

Julius Nyerere: The Intellectual Pan-Africanist and the Question of African Unity

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Abstract

The question of African unity has dominated political and intellectual discourse for quite a while, yet the approach, mechanism and substance seem to be ever elusive. The rhetoric has raised so much dust it has blinded political leaders as to the concrete measures that need to be undertaken. To Julius Nyerere, the quest for unity, both nationally and continentally, was a lifetime undertaking and commitment, the lifeline for the emancipation and development of African people. Nyerere will forever be remembered for pushing and spearheading the growth of Kiswahili in East and Central Africa, which epitomized his belief that Kiswahili could promote African unity, just as it had done in Tanzania. He gave content and meaning to Tanzania's independence by recognising the role of an indigenous language in the development of cultural authenticity and national unity. To him, pan-Africanism meant self-determination in political, economic, ideological, social and cultural spheres. As globalisation witnesses growing nationalism in other continents of the world (such as pan-Europeanism in Europe), and as Africa faces the prospect of increased marginalisation, African thinkers, intellectuals and literary icons such as Ali Mazrui, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Okot P'Bitek and Wole Soyinka have made passionate pleas for a cultural re-awakening, which they see as a first step towards social, political and economic growth. It is the thesis of this paper that by drawing from Nyerere's example, African renaissance and the dream of pan-Africanism shall be realised and that Africans shall not only discover themselves and uphold their identity but also appreciate the inherent power enshrined in their cultural heritage. It is argued that over-reliance on imperialist colonial languages—which by and large are emblazoned with Western world views, cultural values and ideals—

is in fact neo-colonial and therefore detrimental to African unity and the spirit of pan-Africanism. A common indigenous language will not only foster unity but accommodate and manage diversity, express identity and articulate concerns for collective action and shared solutions to achieve growth and development.

When you recognise that so many of the surrounding nation states are riven by horrendous ethnic and tribal divisions, what Nyerere accomplished seems almost miraculous.¹

Tanzania illustrates the potential for ethnic harmony in a racially diverse setting. With an estimated 120 ethnic groups, it has avoided all ethnic conflict or political appeal to linguistic units. National unity cuts across ethnic boundaries, leading to a widespread rejection of tribalism. This outcome can be attributed to former president Julius Nyerere's integrative political efforts and his government's promotion of Swahili as a common language.

Introduction

The patriarchs of pan-Africanism may be gone but the fire they ignited is still burning. Pan-Africanism has generated more rhetoric and literature and dominated political discourse perhaps more than any other issue. Though the achievements of the movement can be considered modest, this has not killed the spirit, desire and belief in getting strength out of unity. It is generally recognised, and therefore need not be overemphasized, that unity remains 'an objective worth pursuing if Africa is to benefit from economies of scale in her industrialisation process'.²

Julius Kambarage Nyerere, or simply Mwalimu, stands out as a relentless pan-Africanist who sought the unity of the African people with a passion. In his tribute to Mwalimu, Jacob Zuma, Deputy President of South Africa, aptly summarized Nyerere's career thus:

Mwalimu, the teacher who taught the African continent about peace, democracy and unity - Mwalimu, the freedom fighter who became one of the founding fathers of the Organisation of African Unity, he laid the foundation for the African continent to start its long and arduous road towards peace and unity.³

The bold cultural choice that Mwalimu made by adopting an indigenous language was not only a rejection of Euro-centricity but an instrument that could facilitate social integration and unity of the people, both nationally and continentally. Mwalimu did not tolerate the balkanisation of Africa, and in one of his speeches he expressed his displeasure that:

Politically we have inherited boundaries which are either unclear or such ethnologically and geographical nonsense that they are a fruitful source of disagreements... the present boundaries must lose their significance and become merely a demarcation of administrative areas within a large unit (Nyerere 1966:212).

Julius Kambarage Nyerere is therefore remembered as a pan-Africanist who lived his entire life pursuing unity both at the national and at the continental level. He cherished a strong belief that only in unity can strength be found to tackle other challenges of life. He understood that the question of development is inextricably linked to whether or not a majority of the people are included in decision making by virtue of being conversant with the language of governance. And this he did by example. Neither did he believe in continued dependence on foreign languages to articulate African concerns, as this tended to retard pan-Africanism. Mwalimu's linguistic nationalism traversed national boundaries, and its ultimate objective was to secure unity and solidarity for all Africans for greater growth, development and security. It is further demonstrated that Kiswahili has been successfully used in social integration and national unity in Tanzania, and therefore can do the same for Africa.

Nyerere: Background and Political Career

Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere was born in 1921 in Butiama, in the north of Tanzania, to the eastern shore of Lake Victoria, to a colonial chief of the Zanake ethnic group. Describing Mwalimu's early life, Iliffe (1979:508) talks of him as 'a first generation convert of sparkling intelligence who had been the archetypal mission boy and whose academic success had carried from local primary school to Tabora, Makerere and finally Edinburgh university in October 1949'.

During his stay abroad, he associated very closely with George Padmore, the West Indian pan-Africanist who had been Kwame

Nkruma's mentor. Imbued with the spirit of pan-Africanism, Mwalimu returned to Tanganyika in 1952. He arrived back at a time of rising political agitation against British rule. No sooner had he taken up his old job as a school teacher in St. Francis school Pugu near Dar es Salaam than he plunged into politics. He got involved in political agitation against the British colonial authority. On being elected president he turned an otherwise moribund Tanganyika African Association into a formidable political party, Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), in 1954. Once described by an American official at the United Nations as a 'symbol of African hopes, African dignity and African successes,'⁴ Mwalimu carved himself a reputation as a most respected and staunch pan-African statesman whose qualities of warmth, humility and oratory skills captivated the public and helped to win widespread support for TANU.

On ascending to the helm of TANU, Mwalimu guided Tanganyika through the various steps towards independence. Tanganyika attained internal self government in May 1961 and Nyerere became Prime Minister. Complete Independence was granted on December 9, 1961 and a year later, in 1962, the Republic of Tanganyika was proclaimed with Nyerere as president. Nyerere was to be president until 1985 when he voluntarily stepped down.

During his tenure as president, Nyerere ensured peace and unity for Tanzanians, who were made to actively take part in the governance of the country. His political contribution traversed Tanzania's borders. More than any other leader in Africa, he played an important role in the independence struggle of countries still under colonial rule and in dismantling apartheid in South Africa. He was an innovator who crafted his own form of ideology in African socialism: Ujamaa, which was meant to dismantle endemic dependence on Euro-American economic and political ideologies.

As a relentless pan-Africanist he provided sanctuary to resistance movements from Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola and South Africa. Despite his country's weak economic base, he gave his all materially and morally. When Idi Amin subjected Ugandans to injustices, Nyerere was there to provide sanctuary, material and moral support to the liberation struggle. Nowhere did his efforts fail to accomplish their mission. Nyerere died of leukaemia trying to make and restore peace in war-torn Burundi. The cruel hand of

death did not give him time to accomplish his mission. Even unto death, he has remained a most honoured 'Father of the Nation,' as the national radio service allocates him 30 minutes daily to speak to the people he left behind.

Nyerere's Vision and Linguistic Nationalism

When Mwalimu Nyerere became president of TANU in 1954, a new constitution was adopted which was to lead the country into independence. It stressed peace and equality and abhorred tribalism and discrimination. A staunch socialist, Mwalimu envisaged an independent, free and self-reliant people. Speaking about the role of education in achieving this goal, Nyerere (1968:74) avers that education '...must encourage the growth of the socialist values we aspire to. It must encourage the development of a proud independent and free citizenry which relies upon itself for its development'.

Pride, independence, freedom and self-reliance related not only to political liberation for Tanzania but also to economic, social and cultural spheres. In fact Mwalimu was cognizant of the Euro-centric cultural tyranny that was imposed on Africa during the colonial era and the need to provide a framework in which indigenous cultural practices could be safeguarded. It's no wonder that he personally spear-headed pursuits aimed at authentic African cultural expression and liberation. This he did by adopting a language policy which recognised African culture.

Right from the time of TANU's inauguration in 1954, deliberate steps and measures were taken to develop, promote and popularise Kiswahili, an indigenous African language. Thus Kiswahili was the ideal tool to galvanise the people in the struggle for independence. Soon after independence in 1961, the TANU government made Kiswahili the national language and a year later it was declared the official language. To demonstrate his resolve, Mwalimu Nyerere delivered his speech in Kiswahili. The years that followed saw policies formulated to develop and promote Kiswahili as the language of the masses, the common man. This had the immediate effect of arousing feelings of cultural nationalism and cultivated equality of all citizens.

The decision to make Kiswahili the language of policy,

government, politics, education and commerce ensured popular involvement in government and decision-making processes. Thus the language policy adopted by Mwalimu Nyerere fostered social cohesion and unity. People did not feel alienated. It widened the range of political leadership as all citizens had equal opportunity to vie for any position, the pre-requisite being only the knowledge of Kiswahili. Opportunities were flung open for people with no knowledge whatsoever of foreign tongues. These gave the citizens a sense of involvement in the running of their country. A sense of identity was created in them.

In the schools, Kiswahili was the language of instruction in primary schools and adult education programmes. Commenting on this policy Mazrui & Tidy (1984:30) write that '...the children are nationalized with a common language which is also an African language and which gives them a sense of common cultural identity'. Similar sentiments are echoed by Khamisi (1991:104), 'Swahili which will increasingly provide the medium through which peasants and workers exchange ideas has been made the medium of instruction throughout the primary school system and adult education'.

On the part of the government, several steps were taken to enhance Kiswahili's status. Among these initiatives, the government created the position of Promoter of Kiswahili who was charged with promoting and expanding Kiswahili usage in government business as well as the dissemination of research findings. This was followed by the establishment of a National Swahili Council, which took over all the functions of the Promoter of Kiswahili. On the other hand the Institute of Education was charged with among other things publication of books, while the University of Dar es Salaam offered courses in Kiswahili language, literature and linguistics.

The government also sponsored literary competitions which in turn increased literature in Kiswahili. Mwalimu himself not only used Kiswahili in his discourses but he also wrote widely. For example he authorised several political and religious poems and translated some of Shakespeare's plays. This had the effect of putting Africa on the map of global literate civilisations and demonstrated Kiswahili's inherent capacity to absorb and express complex and philosophical ideas from other civilizations in the world.

Some authors have ascribed the promotion of Kiswahili to

other factors, for example Wright (1965:48) argues that, ‘the early radicalism of German policy made Swahili the language of power, the interwar conservatism ensured it a broad popular base. Together they have given Tanganyika a priceless asset, a national language’. Others like Legere (1991:120) enumerate several factors including trade, wage-labour in plantations, road constructors, and urbanization, which made the adoption of Kiswahili by the independent government a matter of course. He agrees with the Marxist-Leninist approach ‘that the emergence of a national language is a complicated and protracted process which cannot be accomplished at one stroke by a legislative act’ (1991:120).

These factors notwithstanding, it’s the position of this paper that what Mwalimu did was a deliberate and bold cultural experiment which has no corollary elsewhere in Africa. He did not exhibit the kind of cultural self-contempt which makes other people treat the acquisition of foreign tongues as a status symbol. He was at liberty to opt for a foreign language instead of Kiswahili, but did not do so, even though prevailing linguistic circumstances were hostile to Mwalimu’s efforts. This is adequately captured by Khamisi (1991:96):

Linguistically the nation was tri-focally stratified. There was the class of those who could operate only in Swahili or the tribal language or English....yet in terms of status perhaps a bifocal division....English held high status and Swahili and the rest of the tribal languages a low status in society. Those who spoke and wrote reasonably in English belonging to the privileged group, socio-economically and those who did not were the good for nothing.... If all the linguistic climate was unfavourable or negative for Kiswahili, people’s attitudes, including those of Swahili speakers themselves, were no better either.

But Mwalimu’s intervention marked a turning point in all this. With Kiswahili’s status elevated, the peoples, outlook changed as they discovered their own selves, their lost dignity, their own institutions, culture and all that they had lost either through their own or through foreign influences (Khamisi 1991:96). Thus Kiswahili became embedded in the political and ideological work, social organisations, administrative bodies, the security organs, parliament and other representative bodies, education, industry, agriculture, trade, transport, telecommunication, media, etc. Kiswahili became the

language to create a national culture and preserve major parts of Tanzania's rich cultural heritage and develop its cultural life (Legere 1991:124).

Why Kiswahili?

All African languages are capable of development and promotion as languages of wider communication and media of education, both at formal and informal levels. Indeed all living languages are equal and no one language is superior to another in thought and action. The misconception that African languages are lexically poor or incapable of expressing abstract ideas (Alexandre 1972:33) is a banal fallacy. Every language is equally endowed with an infinite capacity to meet the demands of its users.

But the prevailing linguistic situation does not make matters any easier in terms of finding the most suitable unifying language. Africa boasts of a linguistic heterogeneity of more than one thousand languages. There are 50 languages of wider communication, which enjoy a speakership of more than a million people. Of these 50, 47 are spoken in more than one state. Creole, Fulfulde and Yoruba are some of the most widespread, with Fulfulde spoken in 13 countries. Then there are sub-continental languages used by more than 30 million persons, namely Hausa, Kiswahili and Arabic.⁵

Arabic may not endear itself well in sub-Saharan Africa due to historical and political reasons, as well as the fact that this will entail a completely new orientation in terms of learning Arabic characters. On the other hand Hausa has on occasions faced ethnic rivalry from southern Nigeria (Indakwa 1978:76). Of all the languages of wider communication, Kiswahili is ethnically neutral; only a small minority of those who speak Kiswahili speak it as a first language, and they do not constitute an ethnic group in the usual sociological sense. As Mazrui and Tidy (1984:327) put it, 'the group is an ethnically or culturally mixed and diffuse community at the east African coast, not politically strong enough to arouse the linguistic jealousy of other groups'.

Similar sentiments are echoed by Chimera (1998:2), 'the original speakers of the language, the Waswahili of Kenya, Tanzania, and

Mozambican coasts are, on the whole an extremely detribalised polity....' While agreeing with what Chimera (1998) and others say about the relative advantages of Kiswahili, Roscoe (1977:4) adds that what sets the language apart is 'its classlessness, its status of people's language, its lack of identification with Mandarin groups and elitist castes'.

Kiswahili enjoys a rich literary tradition, and those who speak it were estimated by the BBC in 1995 to be more than one hundred and ten million (Chimera 1998:149). Some of the countries where a sizeable population speaks Kiswahili include Malawi, Zambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Somalia, Madagascar, the Comoros, Mozambique, Oman, Ethiopia, Sudan, and of course Kenya and Tanzania where almost the entire population are fluent speakers.

Kiswahili is offered as a foreign language subject in more than 100 universities across the United States of America, Britain, Germany, South Korea, and Ghana. Radio programme broadcasts are found in South Africa, Britain, Germany, Russia, USA, China, India, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda. In Kenya and Tanzania Kiswahili enjoys full-time Kiswahili services.

It is no wonder therefore that Kiswahili has been mentioned time and again as the ideal language of social integration in Africa. No lesser a person than the first African Nobel Laureate (Literature), Wole Soyinka, has added his voice to this call. While addressing the Union of Writers of the African Peoples on the 27th February 1976, he said

The union finds it regrettable that twenty years have been wasted since the Second Congress of African Writers in Rome recommended the adoption of one language for the African peoples. Resolved to end this state of inertia, hesitancy, and defeatism, we have, after much serious consideration and in the conviction that all technical problems can and will be overcome, unanimously adopted Swahili as the logical language for this purpose. We exhort all writers to apply every strategy, individually and collectively on both national and continental levels to promote the use and enrichment of Swahili for the present and the future needs of the continent⁶

With Africa looking into itself to seek solutions to the myriad of problems beleaguering it, Kiswahili is the language of the re-awakening and renewal.

Challenges for African Renaissance

Pan-Africanism was born out of a realization that African people were a downtrodden group and that they are not only culturally related but also share similar problems and aspirations. It therefore made sense to pull together for mutual support to liberate themselves and even to have a more effective voice in the affairs of the world (Akintoye 1976, July 1992, Ward 1967). It is this realisation that ignited the desire and the quest for eventual unity for all the Africans, and even the coming together of the black people in Diaspora. The quest began in earnest in the early part of the twentieth century.

The initial players in the pan-African movement were intellectuals and thinkers from this continent and blacks in the Diaspora. The attainment of Ghana's independence in 1957 marked a second phase in pan-Africanism with the players taking political leadership and a more pro-active role in the liberation of the whole continent from colonialism, by not only strengthening the spirit of challenge to colonialism but also giving practical support to the movement to liberate Africa.

With more countries attaining their independence from colonialism, it was realized early by the political leaders that the fragile nation-states, born out of the accidents of history that colonialism had bequeathed to Africa, would be too weak, too poor, too politically vulnerable to serve the needs of her peoples after the heroic struggle for independence (Nyong'o 2000:3). For example Kwame Nkrumah believed that Africa could never be truly independent of the former colonial powers unless it was strong, and it could only be strong if it was politically and economically united (Mazrui and Tidy 1984:343). Nkrumah's belief was shared by many other progressive pan-Africanists, among them, Sekou Toure of Guinea, Madibo Keita of Mali and Nyerere of Tanzania. Writing about the essence of unity for the Africans, Nyerere (1966: 336) asserts that :

Africa wishes to have the political strength to prevent other powers using her for their own ends, and it wishes to have the economic strength to justify and support a modern economy, which is the only basis on which prosperity can come to its people....For each one of us is so weak in isolation....

It is for this concern for unity and solidarity that the pan-Africanist movement established institutions and organs to deal with specific needs, with the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) established in 1963, being the most prominent. It was envisaged that continental or regional cooperation could be expressed via the OAU. The OAU was to not only coordinate and intensify cooperation but it was thought to be a precursor of ultimate unity and solidarity of the African states.

A few successes in Africa are attributable to the OAU. In the Nigerian civil war, 1967–1970, the OAU intervention contributed to the ultimate settlement, and was partly responsible for restraining the world powers from interfering and turning the conflict into an international one (Akintoye, 1976). The OAU has also prevented some disputes from developing into full-scale wars. The liberation movement received moral and material support from the OAU. Internationally the OAU enabled African countries to speak with a united voice on world issues, increasing the influence of Africa at the United Nations and the world generally.

But after about four decades, the achievements of the OAU have been so modest that the original goal of facilitating and speeding up the goals of the pan-African movement have not been realised. Rather the movement has undergone a number of hurdles, owing to the unwillingness of some political leaders to surrender part of their countries, sovereignty for the sake of African unity. The tragic consequence of this procrastination has been the proclamation of unity as the ultimate goal of pan-Africanism by the political leaders while at the same time failing to agree on the approach and substance let alone the meaning of the term “unity”. Lamenting about this curious scenario, Nyerere (1966:334) says,

For many years African politicians from all parts of the continent have called for African unity. They have presented the political and economic arguments for it, and left details alone. But this cannot continue much longer. Hard thought and detailed negotiations have now to replace slogans if the objective is to be attained.

It is due to the OAU poor showing as a pan-African institution with clear goals of achieving unity and solidarity for the African people that a need was felt to rename it the African Union (AU). It is envisaged that the new outfit will deliver what the former failed to deliver. In fact for the pan-Africanist that Mwalimu Nyerere was, the

issue of unity, whether at the national or continental levels was not just a mere slogan. It was a lifetime undertaking and commitment. It was part and parcel of the development of the African people.

It is no wonder that as early as in 1958, Mwalimu invited nationalist colleagues from East and Central Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Zanzibar and Malawi to meet in Mwanza to form the Pan-African Freedom Movement of East and Central Africa (PAFMEYA), whose immediate objective was to co-ordinate the struggle for freedom and independence for all the territories. In 1962, this organisation was expanded to include other countries, namely those of southern Africa, thus becoming the Pan-Africa Freedom Movement of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (PAFMECSA).

The creation of the OAU was therefore a watered down version of what the real pan-Africanists had in mind. Referring to this turn of events Nyong'o (1990:4) writes:

Instead of establishing a vibrant and active continental organisation which would destroy colonialism and build on its ruins, Africa created a club that was more content with the past achievements of its members than on the creative energies of their highest aspirations.

While the quest for unity and solidarity of the African people seems to elude the political leaders and as the intellectuals and thinkers seem to be sidelined from responding to the challenges of sustaining independence and making it meaningful for the broader populace, Africa seems to slide into deeper crises. Inter-state and intra-state conflicts are a common occurrence, while social, political and economic woes seem to multiply by the day. The African continent remains the most underdeveloped of the third world continents. Mazrui and Tidy (1984) observe that by the close of the seventies, Africa had 7.5% of the world's population yet it only enjoyed 1.2% of global Gross National Product, with illiteracy standing at 74% compared to Asia's 47% and Latin America's 24%. Africa also trails in statistics of life expectancy, infant mortality, and public health expenditure and energy consumption. They regret that attempts at political and economic co-operation between African states in an effort to overcome balkanisation and related poverty have been limited in scope and lacking in positive results (Mazrui and Tidy 1984:326–7).

It is the submission of this paper that to accomplish the pan-

African goals and objectives, realise a renewal and a reawakening for the African people, Africa must embrace a new approach. The new approach rests on recognition of the role of language, an indigenous African language, which will not only facilitate social integration but also spur technological and economic prosperity. It must be realised that continued reliance on imperfectly mastered foreign languages retards ingenuity and performance in scientific and technical pursuits. This hampers economic growth, political stability and social cohesion.

It clearly appears that lack of meaningful unity and solidarity of the African peoples is a result of failure by the players to recognise and appreciate the inherent power enshrined in our cultural heritage which can be harnessed to foster social integration. The leaders have completely overlooked an enviable tool to galvanize the populace. There is total absence of linguistic nationalism in Africa than say India or Malaysia or Bangladesh. Echoing Sedar Senghor's sentiments, Mazrui and Tidy (1984: 298) observe that one of the obstacles to cultural liberation has been an excessive emphasis on political and economic liberation as processes in themselves, divorced from the struggle for cultural independence:

.... Cultural decolonisation is more fundamental than many have assumed. Yet cultural imperialism 'obscures awareness', making it the most dangerous form of colonialism.⁷

Accordingly 'the lack of political will for an economic transformation may in part be due to a state of mental and cultural dependency.' (Mazrui and Tidy 1984:298). It is a painful legacy of Western civilization that whatever comes from there is the best. This myth is reinforced by tailoring its educational, cultural and social values to Europeanize and de-Africanize the African via European languages and culture. The acquisition and imitation of these languages and culture was rewarded thoroughly and made a status symbol. Those who learned these languages tended to despise those who did not. They identified more with the colonisers, as they out-did each other in speaking the foreign tongue with eloquence. This had to do with maintaining intercourse with the masters and by securing the opportunities availed by such knowledge. Describing the situation then Emerson (1962:136) writes:

The imperial languages were of course tied to the prestige system of the white since the Whiteman, with the partial exception of the missionary and the scholar, generally learned the local languages as an act of grace or better to rule or trade with the subordinate peoples where it was assumed that the native who wanted to advance must rise to the level of the foreign language.

The result was that indigenous languages were despised by the elites. But as Ngugi wa Thiongo remarks, “when you hate your own language, therefore you hate who you are, and you hate your neighbour.”⁸

It must be recognised and emphasized that it is only through language that we can understand ourselves more fully as well as be able to understand others, that we can enhance our cultural identity and development of our personality.

Thus foreign languages have tended to divide society along the lines of social status. Those who can speak these languages are a minority, yet they are the well-to-do in society owing to the opportunities availed by the foreign languages. On the other hand these languages deny opportunities for the majority of the people who have no access to them. The majority of the people are segregated from the communicative process that is fundamental to the economic, social, political and cultural structures of the modern state. How then can development take place when the majority are not involved?

Pan-Africanism has also been a victim of foreign languages. In the early sixties, different regions of Africa were divided linguistically due to loyalty to different former colonial masters, thus there existed the Anglo-phone and the Franco-phone African countries. For example, the latter formed the Brazzaville Group in 1960, which was later changed to the Afro-Malagasy Organisation for Economic Cooperation (OAMEC) in 1961 in Yaoundé. When it changed its name to Afro-Malagasy Union (UAM), it immediately signed a defense pact with France. In 1965 the name was changed to Organisation Commune Africaine et Malagasy (OCAM) Common Organisation of Afro-Malagasy States. This Organisation even set up a joint company: Air-Afrique. Though these differences seem to be downplayed currently, the then linguistic schisms in commonwealth (Anglo-phone) and French community (Franco-phone) tended to

arouse political differences. Continued dependence on foreign languages to articulate African concerns will not realise the dream of pan-Africanism. Mazrui and Tidy (1984:300) have articulately argued that:

English and French are invaluable in various ways for modern African development: they help integrate Africa in world culture, and they are politically neutral in the context of Africa, multi-ethnic societies. But they do not necessarily help to overcome the crisis of national integration which is one of the most fundamental political problems facing African countries.

There is therefore the need to rediscover our own languages not only for social integration but also to enhance our cultural identity and guarantee an effective development of the African personality in terms of self-reliance, self-confidence, resourcefulness and innovativeness. Neo-colonialism and imperialism will be things of the past, and Africa will develop a continental identity. Stressing the need for promotion and use of African languages Roscoe (1977:4) writes:

African aspirations, ideally, should be expressed in African language. How can national hopes, with their special nuances rising from traditional societies and their values inherited from a non-European ethic, resonate in people's hearts via a language which is firstly alien, the product of a foreign way of life and world view and secondly spoken by only a small minority?

Mwalimu Nyerere's rejection of Euro-centricity forged a national unity and identity by promoting Kiswahili as the national and official language. In fact he will be remembered forever for one of his greatest contributions, that of pushing the growth of Kiswahili in east and central Africa. Mwalimu believed, with good reason, that Kiswahili could promote African unity, just as it had done in Tanzania. This should serve as a wake-up call for Africans to emulate Mwalimu.

Conclusion

Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere is undeniably one of the greatest and most respected statesman Africa will ever have. He was a relentless pan-Africanist, whose quest for peace, freedom and solidarity both nationally and continentally will be missed by all.

His bold language experiment has been examined in the light of restoration of cultural dignity and identity of the African people. In so doing he was able to detribalise and cement his country with social cohesion and integration. Language has an overwhelming capacity of bonding people together. People who speak one language are united by the ease with which they can communicate.

Africa needs to keep alive the dream and vision of Mwalimu Nyerere for a shared destiny of the African people. The full realization of our being lies in our collective as Africans. Our freedom, strength, dignity, survival and prosperity as a people depend on our unity as Africans, for only in unity can strength be found.

Having already proven itself as a resilient tool of integration, Kiswahili is the ideal instrument to bridge the linguistic barriers which retard pan-Africanism. This has been demonstrated by Nyerere in Tanzania. Kiswahili has a rich literary tradition, it is widespread with more than one hundred million speakers, it is non-tribal with no political overtones, and it has an overwhelming capacity for modernity, science, technical and complex philosophical concepts. It has a capacity as a tool, to re-ignite the pan-African fire which seems to be in a state of limbo. Kiswahili is therefore the social force that can build the Africa of the future. There can be no better way to remember Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere.

Endnotes

- 1 See UNICEF tribute to Nyerere in *Chicken Bones: A Journal for Literacy & African-American Themes*. (Available On-Line: <http://www.nathanielturner.com/index.html>).
- 2 See the World Bank study 'Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth,' cited by Nyongo (1990:12).
- 3 Available On-Line at <http://www.polity.org.za/html/govdocs/speeches/1999>.
- 4 See *Chicken Bones: A Journal for Literacy & African-American Themes*. (Available On-Line: <http://www.nathanielturner.com/index.html>).
- 5 See UNESCO (1985).
- 6 See Killam(ed) (1984), cited by Chimera (1998:149).
- 7 See Sedar Senghor (1968), In *Presence Africaine*, cited by Mazrui

and Tidy (1984:298).

8 See Ngugi wa Thion'go in the Sunday Standard, 28th September 2003.

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