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## From *sankofa*, *tu*, *shosholoza* to Ubuntu and *umoya*: a five-stage historical timeline of the philosophy of Africa and implications for education, research and practice

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### ABSTRACT

There is no comprehensive history of Africa's philosophy for reasons including colonisation and neo-colonisation that resulted in its philosophy's neglect and under-studying compared to Eastern, Middle-Eastern and Western philosophies. In this article, the timeline of Africa's philosophy has been divided into five stages – *sankofa*, *tu*, *shosholoza*, Ubuntu and *umoya*. *Sankofa* is a stage where less is known, although, by looking at the history of the different groups of Black Africans – the Bantu, Kush, Nile-Saharan, San, Khoi Khoi, Hadza, Sandawe, Mbenga, Mbuti and Twa – we learn that they had related values centred around the family, community, society, environment and spirituality, and probably lived in proximity. The *tu* stage was characterised by the expansion of their communities and new languages that named Africa's philosophy differently but closely. The *shosholoza* stage involved resisting the colonisation of Africa's philosophy on and off the continent. The fourth stage is Ubuntu, the current stage where the noun Ubuntu has become prominent as the name of the philosophy for reasons including the resilience of the Zulu Kingdom from whose Nguni/Ngoni language the noun derives from. The final stage is *umoya*, the stage of renaissance and African-centredness. At this stage, Ubuntu is becoming the dominant worldview for Africa. From this history, among other things, we learn that Ubuntu did not start recently, Africa is not philosophyless and that Ubuntu cannot be attributed to Bantu people alone but all Black Africa. This history contributes to a better education for Africa where scientists, researchers, teachers, social workers, development workers, even security people, politicians and business people – become African-centred, all working for an Africa whose knowledge, innovations and capabilities compete with the rest of the world on an equal footing. It is recommended that the history of Africa's philosophy and the philosophy itself be embedded in all levels of 'formal' or 'informal' education and this will be more useful if all stages, from *sankofa* to *umoya* are included. Knowledge of Africa's philosophy would make education, research and practice more appropriate to Africa, especially in the fields of social work and development where colonial knowledge, values and practices have been dominant.

**KEY TERMS:** Africa, philosophy, *shosholoza*, *sankofa*, *tu*, Ubuntu, *umoya*, Bantu, Kush, Nile-Saharan, San, Khoi Khoi, Hadza, Sandawe, Mbenga, Mbuti, Twa

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## INTRODUCTION

Africa is home to different groups of Black people. The groups of Black people speak different languages, some of the languages have clicks but some do not. The groups stayed in different places and had several ways to survive. They shared a common philosophy. The purpose of this article is to provide this information focusing on social-cultural-developmental aspects and show linkages in philosophy between the different groups. This will then be followed by a historical timeline of the common philosophy of the groups. Philosophy is here defined as a worldview of a group of people that shapes their social, cultural and development expectations and roles and for Africa, this philosophy is largely known as Ubuntu. This paper starts with information about different groups of Black people, followed by stages in the history of Ubuntu and ends with a discussion on Africa's philosophers and Ubuntu. The paper will be helpful for these reasons (1) remove conceptualisation of Africa's philosophy, particularly Ubuntu that has been written by Westerners or by Africans informed by African thought (2) demystify the notion that Ubuntu started recently and in South Africa and is limited to Nguni people (3) show that Ubuntu is not only in the past and present, but in the future, it is a dream for all Black people own it (4) in social work, Ubuntu has been criticised as lacking substance, lacking a history as compared to Western or Eastern philosophy, therefore, practitioners, researchers, students and academics in social work have relied on Western philosophy for their learning, research and practice.

## DIFFERENT GROUPS OF BLACK PEOPLE OF AFRICA

Africa is home to different groups of Black people. Black Africans include the Bantu, Kush, Nile-Sahara, San, Khoi Khoi, Hadzabe (Hadza, singular), Sandawe, Bambenga (Mbenga), Bambuti (Mbuti) and Batwa (Twa). They are mainly classified based on language groups and their historical livelihoods and migration patterns (Katanekwa, 2021). There is no simple and exhaustive way to make this classification, but using languages has gained wider acceptance. The use of language groups to classify people of Africa does not mean that the language classes are ethnic groups. The groups, their settlements, languages and livelihoods are not always clear cut, as shown in the proceedings sub-sections.

### Bantu languages group

The Bantu people are the largest group in Africa and they speak a variety of languages classified as Bantu (Katanekwa, 2021). In using the noun Bantu, the author is cognisant that it has been used to designate low social status to Black people during the colonial period, and for some time, this distorted its meaning. In its original and positive meaning, *bantu* means people but more specifically Black people and this meaning will be adopted in this paper. At present, this group is estimated to have 240 to 350 million people speaking over 500 different languages (Koile, 2022). They are historically livestock keepers and crop planters, and this is their main form of livelihood today (Katanekwa, 2021). Their settlements used to be semi-permanent or permanent in small and large villages. Their first known settlements were at Mambilla, in West Africa at the border of present day Nigeria and Cameroon, where they stayed in large numbers over 4000 years ago (Katanekwa, 2021). They had arrived there from North Africa many years back, escaping desertification (Diop, 1964; 1974). Presently, they have permanent settlements all over Africa, mainly in the South of the Sahara desert, also referred to as Sub-Saharan Africa. Most live in rural villages, but many now live in urban areas. They have strong collective, communal, spiritual and environmental values that were passed on to them by their ancestors who had come from the Northern part of Africa but then lived at Mambilla (Diop, 1991; Katanekwa, 2021).

### Nile-Sahara languages group

The Nile-Sahara people are so called because the Nile river is important to many of their livelihoods while some of them are found in the Sahara desert area (Katanekwa, 2021). The population of this group is estimated to be between 50 to 60 million. In terms of livelihoods, this group keeps livestock and grows crops (Katanekwa, 2021). They too are collective and communal and have strong spiritual and environmental values.

### Kush languages group

The Kush people speak a mix of languages from Africa and Asia (Katanekwa, 2021). Kush (later named Nubia) was a large powerful kingdom in present-day Sudan. The exact population of this group is not known, but runs into tens of millions. They are mainly located in the Horn of Africa, which is the eastern part of Africa, but some are in the North and South. Some of their languages are Semitic, meaning they are related to Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic languages. In terms of livelihoods, this group are livestock keepers, crop growers and also fishermen

(Kataneke, 2021). Values of familyhood, collectivity, communality, spirituality and ‘environmentality’ are prominent in this group too.

### The ‘Ba’ languages group

The fourth largest group of about half a million people is made up of ‘pygmies’ (meaning short people) but are being called the *Ba* languages groups in this article to avoid using a derogatory name. The *Ba* historically survived on the bush (Koile, 2022). They consist of the Bambenga (Mbenga), Bambuti (Mbuti) and Batwa (Twa) (Kataneke, 2021). Presently, they are found in the Congo rainforest in larger numbers, but also in countries like Uganda. This group, together with the clicking sounds languages group, probably have the strongest collective and environmental values. Many of them still live in forest homes, and have found attempts to ‘modernise’ or ‘civilise’ them unfavourable.

### The clicking sounds languages group

The fifth and final group, numbering about 130 000, is made up of people whose languages have clicking sounds. These include the San, the Khoi Khoi, the Hadzabe (Hadza, singular) and the Sandawe. Although their languages have commonalities, research has not shown that these were originally the same people (Koile, 2022). The San, also called the baTwa (Mucina, 2013) and Khoi are spread across Southern Africa countries, while the Hadza and Sandawe are found in Tanzania (East Africa). The San people, who are of short stature, historically survived on hunting or gathering, moving frequently from place to place in small groups. Some of them still survive the same way today (Koile, 2022). The Khoi Khoi historically survived on the bush but kept livestock and are theorised to have been a result of a mixture of an early group of Bantu with San people (Koile, 2022). The Sandawe historically survived on hunting and gathering. The Hadzabe are also known as Hadzapi, Hata, Tindiga, Kindiga, and Kangeju. Up to today, they survive mainly on hunting and gathering (Safari, Nkua, and Masanyiwa, 2021). The San, Khoi, Hadza and Sandawe are all highly collective and communal people. The Hadza, for example, have no leaders and decisions are made through discussion or dialogue circles. The Germans forced them to have leaders during colonisation, but the project failed (Kusimba, and Kusimba, 2011). Child rearing is a responsibility of everyone; it is a cooperative affair. Their societies are egalitarian and gender equality is clearly visible (Kusimba, and Kusimba, 2011).

Now that the groups have been elaborated, the following section deals with the evolution of the common philosophy of these groups. Ubuntu itself appears at the end of this evolution as the current philosophy common among all the groups of Black people of Africa.

## STAGES IN THE HISTORY OF AFRICA’S PHILOSOPHY

### The *Sankofa* stage

About 4000 years ago, the largest group of Black Africans, the Bantu, was living at Mambilla where they had arrived from North Africa. The other groups were in other places on the continent. While each of the groups had its dominant livelihoods, languages and geographical places, they share a common philosophy (Diop, 1974; Mbiti, 1969). These include values of collectivity, reciprocity, communality and dialogue. They have common ideas about creation, the universe, relations, the environment and spirituality. The groups did not always live in harmony, at times they fought over resources, political, spiritual and social issues (Mbiti, 1969). The name given to their common philosophy at this stage is not known. The name *sankofa* has been used for this stage to emphasise the importance of continuously looking back to inform the future. *Sankofa* means returning to the source, looking back to inform the future, reflecting or valuing history (Kissi, 2018).

### The *tu* stage

This stage was mainly characterised by expansion of Bantu and Kush communities and their languages. About 4000 years ago, the Bantu people increased in population and started expanding their communities in different directions away from Mambilla, but mainly eastwards and westwards (Kataneke, 2021; Koile et al., 2022). Ubuntu spread throughout Africa with this expansion. Those who left Mambilla in the eastern direction created a large settlement (the Urewe settlement) in Eastern Central Africa about 2000 years after leaving Mambilla. They interacted with the Kush and Hadza in the east and the *Ba* in the central parts of Africa. Those who went westwards from Mambilla kept going, forming some settlements as they go and interacting with the Pygmies when they reached the Congo area. The Kush spread along the Nile and many migrated East and South (Kataneke, 2021). About 2000 years ago, some people of this great migration reached the ocean to the South of the continent in

present day South Africa (Koile et al., 2022).

Throughout this migration, the different groups interacted and some assimilated (Katanekwa, 2021). They shared languages, art, rituals, philosophical, and cultural values and intermarried. For example, the strengthening of Ubuntu in Southern Africa could be attributed to this interaction. Aspects that could have been strengthened in this interaction included collectivity, reciprocity, communality, 'environmentality' and spirituality. The interaction resulted in different names for African philosophy, including but not limited to *ubuntu*, *utu*, *botho*, *biako ye and buntu*, *gimuntu*, *muthu*, *maaya*, *bato*, *bantu*, *bomoto*, *medemer*, *munto*, *mondo*, *umunthu*, *vumuntu*, *omundu*, *hunhu* and *mutunchi*. Most of these names derived from the root word *tu* which refers to humans (Mugumbate and Chereni, 2020).

### The *shosholoz*a stage

This stage witnessed the greatest threat to African philosophy. Significant at this stage was the slave trade and the colonisation of Africa's philosophy, religions, economies, political systems and culture by the *zungu* (plural *vazungu*, *wazungu* or *bazungu*; singular *mzungu* or *muzungu*) people whose philosophy differs from that of Africans. *Zungu* refers to Europeans, Americans and Middle Easterners. The trans-Atlantic slave trade started in about 1526 and lasted until about 1867, and resulted in the enslavement of more than 15 million men, women and children from Africa (United Nations, 2022). Christianisation was advanced by the Portuguese in Angola about 500 years ago and in Mozambique in the 1530s; the Dutch who invaded the San and Khoi in the Cape in 1652; European missionaries who came in about 500 years ago and more Europeans who came around the 1890s. They denied a significant number of Africans of their philosophy and religion, and sought to replace them with theirs. They said Africa was 'philosophyless' and 'religionless' which was not true (Achebe, 1958; Mbiti, 1969). Where they acknowledged Ubuntu, they said it was only an individual quality, that is, they undermined the broader nature of Ubuntu as a worldview that shapes how Africans think about individuals, family, village, community, society, environment and spirituality. Yet even before this stage, Africa already had a social welfare system based on its philosophy. Antonio Bocarro, a Portuguese historian who visited the Monomotapa Kingdom in present day Zimbabwe in 1492 reported that:

*The Kingdom shows great charity to the blind and maimed, for these are called the King's poor, and have land and revenues for their subsistence, and when they wish to pass through the Kingdoms, wherever they come food and drinks are given to them at the public cost as long as they remain there, and when they leave that place to go to another they are provided with what is necessary for their journey, and a guide, and someone to carry their wallet to the next village. In every place where they come, there is the same obligation (from Gasper Bocarro 1492 diary, cited in Black History Studies, 2009, paragraph 80).*

This quote illuminates the values of collectivity, communality and responsibility. What was left out by the historian was reciprocity, that is, the visitor was expected to be reciprocal in other ways, including simply being of good deeds and intentions. As Falola (2021) summarised it, the intentions of Gasper Bocarro and his kins were no good.

As if the dehumanization of the trans-Atlantic slave trade era was not enough, there came the infamous Berlin conference of 1884 to 1885 and the unscrupulous sharing of the African continent among European countries. The centuries of colonization in Africa severely impacted Africans' sense of identity, consciousness, being, culture, traditions, and continued development. Beyond this, an almost unforgivable impact of colonization on Africa was the deliberate misrepresentation and presentation of Africa to the world. Early European observers in Africa presented the continent as a barbaric one. Essays upon essays were written to portray Africans as needy and hopeless, and people who would have gone into extinction but for the supposed intervention of the Europeans. Indeed, the West brought us the modern form of education. However, Africa would not have declined, so argued many Afrocentric scholars, if the Westerners had not come to the continent. Some argue that Africa would have been better off and way more developed than it currently is if the Europeans had not colonized the continent (The Cable Nigeria, 2021, paragraph 4).

Despite the numerous threats to African philosophy because of the new languages, religions, cultures, politics, professions, environments and spirituality (Mbiti, 1969), the philosophy survived because of *shosholoz*a, meaning unparalleled resilience and resistance.

### The Ubuntu stage

In the 1950s, Ubuntu became more dominant as the name of African philosophy and it was written about in books, articles and political speeches by politicians like Kaunda and Nyerere (Kaunda, 1966; Nyerere, 1968) and writers like Samkange (Samkange and Samkange, 1980). Ubuntu is a Nguni word. Nguni languages include Zulu, Xhosa, Swati and Ndebele, Hlubi, Phuthi, Bhaca, Lala, Nhangwini and Isingqumo. Nguni people are found in South Africa, Eswatini, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia and Malawi. Several reasons gave rise to the dominance of the noun Ubuntu:

- (1) In Southern Africa, the interaction of Bantu and Kush with the Hadza, Sandawe, San and Khoi strengthened Ubuntu and kept it alive.
- (2) There are more than 31 million Nguni people and the main Nguni language, isiZulu is spoken by over 12 million amaZulu and 16 million second language speakers and is one of the most spoken on the continent. It is from this language where African philosophy got its definition, a proverb, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (Gade, 2011).
- (3) The KwaZulu Kingdom stands today together with its monarchy, survived colonisation and is a symbol of *shosholoz*.
- (4) South Africa has a dominant presence in literature and media in Africa, and continuous use of Ubuntu in books, magazines and newspapers made Ubuntu known (Gade, 2011).
- (5) South Africa's freedom fighter and former President, Nelson Mandela used Ubuntu in politics.

Ubuntu's use in modern day disciplines and professions has increased and this can be witnessed in the large numbers of authors writing about it, and institutions using it in their work (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). At this stage, Ubuntu has been clearly articulated as a philosophy but more is required to motivate leaders, policymakers, educationists, academics, researchers and students to use it (Chilisa, 2020). There is more work happening in some areas such as social work, education, philosophy and business but also very little in others. One hopes that in future, there will be more work in all areas as was in the *sankofa* and *shosholoz* stages where there was Ubuntu as the only dominant philosophy.

At this stage, there was the rapid growth of urban villages, international migration and the emergence of Western styled leadership revolving around liberalism and democracy. These socio-political issues all impacted Ubuntu and were impacted by it.

### The umoja stage

*Umoja* means oneness. This is the renaissance stage where Ubuntu takes a central role as the undivided dominant philosophy of Africa (Ramose, 1999). The Renaissance is a stage where African worldviews, economies, society and technologies become the pillars of African society again (Bongba, 2004; Mbeki, 1996) and Afrocentric ideas are transformed into solid actions. In short, values of familyhood, collectivity, reciprocity, communality, 'environmentality' and spirituality get united with the people for the prosperity of Africa. As Mbeki (2004) said:

*Whatever the setbacks of the moment, nothing can stop us now!*

*Whatever the difficulties, Africa shall be at peace!*

*However improbable it may sound to the sceptics, Africa will prosper!*

*Whoever we may be, whatever our immediate interest, however much we carry baggage from our past, however much we have been caught by the fashion of cynicism and loss of faith in the capacity of the people, let us err today and say - nothing can stop us now!*

The Renaissance is about the revival of African identity and the regeneration of self-confidence (Asante, 1998). It is a stage where Africans will reclaim what they have lost or given up including names, religion, language, spirituality, symbolism and our narratives (Asante, 1988; Falola, 2021). Other aspects of this stage include the reconfiguration of governance and global engagement and development to end poverty; rebirth of African politics and conflict resolution (Akinola & Uzodike, 2018); revitalisation of culture; and replacement of unjust systems and arrangements and reimagining a democracy that is still representative and maintains accountability but is suited to Africa (Bongmba, 2004; Ajulu, 2001). The facts that the last colonised country on the continent (South

Africa) got political independence in 1994, that the OAU was renewed to a Union in 2002 and that the New Partnership for Africa's Development was put in place in 2001, are strategies in the right direction of achieving the renaissance.

At the *umoja* stage, Ubuntu will truly become the pillar of human services and human service professions in Africa, including social work, family work, community work and development (Mararike, 1998). Philosophy is at the centre of education (Nziramasanga, 1999), religion (Mbiti, 1969; culture (Karenga, 1988) and identity (Asante, 1998). Ubuntu will transform African education, from early childhood playrooms to professorial lecture rooms as well as religion and culture (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). The founding of Kwanza for example, with its values of *ujamaa*, *kuumba*, *umoja* and others, is an attestation of the revival of Ubuntu in the lives of Africans. Another area Ubuntu will contribute is development (Molefe, 2019) including economic development (Mupedziswa, Rankopo, and Mwansa, 2019). *Umoja* is the future of Ubuntu. However, given imperialism, neo-colonialism and globalisation, this stage is threatened, and there is no guarantee that this stage will be reached easily unless Africa's philosophy dominates education, services, governance, economics, politics, religion and other aspects of life.

### AFRICAN PHILOSOPHERS AND UBUNTU

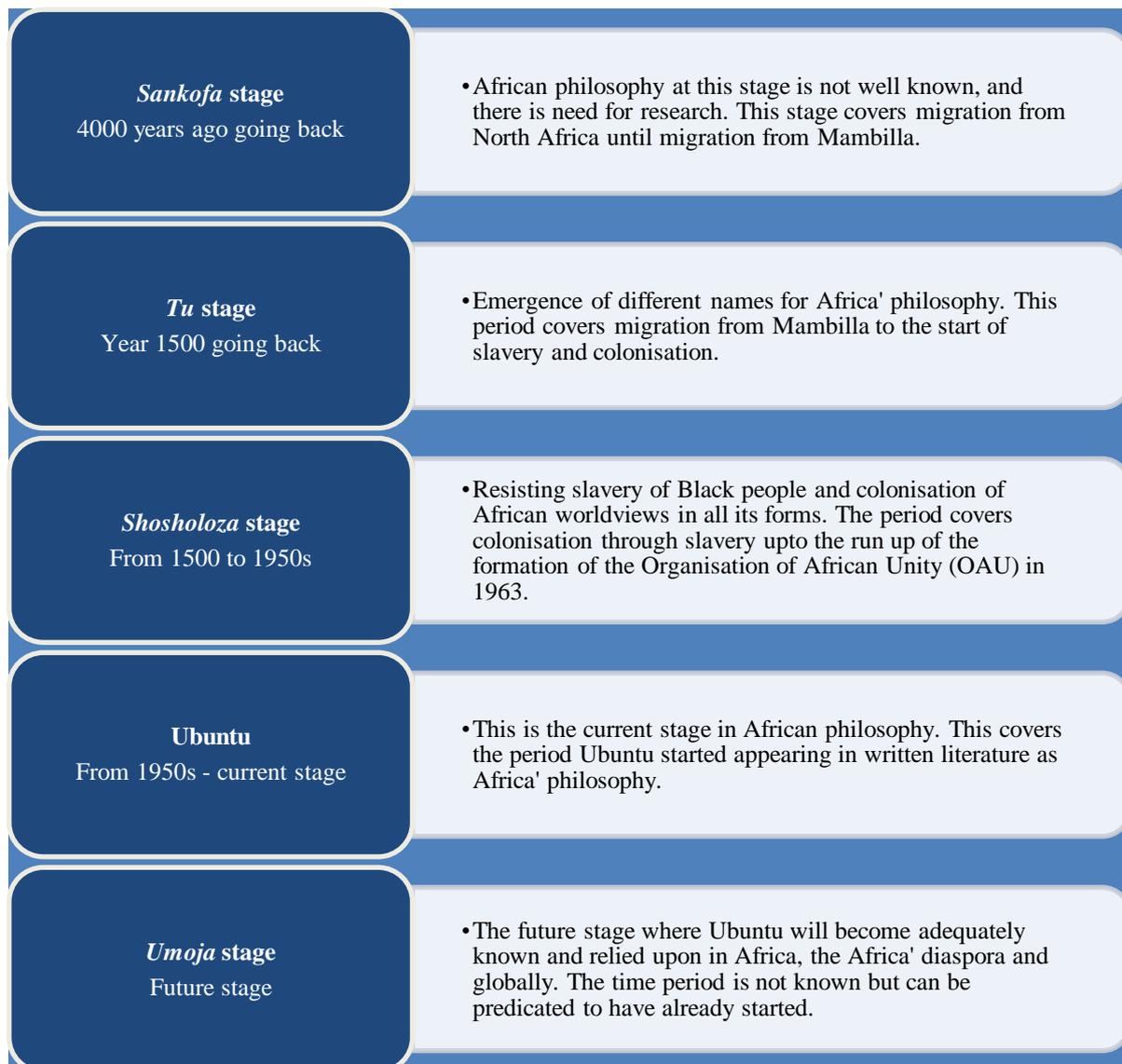
Ubuntu philosophy existed in the community and it still does, although now there are individual philosophers who have talked about it orally or have written about it, as Table 1 will show. As Mucina (2013) said, Ubuntu is a living philosophy. The work of some philosophers in the *shosholoz*a stage may not fall directly under Ubuntu philosophy, but their ideas and actions were largely driven by Ubuntu and espoused values of familyhood, collectivity, reciprocity, communality, 'environmentality' and spirituality. For example, Nzinga, Asentewa and Nehanda were fierce women who resisted physical colonisation of their land and mental colonisation of their people when it was happening. They lived decolonisation. Other philosophers like Yaqob and Amo may not have referred to Ubuntu directly, mainly due to the undervaluing of the philosophy during the time they lived. Other people who lived decolonisation were freedom fighters whose philosophical ideas were on protecting African heritage such as land and culture. Among these were Nkrumah, Kaunda, Nyerere and Mugabe (Nkrumah, 1978; Nyerere, 1968; Kaunda, 1966). While others experienced decolonisation on the forefront, others like Achebe, Diop, Samkange, Wiredu, Mbiti, Nabudere, Thiongo, Gyekye and Mbigi defended and promoted African philosophy through their writings, teachings and presentations (Achebe, 1958; Mbiti, 1969; Diop 1964 and 1974; Wa Thiongo, 1986; Samkange, 1980; Wiredu, 1980, 2002; Nabudere, 2005). Diop's thesis was that Black people were the ancient Egyptians, and because they had their philosophy and knowledge system which they used for inventions to create a viable society, Black people of today were capable of the same (Diop, 1973; 1989; 1999), a view strongly supported by Nkrumah (1978). The Western world initially criticised Diop for these ideas, because they regarded their own thoughts that Black people had no philosophy as the truth, but later Diop's work was recognised and honoured (Diop, 1991; 2007). Defenders and promoters of African philosophy today include Mbeki whose ideas are about African renaissance, Ramose whose ideas are about, Asante whose ideas centre on Afrocentric thought, Bangura whose ideas are around Ubuntu as pedagogy (Bangura, 2005, 2012) and Malema whose ideas centre around total freedom for Africa, including economic and mental freedom (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020).

Table 1: Stages of Ubuntu and African philosophers

Stage	Examples of African philosophers and their years of life	Comments
(1) <i>Sankofa</i> (2) <i>Tu</i>	There were no individual philosophers. Philosophy was collective and communal in all African peoples – the Bantu, Kush, Ba, Khoi, San, Hadza and Sandawe.	Even though there were individual philosophers Mbande, Zara, Anton, Nehanda, Yaa and others, most of Africa's philosophical ideas existed in communities collectively, for example, Ubuntu.
(3) <i>Shosholoz</i>	Mbande Nzinga, Angola (1583-1663) Zara Yaqob, Ethiopia (1599-1692) Anton Amo, Ghana/Germany (1703-1755) Nehanda, Zimbabwe (1862-1898) Yaa Asantewa, Ghana (1840-1921) Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana (1909-1972) Nelson Mandela, South Africa (1918-2013) Kenneth Kaunda, Zambia (1921-2021) Julius Nyerere, Tanzania (1922-1999) Cheikh Anta Diop, Senegal (1923-1986) Robert Mugabe (1923 - 2017)	Under the <i>shosholoz</i> stage, individual philosophers were concerned with resisting colonial religions, dispossession, education and the maintenance of Africa's values.
(4) Ubuntu	Stanlake Samkange, Zimbabwe (1922-1988) Chinua Achebe, Nigeria (1930-2013) Kwasi Wiredu, Ghana (1931-2022) John Mbiti (1931-2019) Dani Wadada Nabudere, Uganda (1932-2011) Ngugi, Wa Thiongo, Kenya (1938-) Kwame Gyekye, Ghana (1939-2019) Lovemore Mbigi, Zimbabwe (1955-2023)	Under the Ubuntu stage, the focus was on putting Ubuntu in the written literature, and in education.
(5) <i>Umoja</i>	Thabo Mbeki, South Africa (1942-) Mogobe Ramose, South Africa (years not known) Molefi Kete Asante, Ghana/America (1942-) Abdul Karim Bangura, Sierra Leone (1953-) Julius Malema, South Africa (1981-) Patrick Loch Otieno Lumumba (1962-) Arikana Chiyedzo Chihombori-Quao (1957-)	Under <i>umoja</i> , the focus is the renaissance.

Now that all stages in the history of Ubuntu and philosophers have been shared, a graphic representation of the stages is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: A history of Ubuntu by stage and years



As shown in Figure 1, *Sankofa* is a stage where less is known at the moment. The *tu* stage was characterised by the expansion of communities in Africa and the development of new languages that named ubuntu differently but closely. The *shosoloza* stage involved resisting the colonisation of African philosophy, which translated to the resistance of colonisation of Africa more broadly. The fourth stage is the current stage of Ubuntu, where the name Ubuntu has become prominent, although, like many other nouns for African philosophy, it comes from the root word *tu*. The prominence was not by mistake, it resulted from several factors including the popularity of the Zulu people and their Kingdom, which stands today and the interaction of Africa's black people which strengthened Ubuntu. The final and fifth stage is the *umoja* stage, the stage of the renaissance. The stages are not completely independent, they feed into each other. For example, *shosoloza* has been an ongoing process and is needed now and in the future to defend the gains. And while the Renaissance is futuristic, there are areas where it will be realised much faster.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The mistaken view that Africa was philosophyless dominated educational systems in Africa, resulting in philosophies from outside being taught and forced on communities. The philosophies from outside mainly came from the Western and Middle-eastern worlds, but also from the Eastern. The West focused more on a philosophy

of individualism, which is the opposite of Africa's philosophy. The Western philosophy also promoted liberalism and competition or survival of the fittest. Together with Middle-Eastern philosophy, they promoted universalism of the religion of Abraham which manifests in Christianity and Islam. Western and Middle-Eastern philosophy both shared a philosophy of dispossession which resulted in the occupation of African land, plunder of its resources and killing of its people. Further, Westerners and Middle-Easterners sought to replace Africa's culture, education, welfare system and languages with their own. Africa too was viewed as scienceless (its science was common sense or senseless), knowledgeless and without a history. However, the history that has been illustrated in this paper shows otherwise.

Through *sankofa*, Africa's philosophy shows that the continent indeed has a long history of knowledge that shapes current knowledge systems. *Sankofa* tells us that before colonisation, Africa had a philosophy that shaped its society. By examining the history of the different groups of Black Africans – the Bantu, Kush, Nile-Sahara, San, Khoi Khoi, Hadza, Sandawe, Mbenga, Mbuti and Twa – we learn that they have related values centred around the family, community, society, environment and spirituality.

The *tu* stage of the history of Africa's philosophy helps us answer the question why the philosophy is named differently in communities of Africa. The *tu* period was characterised by the expansion of their communities and new languages that named Africa's philosophy differently but closely. Further, the *tu* stage shows that despite differences in languages and some ways of living, the core elements of the different communities and groups of people in Africa centre around one common theme as already indicated in the preceding paragraph.

The *shosholozza* stage involved resisting the colonisation of Africa's philosophy on and off the continent. There are important lessons from this stage, including the importance of defending Africa's worldview. There are also practical lessons, for example, writers of Africa's philosophy get inspiration from the works of early philosophers like Mbande, Zara, Anton, Nehanda, Yaa but also Achebe, Diop, Samkange, Wiredu, Mbiti, Nabudere, Thiongo, Gyekye and Mbigi. For academics, including researchers and lecturers, these philosophers provide them with a foundation to build African-centred thinking which shapes learning, policy and practice.

By far, the most influential stage is Ubuntu, the current stage where the noun Ubuntu has become prominent as the name of the philosophy. After colonists were defeated in most communities of Africa, there was a realisation that Africa's philosophy needed revival. This resulted in more work on its philosophy, mainly focusing on the stage of Ubuntu. With more literature on it, Ubuntu started to influence the political discourse of Africa, mainly in South Africa. This gave Africans confidence to walk with their philosophy. In social work and development, there has been a lot of work on Ubuntu, resulting in African social work being synonymous with Ubuntu social work. It is important to begin to talk about Ubuntu development. Major challenges at this stage include the westernisation of Ubuntu but this is being fought by academics, thinkers and researchers. The Western view of Ubuntu, which should be rejected outright, says Ubuntu is about: (1) being generous and receiving; (2) being accepting, non-judgemental or accommodating; (3) embracing all values or change without question; (4) embracing human rights without responsibilities; (5) disconnecting people from nature and spirituality; and (6) adopting 'sorry' forms of social justice (apology, forgiveness and reconciliation) without return, replacement restoration, reparation, restitution and retribution;. Further, (7) the Western view is that Ubuntu started recently in South or Southern Africa.

The final stage is *umoya*, the stage of Renaissance and African centredness. African philosophy is becoming the dominant worldview for Africa, however, it shall reach a stage when it becomes the dominant worldview of Africa. That stage is the Renaissance or *umoya*. The importance of the Renaissance is that it gives Africans more confidence in themselves – their science, language, religion, education and values of family, community, environment and spirituality. The benefits are that, education at all levels – pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary – becomes African-centred. The products of such an education system – scientists, researchers, teachers, social workers, development workers, even security people, politicians and business people, become people-centred, all working for an Africa that is able to compete with the rest of the world.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the preceding discussion, it is recommended that the history of Africa's philosophy and the philosophy itself be embedded in all educational systems of Africa. Ubuntu dominates at the moment, however, it is not the only stage. If all stages are taught, then the learner (and educator) can see the whole picture. Ubuntu presents one part of the story of Africa's philosophy. A philosophy will be more useful if it links with the future, hence it is important to include *umoya* or the Renaissance in the teaching or learning of Africa's philosophy. Another recommendation is for the complete denial of the Western interpretation of Ubuntu because it is neo-colonial in the sense that it advances their agenda, and their interpretation of what African society should be.

## CONCLUSION

There is no comprehensive history of Africa's philosophy for reasons including colonisation and neo-colonisation that resulted in its philosophy's neglect and under-studying compared to Eastern, Middle-Eastern and Western philosophies. In this article, the history of Africa philosophy was divided into five stages – *sankofa*, *tu*, *shosholozu*, *Ubuntu* and *umoya*. In these stages, all groups of Black people of Africa - the Bantu, Kush, Ba, Khoi, San, Hadza and Sandawe are included. These groups share related values centred around the family, community, society, environment and spirituality. From this history, we learn that Ubuntu did not start recently, Africa is not philosophyless and that Ubuntu cannot be attributed to Bantu people alone but all Black people of Africa. This history contributes to a better education for Africa where scientists, researchers, teachers, social workers, development workers, even security people, politicians and business people – become African-centred, all working for an Africa whose knowledge, innovations and capabilities compete with the rest of the world on an equal footing. It is recommended that the history of Africa's philosophy and the philosophy itself be embedded in all its levels of 'formal' or 'informal' education and this will be more useful if all stages, from *sankofa* to *umoya* are included. Knowledge of Africa's philosophy would make education, research and practice more appropriate to Africa, especially in the fields of social work and development where colonial knowledge, values and practices have been dominant.

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