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In Search of an African Theory of Democracy: Utilising the Tiv Cultural Philosophy of Ya-Na-Angbian

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically assessed the lacunae in African political scholarship, particularly the lack of a comprehensive democratic theory that rigorously defined the principles, interpretations, norms, and essence of democracy as practised across the continent. It advocated for a thorough examination of indigenous democratic values, practices, and concepts, specifically through the perspective of the Tiv cultural philosophy of Ya-Na-Angbian, which translates to “eat and give to your brother.” This philosophy, characterised by its principles of egalitarianism and communal solidarity, has the potential to significantly contribute to the formulation of a unique African democratic theory. Grounded in indigenous knowledge systems and cultural philosophies, such a theory could catalyse substantive and sustainable development throughout Africa. Utilising the Communitarian Theory as its analytical framework and drawing from a wide array of secondary sources, the paper employed descriptive and expository methodologies to elucidate the fundamental tenets of Ya-Na-Angbian. It highlighted the principles of egalitarianism and communal solidarity, assessing their practical relevance in democratic governance and their effectiveness in addressing contemporary socio-political challenges. The study revealed that the Ya-Na-Angbian philosophy, emblematic of Tiv distributive justice, has undergone significant transformations under the influences of Western culture, capitalism, Christianity, and the prevalent “sit-tight” syndrome within Nigerian politics. Consequently, the paper concluded that the erosion of the Ya-Na-Angbian philosophy signals potential political instability in Tiv land. It, therefore, recommends the urgent revitalisation and reaffirmation of Ya-Na-Angbian values to promote peace, progress, and social cohesion not only within Tiv land and Nigeria but across the broader African continent.

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Introduction

The feasibility of an African theory of democracy has historically been met with scepticism within African philosophical circles. For many African political scientists, the notion of formulating a distinct democratic theory tailored to the continent’s specific needs and cultural context has appeared irrational. This scepticism stems primarily from a long-standing tradition of emulating foreign theoretical models and democratic practices, predominantly those rooted in Western

political thought. Consequently, African political discourse has often been characterised by an adherence to external frameworks that may not adequately reflect the socio-political realities and cultural nuances of African societies. However, this perspective is gradually evolving. An increasing number of scholars are recognising the critical importance of leveraging Africa's rich democratic heritage and indigenous values to address its unique challenges.

Fayemi (2009) underscores the imperative to revisit and reintegrate traditional African democratic principles, which emphasise communalism, consensus-building, and participatory governance. These traditional practices offer valuable insights and mechanisms that could be instrumental in developing a more relevant and effective democratic theory for Africa. Since the early 1990s, the African continent has experienced a significant wave of democratisation, characterised by a transition from authoritarian regimes and military dictatorships to more liberal democratic structures. The progress achieved by various African nations in establishing democratic governance has been both remarkable and widespread, signalling a profound shift in the political landscape. Ake (1991) contends that these developments are too significant to be overlooked, as they demonstrate the continent's potential to cultivate and sustain democratic cultures. Ake, who praised Africa's democratisation efforts in 1991, later criticised democracy for hindering development in Africa a decade later. He argued that the political conditions in Africa are the biggest obstacles to development, as African politics are structured to block the pursuit of development and the creation of effective development strategies and programmes (Ake, 2001: 1).

The demand for enhanced governance has catalysed the emergence of pro-democracy movements across African nations, resulting in sustained public demands for reform. Internationally, agencies and donor countries have expressed considerable concerns regarding the persistence of autocratic regimes in African states. The global advocacy for universal human rights and dignified living conditions, combined with the potential for improved bilateral relations with non-dictatorial governments, has further intensified the internal impetus towards the establishment of democratic governance in Africa. The quest for a democratic theory that resonates with the African context remains a significant academic and practical challenge. Conventional Western democratic models often fall short in addressing the unique socio-cultural, economic, and political realities of African societies. This inadequacy has led to a disconnect between democratic ideals and the lived experiences of many Africans, thereby impeding the effectiveness and legitimacy of democratic governance on the continent. It is against this background that we explore the possibility of Africa adopting the Tiv cultural philosophy of ya-na-angbian as a democratic theory for political stability and enhanced development.

The Tiv people of Nigeria offer a rich cultural heritage that includes the philosophy of Ya-Na-Angbian, which emphasises communal consensus, mutual respect, and collective decision-making. This philosophy presents a potential framework for an African-centric democratic theory that aligns more closely with the values and social structures inherent in many African communities. However, there has been limited academic exploration into how Ya-Na-Angbian can be systematically integrated into a broader theoretical construct of democracy that is both authentically African and practically applicable in modern governance.

The problem this research seeks to address is the development of an African theory of democracy by critically examining and adapting the Tiv cultural philosophy of Ya-Na-Angbian. The aim is to bridge the gap between indigenous African political thought and contemporary democratic practices, providing a model that enhances democratic legitimacy and effectiveness in African nations. This investigation will explore the principles of Ya-Na-Angbian, assess its compatibility with democratic ideals, and propose ways it can be incorporated into an African theory of democracy that reflects the continent's diverse cultural contexts.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Communitarian Theory (CT), which emerged prominently in the latter half of the 20th century, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s. Scholars like Amitai Etzioni and others spearheaded the development and elucidation of communitarian principles in response to perceived deficiencies in both liberal individualism and authoritarian collectivism. Etzioni's influential works, notably "The Spirit of Community" (1993) and "The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society" (1998), played a pivotal role in shaping and disseminating communitarian theory during this pivotal era.

Assumptions of CT

The following are the basic assumptions of this theory:

1. Primacy of community
2. Shared values and norms
3. Critique of individualism
4. Role of institutions and leadership
5. Balancing rights and responsibilities

Application of CT to the Study

This theory is suitable for explicating this study as illustrated below:

Assumption Number 1: Primacy of Community

Communitarian theory asserts the indispensability of communities for human flourishing and advocates for their prioritisation in political and social frameworks. In this study, the Tiv cultural philosophy of Ya-Na-Angbian accentuates the central role of community cohesion and solidarity. The Tiv emphasise collective decision-making through councils and consensus-building, thereby embodying communitarian ideals that prioritise community welfare within democratic governance structures.

Assumption Number 2: Shared Values and Norms

Communitarianism underscores the significance of shared values and norms that govern communal existence. The Tiv cultural philosophy of Ya-Na-Angbian exemplifies this principle by emphasising reverence for elders, communal stewardship of resources, and the resolution of conflicts through collective deliberation. These shared values constitute the foundation for democratic processes that prioritise consensus-building and communal concord over individualistic pursuits.

Assumption Number 3: Critique of Individualism

Communitarian theory offers a critique of the predominant individualism within liberal democracy, which tends to neglect the communal aspects of human life. Within the study's framework, communitarian perspectives critique Western-centric democratic paradigms that may prioritise individual rights over communal duties. Conversely, the Tiv philosophy of Ya-Na-Angbian proposes an African-centered approach in which democratic principles are rooted in cultural traditions emphasising communal responsibilities and solidarity.

Assumption Number 4: Role of Institutions and Leadership

Communitarianism underscores the significance of institutions and leadership in cultivating community welfare and engagement. This study employs communitarian principles to explore how Tiv leaders uphold communal norms, mediate disputes, and promote inclusive decision-making processes. Leaders are viewed not merely as representatives but as guardians of communal harmony and custodians of cultural traditions integral to democratic governance.

Assumption Number 5: Balancing Rights and Responsibilities

Communitarian theory espouses a harmonious equilibrium between individual rights and communal obligations. Within the Tiv cultural context, this equilibrium manifests in democratic processes that safeguard individual liberties while simultaneously aligning decisions with community norms and aspirations. This approach ensures that democratic governance transcends mere procedural mechanisms to encompass substantive adherence to cultural values that foster social unity and communal welfare.

Conceptual Clarifications

Conceptualising Democracy

Democracy, as both a concept and a governance system with ancient origins, embodies a framework wherein citizens are vested with the authority to determine their own aspirations. Robert Dahl delineates three indispensable conditions essential for the effective operation of a multiparty democracy: (a) vigorous competition among political candidates and their respective factions or parties; (b) political participation enabling the electorate to freely and equitably elect candidates; and (c) civil and political liberties safeguarding citizens' ability to express themselves without fear of reprisal (Dahl, 1971: 221).

Similarly, Diamond defines democracy as encompassing not only a civilian, constitutional, multiparty regime featuring regular, free, and fair elections and universal suffrage but also organisational and informational pluralism, extensive civil liberties, effective authority for elected officials, and operational autonomy for the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government (Diamond, 1988). Despite the myriad interpretations of democracy, a recurrent theme underscores that values should not be imposed upon any populace. Democracy underscores freedoms, the separation of powers, majority rule, and the sovereignty of the people. It places a high premium on political and ethical principles such as equality, reciprocity, and respect for diverse perspectives—values that resonate with the Tiv cultural philosophy of Ya-na-Angbian.

The Interplay Between Democracy and Development in African Contexts

One of the most significant challenges posed by the concept of democracy is its effective implementation across diverse societies. This challenge has led to the emergence of various forms and stages of democracy, stimulating considerable debate regarding the relationship between democracy and development. Ake (1993) emphasises the essential role of democracy in fostering development in Africa, suggesting a direct causal connection between the two. Indeed, a noticeable correlation exists between the absence of democratic practices in African politics and the decline of economic conditions. Governments that lack accountability to their citizens are more likely to pursue socio-economic policies that fail to adequately address the needs of the population. A thorough examination of the evolution of democratic principles and practices globally indicates that democratic governance is firmly grounded in universal human values such as dignity and freedom.

Failures in democratic governance, particularly in Africa, are often attributed more to deficiencies in institutions rather than inherent limitations in developmental capacity (Lipset, 2000).

Democracy has arguably inflicted more detriments than benefits in Africa, particularly in nations such as Nigeria, where politicians have converted state power into a tool for the primitive accumulation of public resources for personal enrichment. The outcomes of practising democracy in Nigeria include rampant corruption, insecurity, economic hardship, economic inequality, and political violence. In both Nigeria and Africa at large, political power has become the primary avenue to wealth, security, and overall well-being. As a result, political competition has taken on the nature of warfare, facilitating the rise of violence specialists, namely the military. This dynamic is why Ake (2001) attributes military interventions in governance and politics to African politicians. He argues that military rule in Africa was not instigated by military intervention per se, but rather by the inherently warlike nature of politics, which inevitably positioned military specialists in leadership roles (Ake, 2001: 6). As of the time of writing, military rule prevails in five African countries: Burkina Faso, Mali, Sudan, Niger, and Gabon. The widespread corruption, economic hardship, and insecurity across the continent indicate that more African countries may fall under military rule in the future.

Historical Perspectives on The Ya-Na-Angbian Philosophy: A Brief Analysis

The philosophy of Ya-na-Angbian is a socio-political and cultural framework deeply embedded within the Tiv people of Central Nigeria. Notably, this philosophy also resonates with other African tribes, particularly within Nigeria, which often draw on its principles to affirm their unique identities (Akaa and Anongu, 2015). Ya-na-Angbian is an ancient philosophy tracing its origins to the very inception of the Tiv people. It gained prominence in the early 19th century as one of the significant African existential philosophies. As Anshi Martin Wang (2004) elucidates, the term Ya-na-Angbian translates to “Eat and give your brother,” encapsulating principles akin to those advocated by Julius Nyerere in his Ujamaa political system. Ujamaa emphasised indigenous African values of brotherhood, communal living, and mutual support, paralleling the fraternity central to Ya-na-Angbian.

This philosophy, intrinsic to Tiv socio-political thought, is founded on the concept of kinship ties and profoundly influences the political ethos of the Tiv people. It embodies core principles of fairness, altruism, equity, and responsibility (Wang, 2004). The Tiv nation historically grappled with majority/minority issues with northern tribes, who initially perceived Benue State (predominantly Tiv) as an annexation of the North. Additionally, power-sharing disputes during the Benue-Plateau era necessitated the revitalisation and popularisation of Ya-na-Angbian. This was done to unite the Tiv people and assert their rightful claim to state resources, thus reinforcing the philosophy’s significance in their socio-political landscape.

Principles of the Philosophy of Ya-na-angbian

As articulated by Akaa and Anongu (2015: 3), the philosophy of Ya-na-Angbian is founded on several core principles: fairness/justice/equity, altruism, hospitality, responsibility, and transparency. A concise elucidation of these principles is provided below:

Fairness/Justice/Equity

Ya-na-Angbian is a philosophy fundamentally anchored in the principle of fairness. It emphasises justice and asserts that leadership across all levels should not be monopolised by any single tribe, region, or group but should instead be a collective responsibility shared among all qualified individuals, tribes, or groups. Politically, Ya-na-Angbian rejects the prevalent Nigerian notion of “winner takes all” and stands against ethnic-based politics, greed, and selfishness. This philosophical

framework advocates for fairness in all domains, whether political or economic. According to Akiga, the entire philosophy of Ya-na-Angbian is predicated on the principle of equity (Akaa and Anongu, 2015: 3).

Altruism/Brotherhood

This principle opposes egoism and selfishness, advocating for altruism, which entails a natural and moral consideration for others and a dedication to their interests. A Tiv individual exemplifies selflessness and eschews all forms of greed, sharing even the last morsel of food with his brother, embodying the belief that “ka ingin iwaren or ye”-“it is this one that saves somebody.” This act of sharing, irrespective of the quantity, signifies a deep-seated invitation for communal participation. The brotherhood observed among the Tiv parallels the family piety promoted by Confucius in his principle of “jen.” In any circumstance, the Tiv person remains hospitable and open-hearted towards others.

Hospitality

Hospitality is integral to the philosophy of Ya-na-Angbian and reflects enduring African values among the Tiv people. It entails a spontaneous and generous welcome for strangers and visitors, who are readily integrated into the community with offered land, under the understanding it reverts upon departure. Unlike Western customs, no formal invitations are needed for visits among Tiv, who greet visitors warmly and share meals without reservation. Symbolic gestures like offering water in a calabash, native fruits, and preparing a meal in honour of guests underscore their hospitality. Misconceptions about Tiv hospitality, such as allegations of offering wives to guests, are unfounded; instead, Tiv exemplifies sharing resources with neighbours and guests alike, guided by principles of communal solidarity and universal brotherhood.

Responsibility

Responsibility denotes an obligation to manage or care for someone or something to avoid blame. The Ya-na-Angbian philosophy imposes a substantial duty on leaders to serve the populace they govern. Accordingly, the principles of Ya-na-Angbian repudiate any endeavour by individuals to accumulate material wealth and leverage it to attain absolute power, as authority emanates from the people (Wegh, 1998). This democratic doctrine confers ultimate authority upon the citizenry, underscoring the necessity for leaders to eschew selfishness, corruption, and other public vices that undermine and jeopardise the public’s confidence in governance.

Communalism

Communalism, while not exclusive to Africa, is deeply integrated into the African way of life, often manifesting through communal living or shared property. This perspective, rooted in the belief that the community exists for individual benefit, highlights the importance of understanding the concept of community. Jibo (1993) emphasises the significance of communal living, which fosters solidarity and mutual support among Africans. Contributions to the community are seen as vital for collective growth and individual fulfilment, as reflected in the sayings, “We are the community, and the community is us” and “I am because we are; and since we are, I am.” Communalism promotes mutual protection and celebrates shared success. In Tiv society, the Swem oath enforces adherence to communal principles, ensuring justice and regulating social relationships for the common good.

Transparency/Public Purity

Ya na Angbian underscores transparency and public purity as essential principles for leaders and their followers. Jibo’s (1993) analysis of Tiv political behaviour from 1959 to 1993 demonstrates this,

with Tiv leaders swearing affidavits to expose the uncompromising actions of their peers. This egalitarian socio-political philosophy rejects individualism and promotes collective, communal, and brotherly piety. It emphasises fraternal love, translating into benevolence towards one's brother, ensuring his needs are met, and fostering trust and confidence in leadership. Such trust cultivates responsibility and altruism among leaders. Upholding these principles is vital for addressing deprivation, public marginalisation, oppression, abandonment, and selective treatment of ethnic groups within society.

Ya-Na-Angbian Philosophy and Democratic Challenges in Africa

In their efforts to justify the imposition of "civilised" governance on their colonial territories, European imperialists portrayed African pre-colonial political structures as barbaric, autocratic, and oppressive. However, this characterisation was fundamentally flawed, as numerous traditional African societies possessed well-established pre-colonial democratic governance philosophies. For instance, the Zulu people of South Africa embraced Ubuntu-'I am what I am because of who we all are'-while the Tiv people of Central Nigeria adhered to the democratic philosophy of Ya-na-angbian.

The Tiv people adopted the Ya-na-angbian philosophy with the goal of enhancing societal cohesion, stability, democracy, and development. Literally translating to 'eat and give to your brother', this principle advocates for the fair and equitable distribution of social and political resources across various segments of Tiv society (Wang, 2004). It embodies values such as fairness, altruism, equity, and responsibility (Wang, 2004).

The highlighting of the Tiv philosophy of Ya-na-angbian aims to advocate for, evaluate, and promote this element of African democratic and political philosophy. It addresses prevalent issues such as corruption, greed, domination, discrimination, nepotism, and marginalisation, which persist not only within Tiv society but also in other similar African societies influenced by imported liberal democracies. Moreover, it seeks to elucidate the fundamental significance of this theory in contemporary Tiv politics and stability, emphasising that Ya-na-angbian promotes not just sharing but also unconditional fraternal and transparent service to humanity.

The philosophy of Ya-na-angbian is crucial as it exposes deficiencies in modern democratic conceptions, elucidates its authentic meaning, and proposes integration and implementation strategies for Africa. It advances a socio-political theory with global relevance concerning the equitable distribution of leadership roles, wealth, and genuine service to humanity. By emphasising fair and equitable power and wealth sharing, the theory of Ya-na-angbian has the potential to mitigate biases and prejudices that afflict corrupt African societies, particularly amidst ethno-religious crises, corruption, greed, self-centeredness, and marginalisation. Additionally, it could counteract issues such as rampant individualism, nepotism, and dominance by unscrupulous African leaders who claim exclusive competence to rule.

Firstly, it is essential to recognise that Ya-na-angbian, as a traditional political and democratic philosophy, encompasses more than mere justice and fairness, as evidenced by practices like zoning and power rotation. Secondly, Ya-na-angbian implies zoning, power rotation, selfless service to humanity, democratic consolidation, and holistic societal development. Thirdly, this philosophy, through lending-injo, allows for positions to be allocated outside a specific segment if they fail to produce competent candidates for election. Fourthly, this democratic philosophy holds promise in addressing leadership challenges such as embezzlement, greed, widespread corruption, alienation, and ethno-religious crises that have impeded progress and development in Tiv society. Lastly, there is an urgent need to institutionalise this socio-political philosophy within the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Customary Law in The Traditional Tiv System

Swem serves as a swift justice mechanism among the Tiv people, targeting individuals known as “bad mbatsav” (plural: mbatsay), characterised by their deliberate malevolence, selfishness, and disruptive behaviour within the community (Tsaaior, 2015: 605). These individuals are believed to harbour evil intentions and employ supernatural powers to harm others, prompting the establishment of the Swem oath to maintain justice and peace.

The Swem oath ensures equitable justice for all Tiv people, addressing crimes categorised as inherently evil (Kwagh-bo), such as murder, adultery, incest, and suicide, which are believed to bring calamities if not expeditiously resolved. Social disturbances (Kwagh-dzaniyol), including rape, theft, and arson, also require swift adjudication, varying in severity and punishment based on deliberations by community elders (Kyoon-Achan, 2013).

As a critical means of conflict resolution, the Swem oath is taken by parties involved in disputes and their witnesses, swiftly settling matters. Tiv oral traditions emphasise a strong aversion to deceit, with the Swem effectively ensuring the truthfulness of claims and bringing liars to immediate justice (Iorundu and Jiki, 2019).

Accused individuals who refuse to confess to crimes undergo the Swem oath ordeal. In this process, as described by Aboh (2005: 16), they solemnly declare on the Swem pot:

“This Swem, listen! If I am aware of any involvement with witches, or if I have offered my child to be killed by witches, or if I have acted against the welfare of my community or brethren, may this Swem cause my stomach to swell until death claims me! But if innocent of these charges, may I remain unharmed, while all conspirators suffer death.”

If guilty, the Swem divination pot causes swelling in the legs and abdomen of the accused, resulting in immediate death. This process serves to curb abuse of power and excessive behaviour among potential leaders within Tiv society.

In contemporary Tiv society, however, the Swem, which used to be a symbol of justice, has lost its sacredness and mystical force in ensuring justice (Agundu, 2006). This decline is attributed to people hiding under the guise of Christianity to avoid swearing by Swem, describing it as ungodly and devilish. Consequently, the Bible has replaced Swem in matters of oath-taking and other related activities. Unlike the Swem, the Bible does not react drastically and promptly to those who swear by it and then act contrary or inappropriately (Agundu and Tughhemba, 2020).

Benefits of The Philosophy of Ya-Na-Angbian

The philosophy of Ya-Na-Angbian offers African states an opportunity to move away from self-centeredness, injustice, corruption, and ethnic bias when addressing national issues. For example, prioritising fairness can encourage diligence and equitable treatment among citizens, influencing policies like power rotation and resource allocation to benefit all. This approach would notably decrease inter- and intra-ethnic tensions across African nations.

Likewise, emphasising hospitality can cultivate tolerance between diverse ethnic groups and mitigate the effects of religious and tribal conflicts that often displace communities. Fostering a spirit of hospitality could also mend diplomatic relations strained by disagreements, promoting peaceful coexistence and mobility within African nations.

Finally, embracing the principle of responsibility would guide leaders in fulfilling their duties and serving humanity effectively. Many current African leaders lack the necessary vision and dedication,

resorting to authoritarian measures to suppress demands for justice. Therefore, adopting and implementing Ya-Na-Angbian's principles by conscientious Africans could enhance governance by promoting justice, tolerance, and commitment. If integrated as an African theory of democracy, this Tiv cultural philosophy has the potential to transform Africa's cultural heritage and spur development across the continent.

Challenges of Implementing the Principles of Ya-Na-Angbian in Tiv Land

1. **Cultural Erosion:** The influence of Western culture, globalisation, and modernisation has led to the erosion of traditional Tiv values, including Ya-Na-Angbian. This cultural shift poses a challenge to preserving and revitalising indigenous democratic principles.
2. **Political Instability:** The "sit-tight" syndrome and entrenched power dynamics within Nigerian politics undermine the democratic ideals of egalitarianism and communal solidarity advocated by Ya-Na-Angbian. This political instability hampers effective governance and implementation of democratic principles.
3. **Educational and Awareness Gaps:** There may be gaps in education and awareness among the Tiv population regarding the principles and importance of Ya-Na-Angbian. Lack of understanding or misconceptions about these values can hinder their acceptance and adoption.
4. **Social and Economic Pressures:** Socio-economic pressures, including poverty, unemployment, and inequality, can undermine community solidarity and the practical application of Ya-Na-Angbian principles in everyday life.
5. **Adaptation to Modern Realities:** Adapting Ya-Na-Angbian principles to contemporary socio-political contexts and challenges requires careful consideration and adaptation. Ensuring their relevance and effectiveness in addressing modern issues such as governance, economic development, and social justice is crucial but challenging.
6. **Leadership and Governance:** Effective leadership and governance structures are essential for implementing Ya-Na-Angbian principles. Challenges such as corruption, nepotism, and ineffective leadership can obstruct efforts to promote transparency, accountability, and communal solidarity as envisioned by Ya-Na-Angbian.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has critically examined the lacunae within African political scholarship, particularly the absence of a comprehensive democratic theory that adequately reflects the principles and practices of democracy as experienced across the continent. By advocating for a rigorous exploration of indigenous democratic values, with a specific focus on the Tiv cultural philosophy of Ya-Na-Angbian, this study has underscored the potential of such indigenous frameworks to contribute significantly to the development of a distinct African democratic theory. Rooted in communitarian principles and characterised by egalitarianism and fraternal solidarity, Ya-Na-Angbian offers valuable insights into how democratic governance can be grounded in indigenous knowledge systems to address contemporary socio-political challenges.

Utilising the Communitarian Theory as an analytical lens and drawing on a diverse range of secondary sources, this paper has elucidated the core tenets of Ya-Na-Angbian, highlighting its transformative potential within democratic governance despite the influences of Westernization, capitalism, Christianisation, and local political dynamics. It has been demonstrated that while Ya-Na-Angbian faces challenges such as cultural erosion and political instability within Tiv land, its revival and reaffirmation present opportunities for fostering peace, progress, and social cohesion not only within Tiv society but also across Nigeria and the broader African context.

Recommendations

Firstly, there is an imperative for enhanced engagement with indigenous philosophies. Scholars and policymakers are called upon to prioritise a rigorous exploration of indigenous democratic philosophies, exemplified by Ya-Na-Angbian. This initiative should encompass scholarly research, educational endeavours, and sustained dialogue aimed at deepening understanding and facilitating the practical application of these philosophies within contemporary governance frameworks in Africa.

Secondly, there is a critical need for the development of a sustainable democratic framework. Acknowledging the foundational importance of indigenous philosophies is pivotal in crafting a sustainable and inclusive democratic framework that authentically resonates with African contexts. This endeavour entails integrating principles grounded in egalitarianism, communal solidarity, and distributive justice into the structural framework and operational practices of governance.

Lastly, there is an opportunity to harness cultural heritage for democratic progress. Africa stands poised to leverage its rich cultural heritage as a transformative catalyst for advancing meaningful democratic development and effective governance. This strategic utilisation ensures that governance practices are enriched by indigenous traditions, thereby fostering societal cohesion and resilience in addressing multifaceted socio-political challenges facing Africa.

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