Representations of African Democracy as Prescription for Africa's Governance in David Mulwa's *Inheritance* and Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk To Freedom*

Andrew Nyongesa

Department of Humanities, Murang'a University of Technology, Kenya
E-mail : anyongesa@mut.ac.ke
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3926-1585

Abstract

The introduction of the nation state and democratic governments in Africa were considered the most appropriate prescriptions for the economic and political malaise in African communities. The nation state supplanted traditional forms of governance, but decades after establishment of nation states in Africa, political upheavals continue to rock the continent. The advent of Western democracy has exacerbated negative ethnicity as leaders mobilize their ethnic communities to attain political mileage. This study examines the merits of African democracy in governance as represented in David Mulwa's **Inheritance** *and Nelson Mandela's* **Long Walk to Freedom**. *In the recent past, scholars have underlined the need to establish Western democracy despite its susceptibility to binaries uncharacteristic of African culture. Using postcolonial theory, the study juxtaposes traditional and modern systems of government as represented in the two primary texts. Utilizing qualitative inquiry, the study deploys narrative research to analyze data from primary and secondary texts, anchored in the ideas of Edward Blyden and Aimé Césaire as the bases of interpretation, and concludes with attributes of a system of government believed to be best suited for contemporary Africa.*

Key Words: Aimé Césaire, African Democracy, African Governance, David Mulwa, Nelson Mandela

INTRODUCTION

Literary writers and critics have lamented about poor governance in post-independent African nations despite introduction of the nation state and western democracy. The political chaos represented in literary works suggests that western systems of government inherited after colonialism may not be suited to the African situation. Although politics has great influence on development, the leadership predicament has pervaded the African continent many decades after independence.

Before delving into issues of governance as represented in African literatures, it is essential to understand the notions of bad and good governance. Thinkers such as Matar (2019) and Gel'man (2022) associate good and bad governance with the statue of allegory of good and bad governance in Siena (Italy). To Gel'man, bad governance constitutes "a devious-looking figure adorned with horns and fangs, and apparently cross-eyed" on the artwork. The figure symbolizes a tyrant with feet upon a goat (a symbol of indulgence) with dagger in hand. Below the autocrat, the pitiful figure of Justice, immured and enfolded, "while the figures of Cruelty, Deceit, Fraud, Fury, Division, and War surround him, and above the autocrat are the figures of Avarice, Pride, and Vainglory" (2). In the same manner, in African history, there are legends about bad leaders that give hint to what constitutes bad governance. Among the Agikuyu of Kenya, the Iregi generation overthrew a tyrant for overruling their decisions about planting season and appointed a *muthamaki* (the leader) as moderator of discussion of the council of elders rather than a ruler (Kimani 2010). Kimani expounds that the Muthamaki, the leader of the council of elders could not make unilateral decisions, but would consult others (38). Similarly, Wangu wa Makeri, a queen among the Agikuyu was overthrown because of her tyrannical behaviour particularly against men (Ngugi 1965, 25). This attests to the fact that pre-colonial African societies grappled with poor governance and strove to find solutions.

In the same way, a solution to bad governance in contemporary societies can only be found if the cause is identified. To a section of scholars, one prime cause of the lacuna in leadership in Africa is the prevailing circumstances on the global stage soon after independence in Sub-Sahara Africa. Klosowicz (2018) points out the Cold War as nourishing environment for incompetent leaders such as Idi Amin (Uganda), Jean-Bedel Bokassa (Central African Republic), and Mobutu Sseseko (Zaire). These autocrats took advantage of the competition among world powers to introduce and nurture a culture of graft in the nations without any criticism from their colonial masters for fear of losing them to the Soviet Union.

Other scholars contend that the major cause of poor governance in Africa is the disconnect between government and society (Koechlin 2013). Scholars in Koechlin's school of thought suggest that the nation state and its encompassing systems of governments such as aristocracy, autocracy, and democracy are incompatible with the African perspective and meaning of government. As result, most African governments are removed from the aspirations of the citizens. For instance, a council of elders, which would merely guide discussions, governed most African communities. The new nation state imposed laws made in a parliament from a capital city by representatives that would not thoroughly consult the citizens. The advent of

classes and material culture exposed the nation state to corruption as wealth rather than wisdom increased one's chances to ascension to leadership. This study extends Keochline's postulation through examining the merits of African democracy in governance as represented in Mulwa's *Inheritance* and Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*. It contends that Western systems of government are not suited to the African situation and underlines the need for a return to the traditional system – which appears to be the most suitable for contemporary Africa.

David Mulwa's *Inheritance* tells the story of Lacuna who is obsessed by Western novelties to the extent that he assassinates his father, King Kutula XV. Lacuna then erases all African attributes that his father had incorporated in governance in favour of a Western skewed dictatorship. Deluded by the myth that communal living is Marxist, Lacuna adopts an individualistic lifestyle that accentuates graft and mismanagement in Kutula. His blind passion for Western capitalism leads to inhumane treatment of his subjects such that he is removed from power by peaceful demonstration. In short, Mulwa juxtaposes African system of governance (as embodied in King Kutula's regime) with a Western system represented by the Lacuna regime.

Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* is an autobiography about his struggle against a Western nation state based on apartheid. The inequalities that pervade South Africa after the advent of the nation state prompt Mandela to make a fateful decision: remain in prison as long as the state discriminates against Black people. In the story, Mandela makes a distinction between African democracy (represented in his uncle's leadership) and Western democracy in modern South Africa.

The choice of texts is justified because the two authors compare African tradition with modern Western systems of governance. While Mulwa makes a subtle juxtaposition through a work of fiction, Mandela draws from his experience to comment on the two systems directly. This study delves into a side-by-side comparison of traditional and modern western system of government as represented in the two primary texts.

DEMERITS OF WESTERNIZED POLITICAL SYSTEMS

Influential African thinkers underscore the need to return to the past as a prelude to good governance. In his submission in the conference of Black thinkers in Paris in 1956, Aimé Césaire contends that Westernization has bastardized African culture to severe degrees that Africa has a single option to political and social success: the grand return to the past (Mgwebi 2008, 56). In Césaire's perspective, good governance for the African peoples constitutes return to past systems such as traditional councils of elders and select

attributes that best suit the way of lives of African people. Césaire's ideas are invaluable to the present study as it examines demerits of Western political systems in Mulwa's *Inheritance* and Mandela's *A Long Walk to Freedom*. While Césaire's is a general appraisal of African culture, the present study delineates the political aspect of African culture and its potential to remedy the political malaise in modern African communities.

Pan-African thinkers have underlined the worth inherent in African culture and the equality between all the races of the world. Edward Blyden (1887/1967) appraises the potentialities in the African way of life, and expounds on the spiritual and humane aspects of the African personality. In Blyden's perspective, Africans have culture that can enable them make outstanding contribution to the world if nurtured. In his theorization of the African and Western personalities, Blyden presents the former as compassionate, merciful, humane with reverence for spiritualty but the latter as impersonal, callous and logical with inclination for science at the expense of religion. Blyden's ideas are essential in the exegesis of features of the African and Western systems of governments. While Blyden generally delves into features African and Western personalities, the present study delineates political aspects of the two cultural groups.

Postcolonial scholars observe that the theory looks at the world in the lens of the marginalized groups. Ashcroft (1995) notes that postcolonialism is associated with migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation and any concerns related to discourses of imperial Europe (2). Ashcroft's study enriches the present study as it juxtaposes Western systems of government with African systems at the margins of modern societies. The dominance of the modern nation state and western political systems over African systems is a postcolonial situation. A study that explores the possibilities of overturning a dominant western political system finds postcolonialism the most relevant theory.

Historians have demonstrated how euphoria rather than reason drives democratic processes and lead to the election of violent leaders that cause wars and state collapse. Walsh (1996) contends that the election of Adolf Hitler in Germany was a mishap of the democratic system of government. The majority in Germany elected men without an iota of integrity— Adolf Hitler, Herman Goering, Heinrich Himmler and Joseph Goebels— to assume positions of responsibility. Besides harangues such as "German is a special race" and promises of manna, the Nazis were not in the least qualified to lead Germany. Hitler's oratory possibly stemmed from manic episodes. This psychopathic condition is characterized by inflated self-esteem, which was evident in his mantra that Germans were a master race destined to rule the

world. There is concrete evidence that Hitler did not have any other plans for German progress except instigation of violence and fragmentation of the German nation and others in Europe. Payne (1973) observes that Hitler's major intention was to shed blood, express his authority and fight the so called "enemy" races (234). From this discussion, Walsh and Payne bring to the fore demerits of democracy through popular elections that result in the choice of dictatorial leaders. The present study examines the demerits of Western political systems such as democracy and their role in poor governance and state fragmentation in Africa. Whereas Walsh and Payne limit their study to the demerits of Western democracy, the present study extends to attributes of an African political system. Further, Payne and Walsh employ descriptive design to convey historical information: the present study employs narrative enquiry in which literary narratives conceal authors' experiences.

Studies in political science have pointed out shortcomings of Western political systems such as democracy in the contemporary society. On the contrary, African nations continue to practice it as the only better option among systems of government. Rogers (2018) observes that Brexit and the election of Donald Trump in 2016, have "exposed democracy's chaotic nature and people power is simply tyranny of the majority" (7). Rogers contends that the desire of the majority in Britain aim to discriminate against other European citizens in England, but the leaders' judgment is to fulfill the desire of the ill motives of the electorate. The ethical considerations of the proposition do not matter as long as the proposed idea is popular. Fed up by the demerits of democracy, Winston Churchill said in a speech, "[d]emocracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others" (Rogers and Jasiewick 1999, 169). Churchill feels that he has to embrace democracy because there is no other better political system available. Indeed, after leading Great Britain successfully against Germany during the Second World War, the wishes of the majority in Britain tilt against Churchill and he loses the election to Clement Attlee. To his contemporaries such as Joseph Stalin, it is profoundly shocking how the majority in the United Kingdom cannot see anything admirable in Churchill's heroic stance against the German war machine. Rogers and Jasiek's studies enrich the present study as they demonstrate how Western democracy perpetuates dualism and attempted fragmentation of the European Union at a moment when unity is required to confront an aggressive Russia in the backyard. The pro and anti Brexit binary factions threaten national integration in the United Kingdom, and after the referendum, Scotland begins her demand for secession for losing her benefits in the EU. Jasiewick suggests that shortcomings of Western democracy

provide space for invention of another system of government, a possibility which this study explores.

Scholars and writers have raised fundamental questions about Western political systems for audiences to reflect on and invent political systems that suit them. These narratives present the writers' experiences about Western democracy for the readers to reflect about its pitfalls. Henrik Ibsen expresses his doubts about democracy in *An Enemy of the People*, particularly the principle of majority rule. The hero of the play, Dr Stockman makes a scientific investigation in his town and the findings reveal that the leaders collude with rich investors to pollute water at the Bath in which many tourists swim. As he prepares the report for publication, his brother, Peter Stockman who is the mayor of the town incites members of the community to declare Dr Stockman the enemy of the people. In the meeting, in town, Dr Stockman casts aspersions at Western democracy. He argues that the rule of the majority is the rule of fools. Ibsen suggests that the winner of a democratic election process is possibly a fool because the majorities that vote do not know what is right. It is the intelligent few, hated like Dr. Stockman, who know the truth concerning the Bath. While Ibsen's focus is the vulnerability of democracy to the foolish majority, the present study compares African and western political systems as represented in two primary texts and suggest a political system most suited to the African situation.

Aside from works of drama, some novelists have interrogated the illegibility of elected leaders in Western democratic processes. Golding in his novel, *Lord of the Flies* points out the demerits of democracy in the modern world. In the novel, an island of schoolchildren led by a charismatic leader descends into chaos and bloodshed because the government is compelled to carry out the will of the majority although their decisions are always foolish. The phrase "schoolboys" signifies the naivety of the citizens who cannot discriminate right from wrong, and end up choosing ineligible leaders. Hamilton et al. support Golding's argument that decisions in a democratic government are not in league with demands of justice, but in tandem with the wishes of the overbearing majority. If the majority feels that government should pardon thieves, its ethical correctness does not matter. The community in question will be forced to live with it. Recent developments in Gabon show how the majority reelected Ali Bongo to perpetuate domination of a single family. Whereas Golding and Hamilton et al delimit their thesis on the demerits of democracy, this study establishes features of a political system best suited for Africa and explores the viability of traditional systems of government.

Studies in political science demonstrate the pertinent role of consensus in decision-making. Ranciere and Panagia (2000) in their interview point out

consensus as the sole means by which tension in polarized modernist governments are evaded through negotiations between Right/Left binary factions that pervade most Western democracies (123). Since rational principles associate each faction with certain ideologies, the two reach a compromise through discussion and arbitration that sometimes results in flimsy coalition governments that collapse at the decision of one group to withdraw. This study goes further and examines the place of consensus in conflict resolution in traditional African systems of government.

THE FLIPSIDE OF WESTERN POLITICAL THOUGHT: BINARIES AND MARGINALIZATION

Mandela and Mulwa in *Long Walk to Freedom* and *Inheritance* respectively suggest that replication of Western political systems of government in Africa can either fail or only succeed to a certain extent. The introduction of Western nation state in Africa brings out attributes of Blyden's European personality in the two primary texts. The oddity of the personality elevates cultural differences that resonate with Koechlin's submission on alienation of government from the citizens. The colonial government headed by Governor Macay and Lacuna's regime in Mulwa's *Inheritance* exhibit callousness, competitiveness, individualism and counterfeit spirituality tantamount to logic. As the play begins, Governor Macay laments about the colonial office's resolution to ban the use of the cane, and confounds the audience by snide references to the colonial secretary as "incorrigible fart" and "the fool" who expects him to pamper Blacks and expect results (3). As the curtain falls on colonialism in the play, the audience discovers that Governor Macay has presided over an inhuman political system that has caused untold suffering and exploitation of the Black peoples of Kutula. When King Kutula XV meets Governor Macay in the prologue, Blyden's attributes of the European personality are evident.

First is the land alienation that Kutula expresses through the analogy of the elephant and the farmers. Elephant tricks the farmer to allow him shelter his big ears in the hut only to take possession of the whole house (10). The cunning in this episode represents the European colonizer's propensity for logic—a salient component of the European personality. Through a combination of political chicanery and logic, Europeans gradually substitute African culture. Kutula contends that the people of Kutula can no longer "sweep" their own homes as they have to sweep with European brooms. They live in tandem with European conventions (11). Césaire refers to this as "bastardization of African culture" (Snail 2008, 56), which precludes failure. The Europeans have also extracted the minerals for their own benefit without any regard for the feelings and needs of Blacks in Kutula. Namayi and

Mugubi (2018) contend that the avaricious relationship between European colonizers and citizens of Kutula in *Inheritance* stems from the manipulation of power as postulated by Foucault's notion of power (25). This first section of the paper considers the "manipulation" as part of the cunning nature of what Blyden describes as the "European personality". The notion of "competitiveness" is evident when Macay tells King Kutula that Africa's slow pace of development gives Europeans an advantage in exploitation of mineral resources on the continent. He brags, "[l]eft to develop on your own, how would you natives have fared except to rot on the wayside?" (9). The choice of words in the conversation is at variant with the African personality, which King Kutula attests to by reminding Macay that in Africa, elders do not "bandy insults" (10). Indeed, the King maintains a diplomatic conversation by use of proverbial language as opposed to Macay's expletives.

One more character that embodies the craftiness and inhuman elements is Bishop Menninger. He exhibits Blyden's postulation of the European passion for logic at the expense of religion as he excels better in political chicanery than piety. In a secret conversation with Macay, Menninger reveals the philosophy at the heart of the Westernized political system introduced in Africa during colonialism. Despite his religious accolades, Menninger advises Governor Macay that Africans are incapable of reason and must rely on imitating what other races invent (5). He expounds that the White race will hold the mantle of innovation as "natives" trail by imitating. He compares Blacks to "common animals" and decries their inability to understand the "democratic bond" between Europeans and their governments. In his weird perspective, Blacks are "a bee colony" that the sovereign must dictate to (6). The expletives from the cleric confound Governor Macay who sarcastically replies that he would give Menninger a pass to heaven. This response arises from Menninger's suggestion to use King Kutula's own son to assassinate the King (16). As Blyden postulates with regard to the European personality, there is no iota of authentic religion in Bishop Menninger's advice. He wants in honesty, integrity and true love, which characterize the Christian religion he purports to profess. For example, after addressing King Kutula in a manner that suggests support for him, in private, he tells Governor Macay that the King is "a rogue zebra" (14) with "a bold, searching and dangerous mind."

After independence, Menninger is infuriated by King Kutula's independent mind that he lays aside all his religious ideals to scheme for his assassination. The cruelty of using a son to kill the father confirms Blyden's postulation of the European personality's leaning towards indifference and logic rather than piety. The tragic episode haunts Lacuna many years after when he confronts unending opposition to his reign. He admits that the introduction of a

Western style political system is the chief motivation of his heinous act. He tells Goldstein that despite the blood relationship he had with King Kutula, he "did it" for the nation—to establish a Western style state (79). The act in the context is the assassination of King Kutula XV that takes the form of poisoning under the watch of Bishop Menninger. In an agonizing reminiscence of a son haunted by the guilt of killing his own father, Lacuna reveals how he pours a toxic powder in King Kutula's tea and the curse he unleashes to dim all hopes for success. While Lacuna, the so-called "morally debased reprobate" (15) feels guilty and tries to plead for his late father's forgiveness, Menninger the "cleric" is unapologetic.

Similarly, Mandela in *Long Walk to Freedom* demonstrates how Blyden's "European personality" informs the accentuation of class and racial othering in South Africa. The callousness and insensitivity with which the two are executed perfectly resonates with Blyden's postulation. In his initial days at school, the teacher of the British education substitutes Mandela's name, Rolihlahla, with Nelson in pretext that Whites cannot pronounce African names. This is also in league with Western culture's claim to superiority that Blyden christens as "competitiveness." Mandela contends "British culture, British institutions, were automatically assumed to be superior" (11). Everything in this culture is interpreted in a binary opposition to the *other*. Derrida refers to this dualism as logocentricism (57). As a superior culture in South Africa, Western values are imposed on "inferior" African cultures through a regimented racist regime. The "callousness" postulated by Blyden is evident through the execution of a number of policies that enhance racial separation, land alienation and the deliberate subjugation of the Black race. The Sharpeville massacre, the assassination of Steve Biko and the arbitrary arrests and detentions of Black leaders not only attest to the inherent cruelty of the European personality, but also discounts western political systems. For instance, while describing those who were arrested in 1964, Mandela writes:

> A week later, Walter Sisulu and eleven others were arrested, bringing the total to one hundred and fifty-six … There were one hundred and five Africans, twenty-one Indians, twenty-three Whites, and seven coloureds. Almost the entire executive leadership of the ANC, both banned and unbanned, had been arrested (176).

The racial composition of those arrested demonstrates the racialization of the Western style regime that Europeans introduce in South Africa. Worse is the sensitivity to criticism exhibited by the regime such that life sentences are handed to Nelson Mandela and his colleagues. The effect of the callous handling of Black leaders is in line with Koechlin's notion of alienation of government from the majority of the population.

While a sensible government would consult and address the concerns of the citizens, Mandela points out how the Western style regime relies on the binaries inherent in the culture to polarize South Africa. He singles out the Reservation Amenities Act that "segregated parks, theatres, restaurants, buses, libraries, toilets and other public spaces" (506) along racial lines. Characteristic of the Western style system, Blacks and Coloured are consigned to the periphery as elements of low culture. They cannot share the same facilities—libraries, buses and toilets with Whites to underline Blyden's postulation as appertains cruelty of the European personality. Subsequently, the majority of non-white South Africans do not identify with the actions of the government in power. Ruma and Leon (2017) contend that in *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela demonstrates how the colonial regime institutes apartheid as a means to mete out violence against *other* races. They conclude that violence is in fact a narrative trope in Mandela's autobiography (1). Indeed, as Mandela expounds, the violence extends to Black-Black violence with incitement by the ruling party. He delves into the way De Clerk appeals to divide-and-rule to incite the Zulu against Mandela (540). As he moves towards the end of the story, Mandela blames the new political system rather than Whites. He writes, "[i]n prison, my anger toward the Whites decreased, but my hatred for the system grew" (528) as it placed different races in a binary opposition. As Mandela expounds in *Long Walk to Freedom*, the White dominated regime in South Africa was a protracted political upheaval. According to Lal (2014), the states' perpetuity in the deprivation of human rights informed Mandela's decision to abandon non-violent strategies in the fight for political liberation.

MERITS OF AN AFRICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM: CONSENSUS, HUMILITY AND SERVICE

Most scholars and leaders have considered Nelson Mandela one of the greatest leaders the world has ever had. His dedication to the plight of Black people, humility and ability to find consensus among different ethnicities and races in the polarized South Africa left a profound impact on the world. In the words of Kalungu-Banda (2007) 'Mandela is one of the greatest leaders in our time and beyond—a man who has managed to inspire his people and the rest of the world with ordinary human actions.' This quote points out one attribute of Mandela's leadership as ability to inspire others without singling out the true source: but anchored in Césaire's ideas, this section explores attributes of an authentic African political system with reference Mulwa's *inheritance* and Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*.

Before Mandela and Mulwa delve into Western political systems, they give a cultural background to suggest that authentic African leadership should not just be conversant with their cultural settings, but arise from it. This is

possibly why Western educated intellectuals bent on uncritical application of foreign ideas in Africa (Robert Mugabe, Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Leopold Senghor) could not successfully lead African nations as they upheld Western dualistic thought that is inconsistent with the African reality.

Mulwa introduces *Inheritance* with a protagonist whose passion for African culture is exceptional. King Kutula XV who has lived throughout the colonial regime, maintains custody of the way of life of Kutula people. Mulwa describes the King as "a towering" figure with a spear at hand to symbolize traditional African leadership. His diction throughout the conversations with Governor Macay distinguishes him as an African patriot with unwavering determination to expel colonialism and preserve the traditions of his people. To account for his decision to support the struggle for independence in Kutula, the King contends, "the silent ones cry for the living" (12). In this assertion, King Kutula's words resonate with Césaire's postulation on the rejection of bastardization of African culture. Earlier on, the King complains that Kutulans at present live by the "rules" of the colonizer (11). On the contrary, they yearn for the freedom to live by "their own rules" to signify the Return to African traditions. Although Namayi and Orina (2016) consider King Kutula's use of proverbs as the embodiment of aesthetic expression, this paper reads this feature as the King's deliberate effort to preserve African language and culture. For example, to Macay's fury, Kutula draws a semblance between land alienation in the colonial period with the fable of the elephant and the farmer. In the story, the former tricks the latter by housing his ear in the hut and eventually evicts him. The King's continuous reference to African forms provokes an angry reaction from Macay who blurts, "[t]his proverbial drivel leads us nowhere" (11). He is incensed by King Kutula's predilection for African traditions, which he considers inferior to Western culture.

Similarly, Mandela describes the traditional Xhosa environment to show the food, the games and what they consider noble or ignoble. He writes:

> Most Xhosa at the time was shaped by custom, ritual, and taboo. This was the alpha and omega of our existence, and went unquestioned. Men followed the path laid out for them by their fathers; women led the same lives as their mothers had before them. Without being told, I soon assimilated the elaborate rules that governed the relations between men and women. I discovered that a man may not enter a house where a woman has recently given birth, and that a newly married woman would not enter the kraal of her new home without an elaborate ceremony. I also learnt that to neglect one's ancestors would bring ill fortune and failure in life (9).

In this passage, Mandela suggests that great leadership in Africa begins early through acquisition of cultural norms, and the philosophy of their lives to

change them from within. A great African leader is that who hones his or her skills from the African philosophy and way of life. Great leadership, in Mandela's perspective does not arise from a system that is transposed from a foreign culture such as the kind imposed in South Africa. This is the same trajectory of thought that Klinken (2014) advances about Waiyaki's Messianic leadership in Thiong'o's *The River Between*. King Kutula personifies similar traits in Mulwa's *Inheritance* through exceptional humility and compassion for all. According to Klinken, Waiyaki is brought up as the savior of the people from colonial oppression and has to acquire the ways of the people, and learn the culture of the White man. Mandela embodies Mulwa and Thiong'o's literary representations as he has matured through cultural knowledge of his people and seeks to serve rather than lord it over his people in humility. The apartheid government had a tendency to misconstrue his humility for communist propensities. In one of his meetings with National Party leadership, he contends that they were wrong to brand him a communist. On the contrary, he is a nationalist, "as they came in different shades." It is apparent that Mandela understands the crux of South African moral blueprint as demonstrated by what he does to gain the favour of his ancestors. Indeed, after release from prison, he visits his motherland in Qunu to receive parental blessings before he ascends to the presidency.

Whereas King Kutula uses proverbs, Mandela refers to the wisdom of Xhosa elders and how they manage to put up brilliant arguments in spite of their not having formal education. About these elders, he writes:

> Though not lawyers these men presented cases and then adjudicated them. Some days they would finish early and sit around telling stories. I hovered silently and listened. They spoke in an idiom that I had never heard before. Their speech was formal and lofty. Their manner slow and unhurried, and the traditional clicks of our language were long and dramatic (32).

There is a distinction between the formal and the informal to show that these elders are educated or rather initiated into their trade. The language of communication is specialized such that the children cannot understand what they are saying. Unlike a modern court that exhibits too much regimentation, the judges are humble as they can allow young people such as Mandela to eavesdrop. This extract suggests that in the African sense, there is no distinction between humility, wisdom and politics.

Essential distinguishing aspects of African political system as expressed in Mandela and Mulwa's texts are consensus and tolerance to criticism as opposed to competitive voting and subjugation of critics. King Kutula exhibits great potential in the realm of discussion to reach decisions for the sake of his people. In his response to Governor Macay's contention that he

ought to abide by the colonizer's conditions for being knighted (11), he replies that it is a foreign medal and he cannot negate his people's wishes for the sake of his selfish ambition. In the defense of the uprising, King Kutula contends that he would not have taken his ancestors, counselors and people for granted (10). In short, the African leader does not just consult people and counselors, but the spiritual to understand the direction they have to take. Unlike his son, Lacuna who takes a Western stance that prompts him to make decisions (such as selling Bukelenge valley) on his own, King Kutula consults his counselors and ancestors, which enables him to lead justly and humbly. With regard to criticism, King Kutula evades expletives despite Governor Macay's arrogance. After his claims that the King persists in belittling a serious conversation with "native jokes" and "long winded proverbs" (8), the King responds that in African tradition, elders do not "bandy insults". Throughout the prologue, King Kutula remains civil and diplomatic, and chooses traditional African idiom to demonstrate his wisdom.

In *Long Walk to Freedom*, in his experience at his uncle's home, Mandela avers that in council meetings, every member of the community would be given an opportunity to speak and the uncle would not overreact to criticism leveled against him. Mandela further argues that the post-independence intolerance to criticism in Africa exhibited by leaders such as Mobutu Tseseko, Jomo Kenyatta, Mangistu Haille Mariam, Idi Amin and Milton Obote is not derived from the African thought. As aforementioned, such leaders skipped the cultural training perhaps because of their preference for Western culture. Mandela gives an amazing episode in his uncle's court to demonstrate how the African leader goes through his cabinet sessions. He writes:

> Everyone who wanted to speak did so. It was democracy in its purest form. There may have been a hierarchy of importance among the speakers, but everyone was heard, chief, subject, warrior and medicine man, shopkeeper and farmer, landowner and laborer. People spoke without interruption and the meetings lasted for many hours. At first, I was astonished by the vehemence — and candour — with which people criticized the regent. He was not above criticism — in fact, he was often the principal target of it. But no matter how fragrant the charge, the regent simply listened, not defending himself, showing no emotion at all (31).

Mandela points out that the leader in the authentic African political system exhibits utmost humility and strength of character as embodiments of wisdom. The African leader should not personalize experience; neither he nor she speaks longer than the subjects do. They speak as he/she listens without either victimization or class considerations. The shopkeeper, the warrior and the herbalist are treated the same way. The episode confirms that the negation of class that Western thought associates with Marxism is an African norm.

In Mulwa's *Inheritance,* Governor Macay misconstrues King Kutula's humility and classlessness for communism. He loves a simple life style and walks all the way from the palace to the Governor's residence. For Macay, the struggle for independence in Kutula is a socialist revolution, which the King disputes. He contends that they are unaware of communism in Kutula (10), which underlines the need to understand the revolution and classlessness in the light of African culture. The King's son, Lacuna, characterizes the King's regime with disdain for class. He complains, "Calf, cow and bull shared same kraal" as Kutula himself drove a Volkswagen "like a Black messiah" (89). This aspect is rampant in Thiong'o's works, for instance in *Devil on the Cross* and *Petals of Blood* where the narrator insists that "a bean fell to the ground" and Maumau fighters shared it. While the Western dualistic thought places him under Marxist/capitalist binary, Thiong'o simply refers to the African disregard for class. Similarly, in the traditional Agikuyu culture, the leader Muthamaki was not an absolute, power wielding commander in chief with immunity from prosecution. Citing Leaky (1977), Kimani (2010) asserts that the Muthamaki, the leader of the council of elders could not make unilateral decisions, but would consult others (38). It is not surprising that despite Chege and Mugo's spiritual gifts in Thiong'o's *The River Between*, the people reject them. Kimani gives a historical background to show how the Agikuyu rejected authoritarian system of leadership. Similarly, the Kalenjin community of Kenya was just as decentralized as the Agikuyu community, hence taking Mandela's example. Chelimo (2016) writes of the Nandi, "[a] sitting of elders in a *Kokwet* was chaired by *Boiyot ab Kok*, village elder, who was installed by elders of his age due to inherent and outstanding leadership qualities. Just like Mandela's society, "humility and wisdom" stand out as the greatest attributes in leadership. Leadership is not given after a popular vote, that may permit inexperienced sections of the population to elect a fool. Generally, in both the Kalenjin and the Agikuyu communities, leadership was decentralized and decisions were made through consensus of the people—the council of elders, which is contrary to Western systems that strive to centralize power in one office. In modern Kenya, the opposition has always lamented about the "The Winner-take- it- all" system of government to refer to the minimal discussion between the ruling party and the opposition.

Consensus tends to traverse decision making in the African communities in this study. Mandela underscores the central place it holds in the regent's decision-making process. He writes:

> The meetings would continue until some kind of consensus was reached. They ended in unanimity or not at all. Unanimity, however, might be an agreement to disagree, to wait for a more propitious time to propose a

> solution. Democracy meant all men were to be heard, and a decision was taken together as a people. Majority rule was a foreign notion. A minority was not to be crushed by a majority (31).

In this passage, Mandela establishes the secret of his legendary leadership and the most central tenet for an effective political system for Africa. The use of the vote to resolve divergent views is alien to most African cultures. It creates two binary groups, and foregrounds one over the other without any attempt to explain and account for the differences. Mandela's uncle allows the elders more time to delve into the crux of the matter, until those who have divergent views get persuaded. The vote, as juxtaposed to consensus embodies a coercion of the will. Rather than solve a problem prudently, casting the vote may demonstrate the want of patience to think and make the correct choice.

In the same way, King Kutula establishes a humane and efficient regime after independence without the elections typical of Western democracy. Throughout the play, he remains a point of reference for exemplary leadership as the oppressed citizens sustain nostalgia for his regime. Tamina, one of the major characters admits that life was better under King Kutula's regime (22) as the children had free education and not a single citizen lost their land to the regime in power. Although Lacuna introduces elections, the ensuing competitive spirit creates savage competitions that lead to Bengo's arrest and detention. He is Tamina's brother in law who Lacuna schemes to use the brother, Judah Zen Melo to kill. Because of these political upheavals, the citizens miss the days when King Kutula led them. This suggests that decisions reached by consensus—which is an African attribute—lead to a more cohesive society.

 Similarly, Mandela acknowledges divergent perspectives and reaches out to them for consensus. For example, in spite of having pointed out De Clerk's lack of consistency during the negotiations, he does not deny him his due. He writes:

> De Klerk began a systematic dismantling of many of the building blocks of apartheid. He opened South African beaches to people of all colors, and stated that the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act would soon be repealed. Since 1953, this act had enforced what was known as "petty apartheid" segregating parks, theatres, restaurants, buses, libraries, toilets and other public facilities, according to race" (506).

In this passage, Mandela appreciates the role of other voices he would otherwise consider rivals or adversaries which gives the memoir a dialogic edge as juxtaposed to Tracy's contention concerning the imposing attributes of autobiography. Mandela's story exhibits polyphonic attributes of

conventional fiction as espoused by Bakhatin as Mandela recognizes divergent voices to his cause in life. Indeed, Cunningham (2017) reiterates Mandela's words that De Clerk played a pertinent role in the political changes in South Africa. He describes De Clerk as "the man who dismantled apartheid" and Mandela admits that it would not have been possible without De Clerk (1). This adoption of dialogic mode of expression in the story elevates it to a more objective source of information with regards to an appropriate political system for the African people.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the merits African democracy in governance as represented in Mulwa's *Inheritance* and Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*. In the recent past, scholars have underlined the need to establish Western democracy despite its susceptibility to binaries uncharacteristic of African culture. The first section employed Blyden's concept of the European personality to examine demerits of Western political systems as represented in the primary texts. It was found that the competitiveness and callousness typical of the European personality alienate their political systems from the African populace. The second section underscored the need for the Return to African political system in the light of Aime Césaire postulation. It was found that most African systems of governments elevated classlessness and consensus without the vote. Leadership was in the traditional African communities focused on service for all. In Mandela's Xhosa community, the regent listens to everyone regardless of his class, and he has to moderate the meeting until consensus is reached. Kutula in Mulwa's *Inheritance* progresses with relative calm until Lacuna kills the father and introduces competitive politics. The absence of the vote suggests that it pervades Western dualism, which elevates binaries—the centre and the periphery. Another curious aspect observed about African leadership is that most Western educated post-independent African leaders gradually transformed into autocrats while Mandela did not. Careful study demonstrates that he acquired both informal and formal education from Africa. Conclusively then, great African leadership stems from mastery of African values such as humility, service, sacrifice and tolerance to criticism, while Western values such as classism, dualism and materialism destroy the African philosophy that renders the leader incapable of leading his people democratically.

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