, severe crimes such as massacres, torture, and crimes against humanity require a more robust framework. A hybrid justice model, which is a combining local legitimacy with international oversight, offers a way to balance restorative justice with compliance to international legal standards (Clark, 2010; Sriram, 2007).

A combination of international and local courts has been used in post-conflict societies such as Sierra Leone, Kosovo, and Cambodia. They integrate international judges and prosecutors with local legal traditions, ensuring impartiality while maintaining cultural relevance (Teitel, 2000). In Cameroon, this model could address crimes too severe for community tribunals and ensure fair trials with defense rights and procedural safeguards (Human Rights Watch, 2011). It would also help build trust by involving both local leaders and international actors. A hybrid justice system to solve the anglophone crisis in Cameroon could be structured to include community tribunals handle lower-level offenses (looting, intimidation, minor assaults). While hybrid courts would be made to tackle severe crimes, staffed by Cameroonian and international judges. Then truth commissions would complement judicial processes, documenting abuses and recommending reforms (International Crisis Group, 2017). This layered approach mirrors Rwanda's division of cases into categories, but adds international oversight for crimes beyond community capacity (Corey & Joireman, 2004).

Although with challenges the combination of local and international justice systems has the advantage in that local participation would ensure cultural resonance, while international oversight might prevent bias. International involvement might certainly strengthen Cameroon's judicial institutions. Sriram Chandra Lekha stressed that it is necessary to help it aligns with international human rights law and transitional justice norms (Sriram, 2007). Hybrid courts can integrate restorative sanctions alongside punitive measures, balancing justice and healing.

Hybrid justice is increasingly seen as a middle ground between purely local and purely international mechanisms. As Teitel Ruti argues that: “Transitional justice must be both global and local, rooted in universal norms yet responsive to cultural contexts (Teitel, 2000). For Cameroon, this means combining Anglophone traditions of reconciliation with international standards of accountability.

4.6.5. Possible Challenges of Applying Gacaca in Cameroon

While Rwanda’s Gacaca courts offer valuable lessons for community-based justice, applying this model to Cameroon’s Anglophone crisis might present significant challenges. These obstacles span political, cultural, legal, and security dimensions. We bring the possible challenges in this article so that stakeholders and peacebuilders should carefully address them to avoid replicating Rwanda’s shortcomings or exacerbating tensions (Clark, 2010; Human Rights Watch, 2011).

4.6.5.1. Political Challenges

Firstly, the Cameroonian state has historically resisted international mediation and community-driven solutions, preferring military suppression (International Crisis Group, 2017). Implementing Gacaca-style courts requires genuine political will, which is currently lacking.

The other major challenge could be the risk of manipulation. In Rwanda the Gacaca justice system was criticized for reinforcing the ruling party’s narrative (Buckley-Zistel, 2006). In Cameroon, there is a possible danger that the government could instrumentalize community tribunals, politicians, elders and chiefs to delegitimize separatist grievances rather than promote reconciliation. Also, we should lose cognizance of the fact that anglophone Cameroonians have continuously demanded greater autonomy, yet community justice requires decentralization. Therefore, there is the high possibility that the government would be reluctant to devolve power and would complicate implementation (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2003).

4.6.5.2. Cultural Challenges

While Rwanda’s Gacaca drew on traditional practices, Cameroon must adapt justice mechanisms to Anglophone customs, such as chieftaincy-led councils and church mediation (Fisiy, 1992). Simply transplanting Gacaca risks cultural mismatch. Churches play a central role in Anglophone society, and their involvement would be crucial. However, balancing religious authority with secular justice could be complex (Nfi, 2014). Moreover, the ongoing displacement and violence have fractured communities, making collective participation in tribunals difficult (UNHCR, 2023).

4.6.5.3. Legal Challenges

Rwanda’s Gacaca faced criticism for weak defense rights and lack of legal representation (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Cameroon must integrate stronger safeguards to ensure fairness. International Standards: Severe crimes must comply with international human rights law. Hybrid courts may be necessary to handle crimes beyond community capacity (Sriram, 2007). In terms of Judicial capacity, we noticed and according to Teitel Ruti that Cameroon’s judiciary is already strained, and integrating community tribunals requires training, oversight, and resources (Teitel, 2000).

Security Challenges

Unlike Rwanda post-genocide, Cameroon’s conflict is still active. Community tribunals cannot function effectively without ceasefires and security guarantees (International Crisis Group, 2017). Perpetrators or armed groups may intimidate witnesses, undermining truth-telling and reconciliation (Amnesty International, 2017). With over seven hundred thousand internally displaced persons, many communities are scattered, complicating tribunal logistics (UNHCR, 2023).

Scholars caution that transitional justice mechanisms must be context-specific. As Clark (2010) observes, “Gacaca was less about legal justice than about social reconstruction.” For Cameroon, this means designing a justice system that balances local traditions, political realities, and international norms, while ensuring security and fairness.

Applying Gacaca principles to Cameroon would involve creating community tribunals in Anglophone regions, led by chiefs, elders, and religious leaders, to decentralize justice and enhance legitimacy (Fisiy, 1992). These tribunals could facilitate truth-telling, allowing victims to recount experiences and perpetrators to confess, thereby building collective memory and reducing cycles of revenge (Buckley-Zistel, 2006; Nfi, 2014). Restorative sanctions such as rebuilding schools, compensating victims, and symbolic peace rituals would reintegrate offenders while repairing communities (Amnesty International, 2017). For severe crimes, a hybrid justice model combining local and international judges would ensure compliance with international law while maintaining cultural relevance (Sriram, 2007; Teitel, 2000).

Yet challenges remain. Ongoing violence and displacement complicate tribunal logistics (UNHCR, 2023). Political resistance could undermine impartiality, as seen in Rwanda's Gacaca (Buckley-Zistel, 2006). Stronger legal safeguards are essential to avoid due process violations (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Cultural adaptation is also critical: Cameroon must design mechanisms rooted in Anglophone traditions rather than transplanting Rwanda's model wholesale (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2003).

GENERAL CONCLUSION

It is essential to recognize that African epistemology and indigenous knowledge systems are rich, diverse, and deeply rooted in the continent's history and culture. African epistemology referring to the ways in which knowledge is created, shared, and understood within various African communities and encompassing various forms of knowledge, including oral traditions, spiritual beliefs, communal practices, and practical skills developed over generations must never be undermined as they are useful in peacebuilding in a continent wrecked by conflicts and wars. These knowledge systems are not only valid but also sophisticated in their own right. They emphasize the importance of community, relationships, and the interconnectedness of life. Such knowledge has enabled many African communities to thrive, adapt, and sustain themselves in harmony with their environments.

The analysis in this article reveals that sustainable peace demands a hybrid model that draws on African Indigenous Knowledge Systems, blending national-level reconciliation with grassroots community justice. Lessons from South Africa's TRC highlight the power of truth-telling and forgiveness, while Rwanda's Gacaca courts demonstrate the effectiveness of community-based accountability and reintegration. Thus, the resolution, better still and end of the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis can hardly be achieved through external interventions or conventional legal frameworks alone. African Indigenous Knowledge Systems models exemplified in the case of South Africa and Rwanda affirms that African societies possess rich philosophical and anthropological resources for conflict resolution. By re-centering indigenous epistemologies grounded in the *Ubuntu* philosophy, restorative justice, and communal harmony Cameroon can chart a culturally resonant pathway toward reconciliation and social cohesion.

Ultimately, this article concludes by stating emphatically that the relevance of AIKS lies not only in their historical significance but as well as in their contemporary application. They offer Africa and Cameroon in particular, a chance to reclaim medium of peacebuilding, ensuring that conflict management strategies are deeply rooted in the values, traditions, and lived experiences of its people. Such an approach promises not just the cessation of violence, but the restoration of dignity, unity, and collective healing.

Moreover, African epistemology challenges the Eurocentric narrative that often portrays Africans as lacking intellectual depth or innovation. It highlights the fact that knowledge is not solely based on written texts or scientific methods, but can also be derived from lived experiences, traditions, and cultural practices. This broader understanding of knowledge encourages a more inclusive view that respects and values different ways of knowing.

By embracing African epistemology and indigenous knowledge, we can dismantle the stereotypes and misconceptions that have historically marginalized African contributions to knowledge. It is crucial to celebrate and recognize the wisdom found within African cultures, as this not only affirms the value of their knowledge systems but also enriches the global understanding of human experience.

Ultimately, acknowledging the depth and complexity of African epistemology empowers African voices and perspectives in the global discourse on knowledge. It encourages dialogue, learning, and mutual respect among different cultures. In doing so, we can work towards a more equitable and comprehensive understanding of knowledge that honour the contributions of all peoples, including those from Africa.

Rwanda's Gacaca courts demonstrate that justice can be both restorative and community-driven. For Cameroon, adapting this model offers a pathway to reconciliation, but success depends on political will, cultural legitimacy, and integration with international standards. As Clark (2010) observed, "Gacaca was less about legal justice than about social reconstruction." For Cameroon, justice must not only punish but also heal, reconcile, and rebuild trust. An end to the Cameroon anglophone crisis and Cameroon's future should be built on truth, justice, collective responsibility, and the expressed will of the people. A national truth, justice, and reconciliation process must be established to address historical grievances, acknowledge past wrongs, and heal the divisions that have plagued our nation. Amnesty for those whose only "crime" was to peacefully express their political opinions or participate in protests, so that they may be fully reintegrated into society without stigma. Such measures would not only demonstrate compassion but also build trust, promote peace, and open the door to genuine dialogue and reconciliation. A new constitution must be drafted through a transparent and participatory process. It should guarantee: Rotational Presidency to ensure equitable representation of all regions. Clearly defined federal powers protected from political interference. An independent, non-partisan electoral commission. Protection of minority rights in language, culture, and resource allocation.

Clemency measures, such as pardons or commutations, for those already convicted under harsh or disproportionate sentences, in the spirit of national reconciliation and healing. All those detained in connection with the Anglophone crisis, as well as other political prisoners across the country, must be released without delay. Cameroon cannot move forward while thousands remain detained for political, security, or conscience-related reasons. Cameroon's unity will be strengthened, not weakened, by a federal system that respects and protects our diversity. Each federated state should have constitutional authority over its governance, resources, and cultural identity within a united Cameroon.

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