

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# African Philosophy: The Question of Periodization and African Historical Events from Ancient Era to 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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**Abstract:** This paper set out to interrogate periodization attempts on African Philosophy. There were versions of perspectives to those attempts, as well as factors behind the intellectual activities that characterized them. While some could be conceptual, others could be as a result of alignment with the Western periodization scheme. Here comes the problem. Following the point that some of these scholars had conceptual misguide and aligned with the Western periodization scheme, they dated African philosophy from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Pondering on this, the paper found out that there were two cardinal factors behind this, namely: 1) misconception of what philosophy really means and implies, 2) Western influences which had not only questioned African wisdom but also politicized African philosophical history. It is against this backdrop that the paper argued that dating African philosophy should extend backwards to ancient era and then to the events of today so as to postulate what would be the future of African Philosophy. In the end, the paper presented an African view of philosophy that would not only justify its arguments but would also give a direction to what philosophy means and implies. It also gave a direction on how not to always copy everything trending in Western philosophical tradition and address it as an African Philosophy. Finally, it further interrogated today's events that are threats to humanity, all of which that raise philosophical questions and beg for philosophical and historical documentation as they are life-changing events. The paper adopted historical and conceptual analyses as methods. The historical method helped in interrogating previous scholars and African events that shaped African experience. Conceptual analytic method helped in an insightful postulation of a better periodization option than those already had through a critical analysis of African experiences.

**Keywords:** African Philosophy, African History, Antiquity Era, Political Era, Modern Era, Contemporary Era, Periodization, African Experience

## 1 Introduction

The attempt to periodize African philosophy is an activity that shows a higher consciousness from African philosophers and historians to restructure African philosophy and historiography more comprehensively. Many factors underline such scholarly exercise: 1) African conception of philosophy, 2) to ensure ordered historical structure of African philosophy. Conceptual factor determines even the descriptive names of philosophy and then its historiography; and that explains why, in the case of African philosophy, it is described as an 'ethno-philosophy'. The enthusiasm for more orderliness and comprehensive history of African philosophy explains why some scholars regionalize the history, and others, according to the historical experiences of Africans.

What are the potential conflicts in this historical exercise? (1) One has to do with the periodization of the philosophies of African indigenes who philosophized in Western mentality. (2) One has to do with the periodization of non-Africans who philosophized in Africa and whose philosophical ideologies had a lot of socio-religious and political impacts in Africa. (3) One has to do with ascertaining, if truly, there was really philosophical exercise during the period many African scholars referred to as 'medieval period' but which the paper referred to as 'African Dark Age'. 'Dark' here follows from the fact that it was an era of the predicaments that befell Africans from the Western imperialist movement. (4) One has to do with the appropriate term to describe this exercise: could it be the best described as period(ization), era, epoch, dating, time, moments, etc.?

These are salient issues that must not be swept under the carpet, as they stand so influential in the exercise. Even though this paper used 'periodization' as a matter of linguistic convenience,

it nonetheless adopted 'era' as the appropriate term, and subsequently proposed for a quadruple era of African philosophical historiography; namely (1) the Ancient/Antiquity Era, (2) the Political Era (Dark Age), (3) the Modern Era and then (4) the Contemporary Era.

## 2 On the Concept of Philosophy

The term 'philosophy', as history holds, is first scholarly used by the Samosian mathematician, Pythagoras who, in his attempt to appreciate the wonders of the human wisdom as expressed with the intellectual capability in interrogating certain existential situations, coined the term. Thus, even 'philosophy' as a term is a product of wonder and appreciation of wisdom expressed with the human intellect in interacting with existential facts. However, as a term, in its etymology, 'philosophy' is Greek—*philein* (or *philo* in Latin) meaning 'love' or 'friend/ship' and *sophia* meaning 'wisdom', hence the 'love or friend for/of wisdom' or better still, 'being in friendship with wisdom' hence a 'philosopher' becomes a 'lover/friend of wisdom'. The implication here is that 'practicality' is inhered in the concept, 'philosophy'. That is to say that to validate/affirm its wisdom, philosophy must be applied to real existential situation; it does not end in theory or something out-there, but in-here.

However, today in a broader perception, the 'wisdom' here is sometimes interchanged, by some scholars, with the term 'knowledge'. But knowledge does not mean and imply exactly one and same thing with 'wisdom'. Thus, it may be asked: what is *wisdom*, and how can one *love (be-friend) wisdom*? Or, is philosophy all about being defined as *love of wisdom*? First, to 'love' here connotes the idea of critically and logically searching for wisdom and sincerely applying it in life to bring about results. 'Wisdom' here presupposes the idea of 'innate knowledge', expression of high cognitive tendency which could be termed a 'gift of/from nature'. It associates with the human sense of perception or 'common sense'; by this, it manifests through human common sense. According to Makumba (2005, p. 32), wisdom can be defined as "certain knowledge of the deepest causes of everything." This implies that "the wise man is the one who has certain knowledge about the most general causes of everything, and not just in some particular specialty as is commonly understood." In this definition, 'wisdom' (certain knowledge of the deepest causes of everything or certain knowledge about the most general causes of everything) is differentiated from intelligence which is the product of educational process (knowledge on some particular specialty).

Wisdom is a gift from Nature in an ontological perspective, to creatures especially as experienced human beings. Essentially, it is more valid than academic intelligence/excellence. Intelligence is knowledge on a particular issue but wisdom is in whole in itself. It is the bedrock upon which intelligence is initiated and commendably sustained. But what does it really entail to be intelligent? To be intelligent is to be scholarly or educated to be able to write, speak, read and display every possible logicity and criticality as an educated individual. But to be wise necessarily needs not to be educated and crack brain for logicity and criticality. All these ingredients are contained in the words, actions and thoughts of the wise person but not in a scholarly way. When a wise person acts, speaks or thinks, the academically intelligent person may even find it difficult to clearly and easily understand him/her. The wise person communes and understands with nature. His/her teacher is 'nature' while the teacher of the academic intelligent/excellent person is his/her fellow 'intelligent person'. It is based on this perspective that the African sages who initiated certain critical and philosophical thoughts, circumscribing them into words and expressions were philosophers by nature, but not by profession. The only thing differentiating theirs from that of the professional (modern) philosophers is articulating and dispensing their thoughts globally and equally individualizing or particularizing them, but the point remains that all these thoughts express certain wonders and criticalities and equally picture existential realities found in those environments where they lived and invented proverbs, thoughts, sayings and texts. That is why Oruka (1978, p. 3-4) insists that the sages were philosophers and were really "critical independent thinkers who guided their thoughts and judgments by the power of reason and inborn insight rather than by authority of communal consensus." Imbo (1998, p. 26) toeing same perspective still insists that "the result of sagacity is a critical effort, which is the property of individuals rather than the community at large." In the above citations, the phrases 'inborn insight' and 'critical effort' refer to nothing but the concept of wisdom which is the central character in philosophizing. The implications of these citations are that the qualifications in philosophy as a discipline in modern era are not enough reasons to dismiss the thoughts of the sages as less-philosophical or even uncritical. After all, Oruka writes:

*What we know as the Chinese philosophy is no more than Confucianism from Con-*

*fucius (551-479 BC), Taoism from Lao-tzu, Maoism from Mo-Ti and Maoism from chairman Mao-Tse-tung. We must note that these philosophies are not harmonious with each other. We call them Chinese philosophy only because they are composed by Chinese thinkers or philosophers (1991, 31).*

Generally, there are some inseparable thematic terms that are inherent in the defining of philosophy, terms like: (1) curiosity/desire- strong feeling/hunger to acquire/possess more knowledge about things/phenomena- anything at all, hence 'being'. (2) Criticality- the procedural thoroughness and rigorousness in reflection as the act of philosophizing. (3) Truth-identification with that which is. This position presupposes that the epistemological process (act of knowing) or better still, the 'howness' of arriving at 'truth', is most necessary than the truth itself (the known) and the epistemological enquirer (the knower). It is in this 'howness' that reflections, questionings and criticality surface for affirmation of what the process has produced as the end-product or truth of the epistemological enquiry/search. It is based on this that a scholar like Omoregbe (1985, p. 3, 8) would insist that "the essence of philosophy is not argument but reflection. . . . Wherever there is reflection on the fundamental questions about man or. . . the universe. . . there is philosophy." So, for him, to philosophize "is to reflect on human experience in search of answers to some fundamental questions." Standing on this, he contends that "philosophy is a rational search for answers to the questions that arise in the mind when we reflect on human experience" or "a rational search for answers to the basic questions about the ultimate meaning of reality as a whole and human life in particular" (Omoregbe, 2011, p. 3). For a scholar like Chukwudum Barnabas Okolo, even in his confusion state as to what truly philosophy means and implies, philosophy is:

*A form of critical inquiry into things and their causes, human experience, and man's role and prospects in it. It is in short the highest form of inquiry because it alone involves no presuppositions, no taking anything for granted. Philosophy thus questions everything including itself. . . . Philosophy tries to give a coherent, systematic account of the multi-faceted reality, of all nature and how man knows and interprets it. Philosophy indeed addresses itself to all sorts of problems which burden the human mind and which are important to or confront man in their kinds and intensity (1993, 3-4).*

What is outstanding in all these definitions is the expression of wisdom to interact with human existential challenges, raising certain questions about human beings, their nature and place in the community of beings and their environment. That is what this paper conceives as philosophy and act of philosophizing. It is based on this that philosophy immediately implies when the idea of being which presupposes the fact of existence, is mentioned. That explains why the paper argues that African philosophy dates back to time immemorial. Philosophy emerges when there is an activity by human persons to explore and come up with a philosophy, a philosophical position about a certain phenomenon. This human activity of philosophizing, especially as it concerns African peoples, to simply put it, started from the ancient times. Periodization of African Philosophy and schools of philosophizing in Africa is only but expressions and affirmations of conceptual incongruities among African scholars. Philosophy and activities characterizing philosophizing were unfortunately misconceived by these scholars hence the equation of philosophy/philosophizing to the modern era of formal/Western pattern of education. For them, there is no philosophy or real philosophical activity without formal/Westernized pattern of education. However, the paper shall now go on to engage how African Philosophy and the activities of philosophizing have been periodized by African scholars.

### **3 Critical Review of African Scholars on the Periodization of African Philosophy**

Many scholars have tried periodizing African Philosophy and classifying African philosophers into schools of thought. They have their reasons for, and criteria in, doing this. Many based this on the African experiences, many others based it on professionalism when philosophy took a professional status, and very many others based it on their conception of what philosophy and doing philosophy designates and plenty others engage in it based on their Western influences. Brief chat on their attempts will give more clarity on this discourse.

Orika (1981) on an attempt to periodize African philosophy argues that there are four characteristic trends or schools of African philosophical thought following the characteristic conceptual schemes that they projected. They include (a) Ethno-philosophy, (b) Philosophical Sagacity, (c) Nationalist Philosophy Ideological Movement and (d) Professional Philosophy.

Analyzing the first trend, Oruka writes that African philosophy “first went through the myth of prephilosophy, a stage at which the black man’s culture and even mind were claimed to be extremely alien to reason, logic and various habits of scientific inquiry” (1991, 45). It is in line with this period also described as ‘folk philosophy’ that the African mentality is described as ‘primitive’. After the pre-philosophical stage came the philosophical sagacity characterized by the wisdom of unknown sages. Their wisdom is the rationale behind instituted culture and norms that form the philosophical basis or justifications of the later philosophers. After this period came the nationalist philosophical ideological movement which is why it is also referred to as the ‘ideological school’ characterized by efforts to develop peculiar African political ideologies for the political emancipation of Africans from the grips of colonialism and by extension, neo-colonialism and generally Western imperialism. The struggle gave insights into African authentic being and personality. The characteristics of the period marked a serious phase of African philosophy. Following the level of consciousness aroused in the ideological school period, came the period of ‘professional philosophy’. As the name suggests, it is the period marked by not only emergence but also the critical, analytical and technical activities of professional philosophers. The period is greatly significant following the full adoption and integration of Western philosophical methodology into African philosophy or act of philosophizing. In fact to some scholars, it is the period of ‘foreign philosophy’, implying the engagement of African philosophical affairs with Western philosophical characteristics.

But Francis Ogunmodede would criticize Oruka contending that his periodization would be “too narrow and inadequate to cope with the galaxy of philosophers and scholars that have surfaced since Ptah-Hotep (2800 BC)” (1995, 10).

Peter Bodunrin is known for his radical and critical approach to African philosophical discourses as he never believed that there was an African philosophy without Western contact. That explains why he has no period before the European-African contact because for him, “everyone would agree that philosophy as a discipline is reflective, rational and systematic. Now it so happens that the research pursued in Africa up till now... does not satisfactorily meet these requirements”, thus, “African thought, if it is thought at all, must encompass philosophy” (1985, 8, 26). For him, African philosophy must be a product of critical exercise after professional study of (Western) philosophy. He argued that even though there could be schools and trends in what was described as African philosophy, nonetheless, “their material is still African myths, folklore, social organization and oral literature and culture” (1985:1x). Be that as it may, according to him, African philosophical schools is generally categorized into two groups to include: (1) Those who “emphasize the present in relation to the past” and (2) Those “who emphasize the present in relation to the future” (1985, xi). While the exponents of traditionalism could stand for the former, the nationalist could stand for the latter. He quickly discarded the wisdom of African sages by which traditional Africans survived and grew responsibly in the olden days. Many scholars with Western influences have maintained such position. Scholars with such mentality include the following: Wiredu (1980; 1984; 1991), Hountondji (1983), Towa (1991), Oruka (1991). But that was quite unfair of these scholars.

Momoh (1985) has three different periods into which he characterized African philosophy; namely: (1) The Ancient period (2) The Transitional Period and (3) The Modern period. He argued that the philosophical trend of the Ancient African philosophy focused on those beliefs and cultural expressions instituted by African unidentified sages that provided bedrock for the reality of an African philosophy. He went on to analyze the feature of the Transitional period as the period when foreigners wrote about Africa and Africans from their various professional understandings. It marked scholarly exercise about African by non-Africans, and that was the transition from indigenes to foreigners. Talking about the Modern period, he reasoned that in this period, African scholarship has grown and Africans took back the authorship of themselves and what could be called their philosophies. Momoh did not take into cognizance that there are trends focusing on different issues lumped into his modern period. Again, Momoh has to identify the rational justification of counting the scholarships of foreigners about African peoples as a period in African philosophy, and the difference between his transitional period and the period of African predicaments.

Still on a tripartite periodization pattern of African philosophy, Keita (1985) proposes the following periods: (1) The Classical period (2) The Medieval period and (3) The Modern periods. He identified the classical period with the Egyptian civilization and philosophy with their influences in the world. He further identified the medieval period as the Islamic scholarly influence in North Africa. He equally identified the period as the era of emirates and empires emergence in African as exemplified in the Ghana, Mali and Songhai empires. Finally, he identified the modern period as ranging from the colonial era till date. Remarking its being

distorted by colonial exercise, he nonetheless recognized its political facet as engineered by African nationalists for African political emancipation. Outstanding in the period in regards to the political ideological struggle for African emancipation are the Negritude movement and the Pan-Africanist movement (1985).

A scholar like Chukwudum Barnabas Okolo goes straight to posit a dualistic phase of philosophy. One phase is described as 'philosophy in Africa' which designates the era of Informality, Pre-literacy, Pre-modern, non-academic or non-professional exercise of philosophic tendencies in Africa. Philosophy in the era is understood in a debased sense and characterized by 'ordinary thinking' (Okolo 1993). For Okolo, the African did not, in a strict and formal sense of philosophy characterized by criticality and pure and high logicity, philosophize; rather s/he expressed his/her worldview in some ways. As cited in Azenabor (1994/95, p. 73), this position aligns with Grahay's that "a world view is not explicit, not systematic, it is not' compared critically to other philosophies and does not include attempts to prove." Describing Okolo's position, Azenabor (2003, p. 95) writes: "To Okolo world-view is something "out there", a universal experience, - already made, independent of the thinking mind, whereas, philosophy is a personal, conscious, critical activity of a reflecting mind." The other phase is described as 'African philosophy' which designates the era of formality, literacy, modern, academic or professional exercise of philosophy. Philosophy here is a product of critical and reflective exercise by an individual hence its characterization as 'African philosophic thinking' (Okolo, 1993). Elaborating more on this, Okolo writes:

*African philosophical thinking... restricts its inquiries to the African and his presence-in-the-world. It is certainly philosophizing but in the context of African experience or world-view. In short African philosophical thinking... is one of the many modes of philosophizing or critically analysing and interpreting reality as different peoples, races, and cultures view it. In African philosophy, therefore, the philosopher reflects and concentrates on African reality, on the African, his role and place in it and not on reality as such nor on man in the abstract (1993, 6).*

This conceptualization shows what philosophy is to Okolo which finally manifests in Okolo's historiography of African philosophy. Periodizing African philosophy, he writes:

*By my own basic distinction of "informal" and "formal" philosophy as my own Canon, I am poised to tackle this rather sensitive question, when did philosophizing start in Africa?, that is to say "African Philosophy"; and in the same sweep of arguments, reflect on its possible periodization... By my understanding of philosophy strictly so-called (formal philosophy) as a product of critical reflection carried out in the light of pure reason (some form of training implied) we can and should trace the historical origins of African Philosophy to the period of literate tradition, period of formal education or scientific thought (Okolo, 1992, p. 36-37).*

What Okolo is arguing for, is that "there was no African philosophy before the dawn of literacy in Africa. The dawn of formal education in Africa which coincided with colonialism may well be the start of formal African philosophy" (1987, 27). Elsewhere, Okolo reiterates this:

*We must reckon it from the period of literate tradition in Africa, in the modern times, in Anglophone Africa, for example, it is certainly after the Second World War. In other parts of Africa, the historical origins of African Philosophy, if any, are traceable to the same period of literate tradition, after people had attained some degree of leisure and material satisfaction (Okolo, 1990, p. 32).*

But Okolo has to answer if the humanistic socio-ontological philosophy that characterizes the African is a product of African-European contact or African worldview. Again, Okolo scrapped out the ancient era, or demeaned it to imply an era of activities that are more cultural than philosophical, that is, ethno-philosophical exercise, but turned to phenomenologically utilize the African personality of the era (the attitude of 'being-with' without which one is not truly an African) as an African philosophy.

A scholar like Makinde (1989) would present a tripartite era into which African Philosophy could be categorized. They include (1) The unknown or unidentified period where thinkers of such period are unknown because their philosophical activities were not documented. These thinker-philosophers exercised high sense of philosophical reflections in addressing peculiar social and existential challenges they faced. (2) The period of colonial ethno-philosophers, ethnographers and anthropologists, characterized by philosophical activities at a debased or

loosed sense. Predominant thoughts of the era could better be described as anthropological instead of philosophical. (3) The period of professional African philosophers characterized by the application of Western philosophical principles to interrogate African experience in appreciation of critical and logical mindedness. As the identifying name suggests, it is the era of a group of people with the opinion that philosophy is strictly a pure professional affair which emerges after a scholarly engagement (Makinde, 2007). However, Makinde's position has attracted to him, a certain level of criticisms from a scholar like Fayemi (2017).

Christopher Bankole Ndubuisi Ogbogbo has more of geographical and thematic historical documentation of African philosophy than any other African scholar who has delved into the periodization of African philosophy. From a geographical historical perspective, he noted that as a continent, Africa is divided into the Western, Eastern, Southern, Central and finally, Northern regions. He alternated regional history for peculiar nature that are not just historical but also identifies each region, thus, Africa could be located with the Magreb (Arab Maghreb), Forests "Coastal or Savannah belts of West Africa" (1995, 7). Ogbogbo also has a thematic historical periodization of Africa which include the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade era, the Saharan Trade era and some part of the balkanization of Africa and colonial era could be identical with the ancient era and all regions of Africa, the Jihadist *cum* Crusade eras could be identical with the Northern, Eastern, Central and minor parts/regions of Africa, Neo-colonial and nationalist movement cut across Africa as a continent. Regionalization or partitioning of a people's history may be exclusive and make it difficult for appropriate and accurate dating and also enhance an in-depth knowledge about a region thereby facilitating professionalism.

Francis Ogunmodede is another scholar who has participated in the periodization attempt of the African Philosophy. He, however, prefers a multi-dimensional model of periodization, which according to him, "allows for a much broader, detailed and enriched historical investigation in African philosophy" (Ogunmodede 1995, p. 1-13; 1998, p. 3-26; 2004, p. 37-39). He divided the history of African philosophy along the following lines: (a) the Ancient Period dating from the 10,000-700 BC, (b) the Greek Period which dated from the 600BC to the actual days of Christ's birth, (c) the Early Christian Period dating from the 1st-6th Centuries AD, (d) the Islamic African Period dating from 7<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Centuries, (e) the Early European-African contact dating from the 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries, and finally (f) the Western Colonial Period dating from the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Ogbogbo did not feel comfortable with the multidimensional historical documentation of African philosophy of Ogunmodede arguing that it "is too broad and cumbersome to deal with" (Ogbogbo, 1995, p. 38).

It could save time to combine the periodization attempts by Obenga (2004) on African philosophy and that of Osuagwu (1999) following the conceptual similarities between the two scholars. Both have four different periods of the history of African philosophy: (1) the Ancient period (2) the Medieval period (3) the Modern period and (4) the Contemporary period. They both agreed to include unidentified sages and the Egyptian civilization which they dated from 3000 to 300 BC, as the period of ancient time. Describing the Medieval era, just like Keita, both Osuagwu and Obenga agreed that the Medieval period has dual phases: the early period which pointed to the Christian civilization in the North African region around the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> Centuries ago, while the later medieval period pointed to the Arab *cum* Islamic civilization in the Northern and Western axis of Africa around the 10<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Be that as it may, they both equally have modern period in common which dated philosophical activities in Africa ranging from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. According to Osuagwu (2010, p. 58), the hallmark of the period is its "Kaleidoscopic" feature. That is to say 'that it has a plethora of mosaic influences.' The contemporary period was dated from the 19th Century till date. Osuagwu went further to argue for an African historical methodology which he insisted could be described as (1) deconstruction (2) reduction (3) reconstruction and (4) construction (Osuagwu, 2010). Osuagwu and Obenga just demonstrated Western influences by adopting the trending Western scheme of periodization. However Osuagwu in defence, argued that it has an African viability option because ignoring such "is to abandon the liberty of scientific scholarship, solidarity, commerce, dialogue, communication and exchange" (2010, 43). But the African viability option in the conceptual scheme is still practically nowhere to be found.

Both scholars would not deny that there have not been great shift in philosophical enterprise from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century till date, like the infiltration of science into philosophy which has brought a sort of drastic change and trend tilting towards empiricism more than the long aged dominated traditional metaphysics.

To a scholar like Godwin E. Azenabor, the "question of the history of African philosophy is really an offshoot of the problem of definition in African philosophy" (2003, 93). This is

so important because conception determines definition which will now influence historical records as is the case in African philosophy. That explains why Hountondji would posit that African philosophy “can develop only by reflecting on its own history, new thinkers must feed on the doctrines of their predecessors; even of their contemporaries, extending or refuting them, so as to enrich the philosophical heritage available in their own time” (1983, 663). In the same angle, for Olela, “any philosophy must be evaluated from the context of its history... contemporary African philosophy is moribund if it does not take into account the history of African philosophy” (1984, 89). However, bearing this in mind, Azenabor contends that the “problem of the history of African philosophy has mainly two attendant aspects; first, there is the problem of the historical origin, second, is the problem of periodization” (2003, 94). Addressing the question of historical origin, Azenabor opines that:

*although philosophy had its roots in ancient Egypt, it was actually developed and popularized by the Greeks... While the Egyptians contributed to world civilization, especially in the area of knowledge, belief system, ideas and culture generally, the Greeks were the one responsible for questioning, criticizing, analyzing and purifying those existing thoughts. Rather than talk about the Egyptian origin of philosophy, we should be talking of Egyptian contribution to the development of philosophy, since all ancient cultures contributed to the development of philosophy (2003, 98-99).*

But one question awaits Azenabor to answer: If a man owns something, he neither gave it a name nor questioned it critically, but another man came and named it and critically questioned it, does it make the naming and questioning-man the originator of that very thing?

Be that as it may, Azenabor, recognizing the importance of African historical recordings, is of the view that he would still employ “the most commonly employed sub-divisions in African history, that is, the “precolonial”, “Colonial” and “post-colonial” periods of African Philosophy” (2003, 92). Unfortunately, Azenabor only named what he thinks the periods defining African philosophy could be, but never crystallized and analyzed them. Though from the designated terms, he includes elements of philosophical activities in Africa before any colonial activity in Africa, during colonial period (if there is, and if really there is, it should be significant to stipulate them because colonial period was a historical era in African history), and then postcolonial which if it should extend till the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, needs separations, or, is too big to be jam-packed into one period.

Addressing the periodization question about African philosophy, a scholar like Christopher Makwe Okoro stresses that “if the reality of the discipline [African Philosophy] is assured, one has yet to account for its birth and stages of its historical development as is the case with Western and Oriental philosophies” (Okoro, 2003, p. 19). So, he sets out to periodize African Philosophy. His argument is that philosophy has always been explicit in the traditional African, hence, the need for its historiography account. He contends that Africans as human beings are rational, and rationality is identical with philosophy for it is the tool for philosophizing. In this regard, he writes: “Our argument here against such view of African philosophy is that we cannot date what is not explicit or if African philosophy is yet implicit it is foolish to talk of its periodization” (2003, 21). In doing this, he began his periodization attempt by issuing a directive. Bearing this in mind, he writes that:

*we should realize that the periods in European history known as: ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary are different epochs in the history of thoughts in Europe. Trends of thoughts that fall under a particular epoch as we know very well have common characteristics. This means that if we follow the same divisions in dating African philosophy we must make sure that similar trends of philosophical thoughts fall under an epoch that characterizes them. It is thus wrong to plot the works of an author under the epoch that he or she lives if the works do not reflect the trend or system of the epoch in question (2003, 21).*

The position that similarity of trends of thought characterizes each philosopher’s thought is highly questionable. However, Okoro finally categorizes African Philosophy into four periods: (1) Ancient Period, (2) Medieval Period, (3) Modern Period, and (4) Contemporary Period. (2003) Describing the Ancient Period, he stretches from time immemorial to the end of World War II in 1945. Three factors motivated him to argue for such position: (1) his identification of philosophy with rationality, (2) that the beingness of human beings presumes that of philosophy for philosophy is as old as human beings, (3) that the archaeological findings in Africa especially that of Professor D. D. Harttle bore a strong support to this claim. For Okoro, human beings have always lived with rationality with which they have interrogated their environments, found

existential challenges and attempted proffering solutions to them. So was African society in that period (2004, 35-6). There have always been “individuals who constrained by their individual temperaments, pre-occupied themselves with the basic problems associated with philosophy” (2003, 24). (2) For Okoro, the works of scholars like Chinua Achebe, Ojike Mbonu, Placid Tempels, Alexis Kagame, Bolaji Idowu, etc., make up the medieval period of African philosophy (2003, 28). It was a period between 1945-60s characterized by attempts to extract out philosophic contents from African religion and culture. (3) The modern period was when Africans were in intellectual struggle to push forward socio-political, religious and economic ideologies for the emancipation of Africans from the strong hold of European imperialism. It existed in the 70s and 80s and the characteristic ideologies in the works of African socialist liberalists like Nyerere, Nkrumah, Senghor, Azikiwe, etc. stand for the identification of the period (2004). (4) He identifies the contemporary period with the Great Debate questions, “a period of professional African philosophers with various philosophical orientations.... It is a period of various and serious efforts to define the nature of the discipline, determine its scope, method, create canon in studying it and also systematize it” (2004, 38). Identical to this period include the works of African philosophers like Hountondji, Olera, Bodunrin, Oruka, Okolo, Momoh, etc.

A critical look at Okoro’s periodization of African philosophy leaves us with more awe. Periods do not rhyme with the works of philosophers categorized under them. For instance, the contemporary period could be said to have existed in the 90s, but the works of Okoro’s modern period scholars like Hountondji, etc. are older. More critical responses to Okoro’s African philosophy periodization attempt could be seen in [Nwinya \(2022\)](#).

[Nnoruka \(2006\)](#) is one African philosopher whose thought has an aspect discussing not just African philosophy, but also has made an attempt of periodizing it. Even though his periodization is not a full detailed and described one, but one that started from a contemporary era, and this contemporary era has witnessed four different captivating moments which include (i) the audacity of Placide Tempels, (ii) the Great Debate, (iii) the possibility of African Philosophy and (iv) the Self-Affirmation. He describes the contemporary evolution as the moment of critical approach to reality which characterizes philosophy in a real sense of it. By this ‘momentization’ of African Philosophy, it could be deduced that Nnoruka’s position is that African Philosophy really as critically done, started after the World War II as scholars like Okolo, etc. hold. The first moment attributed to the Belgian Missionary Reverend Father Placid Tempels was what he described as an audacity, guts, momentum or the bravery to attribute philosophy or a philosophical mind to a people whom, hitherto, have denied rationality by the European scholars. The second moment was the Great Debate of whether there is or not an African Philosophy when African scholars were thrown into speaking grammar and telling themselves ‘we are now logical’ and some would, on the process, strongly argue ‘we have no philosophy’ while others would, in counter argument say ‘we have’. For them, that was truly doing philosophy. No wonder some lay men in the society would describe philosophers as *ndi nkogheri* (people who are vocally and vibrantly talking, but talking senseless). From a professional philosopher, philosophers are described as “*mad people talking to mad people such that at the end of the day, there is no compromise*” ([Ozumba, 2009, p. 13](#)). That moment was followed by the third moment where and when there was then a proclamation of the reality of, at least, an African Philosophy. Perhaps, without this moment of proclamation, there would not have been an African Philosophy, or the African would have still be believing that s/he does not really exist because the European scholars says s/he does not really exist because s/he has no philosophical thinking-capability. Then there was the fourth moment of Self-Affirmation, that is, retrieval of African existence from the wave of Westernization where the African lived with sub-consciousness about his/her personality or identity.

A scholar like Joseph I. Omoregbe would generally periodize African Philosophy into three major eras, namely: (1) The Ancient Period, (2) The Medieval Period and (3) The Contemporary Period. Philosophers of the Ancient Period include majorly North African scholars like Tertullian (160 A.D), Clement of Alexandria (150-213 A.D), Origen (185-254 A.D) and Augustine (Saint) (354-430 A.D) ([Omoregbe, 2011](#)). He said that the Greek Philosophy and the Christian Theology were two major formative factors that influenced their philosophical thoughts hence they “had all studied Greek philosophy, especially Neo-platonism, before becoming Christians and developing their own thoughts” (2011, 13, 13-20). Articulating the Medieval Period, he said that that period was majorly formed by the thoughts of South Saharan African where there was no art of documentation then. Mentioning philosophers under the articulation, Augustine (Saint) and Anthony William Amo (1703-57) appeared. By extension, the writings of J. S. Mbiti, the Belgian priest, Placid Tempels, and the Rwandese scholar, Alexis Kagame equally



surfaced (2011). The Contemporary Period “is predominantly a political philosophy, and this reflects the socio-political situation from which it arose” (2011, 30). Philosophers or scholars characterized under this period include the African nationalist thinkers: Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Sedar Senghor, etc. and surprisingly, Kwasi Wiredu was among them (2011).

Critically examining Omoregbe, the Ancient Period of a philosophical tradition that started with St. Augustine and co., as submitted above is not really ‘Ancient’ and does not portray originality. This was also knowingly or unknowingly confessed by him when he said that the African Ancient Period philosopher studied Greek Philosophy and Christian Theologies. In other words, the African ancient period philosophy was an extension, or a by-product of the Greek and Christian thought systems. Again, in his periodization attempt, he partitioned philosophy, and that is why the ancient was majorly constituted by the thoughts of the North African thinkers whose thoughts were documented, but the Medieval (a latter) Period was majorly constituted by the thoughts of the South Saharan African thinkers, yet whose thoughts were not documented. That was a contradiction, if not, he should explain why the latter was not documented if the former was documented. In other words, the undocumented characteristic that should feature the Ancient Period is now featuring the Medieval Period. Further, a scholar like Kwasi Wiredu of Omoregbe’s Medieval Period whose writing came after the Contemporary Period scholars of the African nationalists is quiet contradictory. By the description of Omoregbe’s Contemporary period which was the period of nationalist struggles for political emancipation from the European imperialism pioneered by people like Nyerere, Azikiwe, Senghor, Nkrumah, etc., Omoregbe has to answer if African philosophy is still in this period. If YES, it is an obvious contradiction because that is what is obtainable in Africa today. If NO, why then did he stop his periodization attempt at the Contemporary period. That may raise the question on the modalities of Omoregbe’s periodization attempt: whether it is on similarity in writing style, or the time of writing or the influencing philosophical principle or themes underlining or dominating writing in a period of time.

Bartholomew Abanuka characterized African Philosophy into four main periods: (1) The Ancient/Early Period, (2) The Medieval Period, (3) The Modern Period and (4) The Contemporary Period (Abanuka, 2013). Analyzing the Ancient/Early Period, Abanuka simply identifies this period with the ancient Egyptian philosophy (2013). Analyzing the Medieval Period, he writes that it “is really the dark period of African history... which also affected the African mind and philosophy” (2013, viii). This period includes “the various conquests and occupation of Ancient Egypt” and even “the Arabs in the seventh century” by the European colonizers (2013, viii). Works of scholars like Plotinus, Tertullian, Augustine (Saint) and by extension Origen the attributed “the first Christian to be a genuinely philosophical theologian” (Edwards, 1972, p. 8), make up the thoughts of this period (2013, viii, xii). Discussing about the Modern Period, Abanuka opines that it “comprises the European colonial period and the period of independence of African countries” (2013, viii). Significantly, he notes that it “will be taken to end with the philosophical works of some of the advocates and fathers of African independence” (2013, viii). Presenting the Contemporary Period, Abanuka notes that it “shall be take to begin with the period of skepticism about African philosophy characterized by the question as to whether there is an African philosophy” (2013, ix).

But it sounds worrisome how the waves of periodization attempts go to present day North Africa, perhaps because of certain Egyptian influences, as the only place identifiable with the Ancient Period. Philosophy appears inseparable from the conceptual scheme that bore a people’s worldview; and because of that, every culture has its own, or is identifiable with Ancient Period. Again, it appears incomprehensible to understand the characteristic feature of Abanuka’s Medieval and Modern Periods as both are characterized by the African predicaments like colonialism, etc. Clearly, the characterizing feature of the Contemporary Period has been outdated as the focus of African Philosophy today is no more on the argument of whether there is an African Philosophy but on the method and the demarcation between philosophy and non-philosophy and then interrogation of some philosophical questions/issues from an African perspective, like the issues of reincarnation, self, identity, race and how metaphysical epistemological, ethical, and otherwise they could be approached.

An erudite like Jonathan Okeke Chimakonam tried all he could to be all-encompassing thereby not only periodizing African philosophy, but also pointing out conceptual hindrances, and equally attempted restructuring African philosophy in different schools of thought, criteria, methods, movements and trends, etc. In doing this, he first identified seven conceptual challenges that brought about setbacks in plausible and rapid growth of African philosophical enterprise. He called them bulwarks, and advised that African scholars who wish well to African philosophy

and its plausible and fast growth should desist from them. They include: Historicist Bandwagon, Philosophical Nationalism, Cultural Nostalgia, Perverse Orientation, Hountondji's Dilemma, Methodic Apathy, Logical Schizophrenia (2015).

In his criterion status of African philosophy, through addressing what is that makes philosophy African, he identified two positions: Universalist and Traditionalist. "Whereas the Traditionalists aver that the studies of the philosophical elements in world-view of the people constitute African philosophy, the Universalists insist that it has to be a body of analytic and critical reflections of individual African philosophers." Going further, he notes: (1) The Racial Criterion which holds that "a philosophy would be African if it is produced by Africans" as projected by Pauline Hountondji, Odera Oruka (in part), and early Peter Bodunrin, among others. (2) The Traditional Criterion which argues that "a philosophy is "African" if it designates a non-racial-bound philosophy tradition where the predicate "African" is treated as a solidarity term of no racial import and where the approach derives inspiration from African cultural background or system of thought." As an extension of the criterion exercise, 'Linguistic Issue' has become a concern that has been of more influence to be considered in the criteria discourse of African philosophy. The works of Euphrase Kezilahabi, Wa Thiong'o Ngugi, A. G. A. Bello, Francis Ogunmodede, etc raise such concern (<https://iep.utm.edu/history-of-african-philosophy>).

Addressing the issue of methods, he points out the communitarian method championed by Ifeanyi Menkiti, Kwame Gyekye, Thaddeus Metz, etc; the complimentary method chiefly championed by Innocent Asouzu, and a host of others like Mesembe Edet, Ada Agada, etc.; the conversational method chiefly championed by the Chimakonams, (Jonathan and Amara) and a host of others like Godfrey Ozumba, Uchenna Ogbonnaya, Aribiah Attoe, etc. (<https://iep.utm.edu/history-of-african-philosophy>).

Addressing the issue of schools of thought, there is (1) The Ethnophilosophical School "which equated African philosophy with culture-bound systems of thought" as seen in the works of excavationist movement as predominantly noticeable in Placid Tempels, John Mbiti, Paul Kagame. (2) There is also the Nationalist Ideological School openly projected by some scholars whose works could be described as excavationist and the nationalist ideologists, political-freedom-fighters like Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Senghor, Julius Nyerere, Nnamdi Azikiwe, etc. This could, in other words, be referred to as the Identitist school which came to answer the common question to Africans: 'who are you?' which European answers to, have always been dehumanizing. (3) There is equally the Philosophic Sagacity School "whose main focus is to show that standard philosophical discourse existed and still exists in traditional Africa and can only be discovered through sage conversations." Odera Oruka, George James, among others, are exponents of the sagacity school. (4) There is, as well, the Hermeneutical School that contends that interpretations of raw materials- culture, language, etc.- remain one of the best ways to truly do African philosophy. The works of Theophilus Okere, Tsenay Serequeberhan, Raphael Madu, Okonda Okolo, etc. espoused this idea. (5) There is, of course, the Literary School that attempts exposing African value and personality through literary articulations as championed by scholars like Chinua Achebe whose most of his works could be described as excavationist, Thiong'o Ngugi, Wole Soyinka, etc. (6) There is also the Professional School that "contends that all the other schools are engaged in one form of ethnophilosophy or the other, that the standard of African philosophy is critical, individual discourse and that what qualifies as African philosophy must have universal merit and thrive on the method of critical analysis and individual discursive enterprise." The "school champions the movement of Afro-deconstructionism and the abortive Critical Reconstructionism of the middle and later periods, respectively." Champions of the school include but not limited to Kwasi Wiredu, Pauline Hountondji, Peter Bodunrin, and a host of others. (7) There is the conversational school which "thrives on fulfilling the yearning of the professional/modernist school to have a robust individual discourse as well as fulfilling the conviction of the traditionalists that a thorough-going African philosophy has to be erected on the foundation of African thought systems." Its exponents are the Chimakonams, Asouzu, among others (<https://iep.utm.edu/history-of-african-philosophy>).

Addressing the issue of movements in African philosophy, Chimakonam argues that there are four main movements which include: (1) The Excavationism which seeks "to erect the edifice of African philosophy by systematizing the African cultural world-views." The works of some excavationists like Placid Tempels, John Mbiti, etc., and some nationalists like Julius Nyerere, Leopold Senghor, Aime Césaire, etc. bear the characteristics of the movement. (2) The Afro-constructionism or Afro-deconstructionism which could sometimes be referred to as Modernists or the Universalists seek "to demote such edifice erected by the Excavators on the ground that their raw materials are substandard cultural paraphernalia." Works of scholars like Paulin Hountondji, Kwasi Wiredu, Peter Bodunrin, Macien Towa, Fabien Eboussi

Boulaga, represent the school. (3) The Critical Reconstructionism or Afro-Eclecticism was a movement that emerges as a result of the evolvement of some Afro-deconstructionists of the middle period into “Critical Reconstructionists hoping to reconstruct from scratch, the edifice of authentic African philosophy that would be critical, individualistic and universal.” Their main argument is “that the edifice of ethnophilosophy, which they had demolished in the middle period, contained no critical rigor.” Its exponents include Olusegun Ladipo, Kwame Appiah, etc. (4) The Conversationalism seeks “to create an enduring corpus in African philosophy by engaging elements of tradition and individual thinkers in critical conversations” thereby emphasizing “originality, creativity, innovation, peer-criticism and cross-pollination of ideas in prescribing and evaluating their ideas” and holding that a “new episteme in African philosophy can only be created by individual African philosophers who make use of the “usable past” and the depth of individual originality in finding solutions to contemporary demands” (<https://iep.utm.edu/history-of-african-philosophy>).

Chimakonam also addressed the issue of African periodization from an epochal perspective, hence he has two epochs: (1) Pre-systematic Epoch which “refers to the era from the time of the first homo sapiens to the 1900s.” Asouzu refers to African philosophers of that epoch as “Anonymous Traditional African Philosophers,” and for Chimakonam, they “may also include the ancient Egyptians, Ethiopians and Africans who thrived in Europe in that era.” (2) Systematic Epoch which “refers to the era from the 1920s to date when systematicity that involves academic training, writing, publishing, engagements, etc., inspired by African conditions and geared towards addressing those conditions, became central to philosophical practice in Africa, South of the Sahara.” The systematic Epoch gave rise to his quadruple periods of early, middle, later and new/contemporary eras (<https://iep.utm.edu/history-of-african-philosophy>).

In his periodization attempt, Chimakonam dates the Early Period of African philosophy from 1920s-60s following the methods through which African philosophy was approached like J. B. Danquah’s and S. K. Akesson’s rationalist approach, George James’ reconstructivist approach, and Meinrad Hebig’s logical approach. For him, these methods are hallmarks of systematization, professionalism and formality in approaching African philosophy, hence the dating of African philosophy from 1920s. Adding to the works of these scholars above as what makes the early period of African philosophy, are the works of others like Placid Tempels (Bantu Philosophy), George James (Stolen Legacy), Odera Oruka, Henry Olela, the nationalist ideological fighters, Alexis Kagame, Uzodinma Nwala, Emmanuel Edeh, Innocent Onyewuenyi. Generally, the characteristic of the early period is that it “sought to prove and establish the philosophical basis of African, unique identity in the history of humankind, while others sought to chart a course of Africa’s true identity through unique political and economic ideologies” (<https://iep.utm.edu/history-of-african-philosophy>).

The Middle Period was the period of the Great Debate (1960s-80s). The activities of the period were characterized by two intentions: “Those who seek to clarify and justify the position held in the early period and those who seek to criticize and deny the viability of such a position entangled themselves in a great debate” (<https://iep.utm.edu/history-of-african-philosophy>).

The Later Period started from 1980s-90s and generally focused on “the construction of an African episteme.” But the period had two different camps: (1) The “Critical Reconstructionists who are the evolved Universalists/Deconstructionists” and who tried “to build an African episteme untainted by ethnophilosophy.” (2) The “Eclectics who are the evolved Traditionalists/Excavators” who tried “to do the same by a delicate fusion of relevant ideals of the two camps.” For Chimakonam, the critical reconstructionism movement later failed as it could not produce a genuine substance to be called truly a philosophy hence the rival eclecticism swallowed it and it died a natural death (<https://iep.utm.edu/history-of-african-philosophy>).

The New/Contemporary Era which was the conversational school which was Chimakonam’s brain child emerged since 1990s till date to argue for the position of the later period in the history of African philosophy. Summarizing the new era, he writes: “The focus becomes the Conversational philosophizing, in which the production of philosophically rigorous and original African episteme better than what the Eclectics produced occupied the center stage” (<https://iep.utm.edu/history-of-african-philosophy>).

Chimakonam must be commended for his all-encompassing attempt to put into historiography, the characteristic events that marked the development of African philosophy. However, his pattern of doing this became too cumbersome that it became confused for easy comprehension. Again, the terms adopted in doing this beg for clarity so as to know which one fits more to which one, for easy identification. Which term among period, epoch, system, schools of thought, dating and era, best describe this exercise? Further, his quadruple periodization attempt which

is situated at 1920s has three basic questions to answer in regards to (1) the descriptive terms 'pre-systematic' and 'systematic' epochs; (2) the reference to the actors of these epochs as 'philosophers', and (3) the content of what they did that qualified the activities as 'philosophy'.

Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu goes straight to the point to say that it is his "opinion that African philosophy be divided into four periods, which also are four traditions: the ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary periods or traditions" (2014, 189) While he was busy describing the Ancient Period or Tradition, with positions taken about the period by previous scholars like Osuagwu (1999), Obenga (2004), Onyewuanyi (1993), Tempels (1959), Wiredu (1989) and Hountondji (1983), he nonetheless made a remark about the period. He said that "the philosophy of this period was indigenous to Africans, and untainted by foreign ideas" (Kanu 2014, p. 189). Describing the Medieval Period, Kanu argues that the period is divided into two sub-divisions/periods: Early and Later. For him, the Early Period covers "the North African history of Christian philosophy, covering the period from the second to the seventh centuries AD" and the "Later Period covers the Arobo-Islamic activities of about the 10th – 15th centuries" (2014, 189). Responding to the controversy of this period especially as it concerns the argument that ensued between Onyibor (2006) and Osuagwu (1999) whether the thought of the scholars in the medial period qualifies as African, Kanu writes:

*The question we should be asking is, were they Africans? Were they born in Africa? To say that they are to be excluded is to deny Africa the contribution she made to the development of western thought. Augustine was the first religious man to introduce African communalism to the religious life. This is to indicate that there was an impute from their Africanness. They were Africans by birth and they did their work in Africa (2014, 189).*

Arguing for the qualification of the period as originally African and has to be periodized under African philosophy as against Osuagwu's position that it should be categorized as 'philosophy in Africa' because the experience that form their philosophical thought is not African in origin and again following the influences from the Greco-Roman and Jewish Christian traditions, Kanu must have drawn influences from Onyibor's contention that "the history of African philosophy of this period should be geared towards discovering the influence of African culture and tradition on the Christian and later Islamic philosophy of this period" (2006, 174).

Writing about the 'Modern Tradition of African Philosophy' he writes that "the modern period includes philosophical activities in Africa between the 15th and early part of the 20th centuries" (2014, 190). The works of scholars like Claude Summer, Walda Heywat, Wilhelm Anton Amo, J. Jahn, J. S. Mbiti, Placid Tempels, Alexis Kagame, and Marcel Griaule, among others made the tradition (2014, 190).

Analyzing the Contemporary Tradition of African Philosophy' he writes that the period "covers from the 19th century to date. . . It extends from the later part of the 20th century to... present" days (2014, 190). Going further he notes that it "was a time when issues regarding the nature of African philosophy and who should be considered an African philosopher was raised and reflected upon. Issues regarding the schools of African philosophy" was not left out also (2014, 190). Responding to the question of who is an African philosopher, and in subtle defence to his inclusion of African scholars with Western philosophical pattern and non-African scholars in his periodization attempt, Kanu argues that what makes an African philosopher is not an African origin by birth but reflection of African experience which significantly marks "the beginning of philosophy as an academic discipline" (2014, 190). Scholars of this period include "Paulin Hountodji, Kwasi Wiredu, Godfrey Ozumba, Andrew Uduigwomen,... O. Oruka, P. O. Bodunrin, J. O. Sodipo, E. Edeh, K. Gyekye, B. C. Okolo, Kanu, I. A. etc" (2014, 190).

Ademola Kazeem Fayemi opines that the periodization canon of African philosophy has to convey African historic experiences like slavery, colonialism, etc. and identity questions and as they feature in the different regions into which Africa is partitioned, like 'Afrikaans, Francophone, Anglophone, Arabophone and Lusophone African societies' (2017, 310). He further argues that observing this manner in the periodization attempt would be better as "such characterization and historical documentation of African philosophical ideas is more cogent than merely aping the Western models of ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary periodization in African philosophy" (2017, 310). He goes on to posit that the exercise would help to decipher definitional problems and conceptual incongruities, documentation and methods of engaging African philosophies which have always characterized philosophizing (2017). A factor that is too clear to be denied is his conception of what African philosophy is. For him, African philosophy is an "intellectual inquiry which raises universal and particular fundamental questions in relation to African experiences be it in the area of religion, politics, socio-cultural life, morality, art,

economy, technology, and intellectual heritage among other aspects of philosophical concerns” (2017, 305).

Nevertheless, Fayemi goes on to make some critical observations of periodization attempt made by his predecessors and then comes up with a sort of generally tripartite eras of the African philosophy based on the African predicament of colonialism, namely: (a) the Pre-Colonial, (b) Colonial and (c) Post-Colonial Eras. Elaborating on this, he writes that this tripartite formula insightfully stands as a “historical delineation along the lines of African historic experiences, especially, colonialism. Many African states had colonial experiences except for a few” (2017, 310).

Jerry Obi-Okogbuo and John Nwanegbo-Ben equally participated in the periodization attempts on African philosophy. They argued that there are several schools of thought in African philosophy which include the following: Traditional, Ethnophilosophical, Nationalist/ideological, Analytical-Professional, Hermeneutical, Sage schools of thought (2019). Dealing with the question of branches in African philosophy, they contended that there are six branches: “Metaphysics” with its subdivisions (“ontology, Epistemology, Cosmology (Natural Philosophy), Psychology, Natural theology”), “Logic, Ethics, Aesthetics (African philosophy of Arts), African Political Philosophy and History of African Philosophy” (2019, 5-6). Arguing for method of African philosophy, they upheld the following: “The Rational Method, The Hermeneutical Method, African Historical Deconstruction, African Historical Reduction, African Historical Reconstruction, African Historical Construction” (2019, 6). Periodizing African philosophy, they insisted that there are four periods of African philosophical development: (1) Ancient Period which started “from 3000 to 300 BC. This implies that it flourished thousands of years before the beginning of Greek Philosophy in 700BC” (2019, 8). They went further to uphold that “some of the Schools of Philosophy are found at Heliopolis, Hermopolis, Thebes and Memphis. The notable philosophers are Ptahhotep, Amenomope and Imhotep: the apotheosized founder of Egyptian medicine” (2019, 8). (2) Describing the Medieval Period, they wrote: “This period spans from about 2nd to 14th A. D. It is subdivided into two parts: Early Medieval History of African Philosophy dated from about 2nd to 6th A. D. and Late Medieval History of African Philosophy dated from about 9th to 15th AD” (2019, 8). They equally noted that “the locus of this history was mainly North Africa with central and West Africa also as theatres. The indigenous African figures were Pantaeus, Origen, Plotinus, Hipathia, Tertulian, and St. Augustine of Hippo. Non-indigenes like Clement of Alexandria, a native of Athens played roles” (2019, 8). (3) Their Modern Period is an epoch that “spans from the 15thC to the 19thC A.D.” Describing this period, they argued that “Christian, Hellenistic, Jewish, Arabic, Islamic, European, and American. Africans who went abroad to study philosophy came back with the influences of the places of their sojourn but their Africanity was not wiped out” (2019, 8). They were of the opinion also that the period has two phases: (a) The Arabic-Islamic Phase and (b) The Ethiopian Phase. “Some of the figures of this epoch are Abba Mikael, an Egyptian Arab; Zär’aYacob and WaldaHaywat, Ethiopians; and Wilhelm Anton Amo, a Black African Fanti of Ghana” (2019, 9). (4) Doing an analytic justice to the fourth period: Contemporary Period, they wrote:

*The Contemporary History of African Philosophy begins from about the middle of the 19thC and runs till date. The event commonly taken to mark its inception is the publication in 1945 of La Philosophie Bantoue of Placid Tempels (1906 — 1977), a Belgian Catholic Missionary, who worked in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Tempels’ trailblazing book asserted the existence of African Philosophy; which critics derisively called ethno-philosophy (2019, 9).*

Obi-Okogbuo and Nwanegbo-Ben have just thrown us into the scenario of philosophizing on African discourses but with Western mentality as could be seen in their naming of the periods.

## 4 An Attempt to Periodize African Philosophy in ‘Eras’

Talking about the discourse of philosophical historiography, that of African is quite more contemporary, but that does not, in any manner, deny the reality of African philosophy even from the ancient era. In Graness’ expression, “the history of philosophy in Africa is still a young discipline, although philosophical thinking [philosophers, concepts, conceptualizations, methods/systems, schools of thought, etc.] can be traced back until ancient Egypt” (2015a, 138). Further, George James in his monumental piece reinstates that what is attributed to the Greek as their philosophy has its origin in Egypt. For this, Africa deserves acknowledgment of the Greek for the paraded Greek philosophy is a prototype of the Egyptian philosophy, hence the position

that “the true authors of Greek philosophy were not Greeks, but the people of the North Africa community called the Egyptians, and the praise and humour falsely given to the Greeks for centuries belong to the people of North Africa, and therefore to the African continent” (James, 1892, p. 7). Onyewuanyi (1993) has provided evidences from both philosophers and historians of both African and non-African origins, of how what is attributed to Greek is originally founded and also practised by Africans and in Africa. It has been recorded that the cradle of what is called African philosophy today is identical with Egyptian philosophy which could be traceable to 10,000 B.C. As an aspect of the civilization then, first records of farming were dated to 6,500 B.C. at the Egyptian Nile Delta (Lawhead, 2006). The *Tassa* irrigation method in Niger Republic today bears still a witness to this claim. Many African scholars have upheld this view in strong dissent voice. A scholar like Diop would always convincingly reiterate that the “ancient Egypt was a Negro civilization. The history of Black Africa will remain suspended in air and cannot be written correctly until African historians dare to connect it with the history of Egypt” (1974, xiv). In still strong voice, Azenabor would always argue that “the history of African philosophy must include a study of Egyptian philosophy as Western philosophy does of Greek philosophy” (Azenabor, 2010, p. 19-20). Ogunmodede on this position would write:

*The march of philosophical speculation in the ancient world became definitive with the Black Egyptian who developed centres of learning and civilizations between 5000 and 3200 B.C., that is, before those of Mesopotamia and very, very long time before the Greeks came into existence and when Chinese and Indian civilizations were yet to begin (2004, 38).*

The implication is that the philosophy/sharpening of the IQ of the pre-Socratic philosophers of the history of Greek philosophy to grasp what philosophy and philosophizing really means, should be attributed to African scholars like Imhotep, Akhenaten, etc. (Asante, 2000). It is on this context that Martin Terris contends that “irrespective of the race of the ancient Egyptians, they were cultural forebears of Europe” (1976, 29). It is thus a grave insincerity of historians and modern European philosophers to deny Africa the birthplace and originality of African, even if Africans failed to develop it as highly sophisticated as it is today. This insincerity has been recorded by many scholars like Eneh (1999) among others. In this regard, for Graness, “Africa was not always rejected as a source of philosophical knowledge. Until the end of eighteenth century, volumes on the history of philosophy still refer to Chaldean, Persian, Arab, Indian, Chinese and Egyptian philosophies” (2015b, 81).

However, while the paper does not contend with the position that Africa is the original place where the Greek-attributed-philosophy is birthed, it rather contends that every society has its own peculiar philosophical values and orientations. So, attributing the popularization of African philosophy in Egypt is not in contention, but attributing the originality of African philosophy is. If that is the case, then there should be no more ‘African philosophy’ but ‘Egyptian philosophy’. But there must be African philosophy because there are obvious similarities that cut across African peoples’ conceptual scheme, but that does not justify the claim of the Egyptian origin of African philosophy. There are differences in language, culture, etc., which now manifest in the people’s conceptual scheme thereby making slight differences in their philosophies/philosophical tendencies, hence the need for the pluralization of ‘philosophy’ in the expression, ‘African philosophy’. So there should be, for instance, Igbo philosophies not even philosophy, Akan philosophies not even philosophy, because of the little but salient differences in the conceptualization scheme of the Igbo people manifesting from their language, thinking pattern, culture, etc. Writing from your own particular language, worldview, thinking pattern, one adds the article ‘An’ Igbo to show that one is writing from one Igbo people’s worldview, culture, language, etc. From this sense of particularity, philosophy gets to an individualistic root where one could say, for instance, Nwala’s or Edeh’s or Chimakonam’s or Ugwu’s philosophical concept of *mmadu* or *onwuo* or *ezi-na-ulo*, etc., instead of Igbo concept of *mmadu* or *onwu* or *ezi-na-ulo*. Even when a people is attached to a concept, that is, a product of a general conception or worldview as experienced by the people, but history still exposes that at the bottom line of the conception or worldview, an individual, though unknown, stands as the being behind it. Thought behind the institutionalization of the worldview or conception was the thought of an individual, there is no communal/istic thought or thinking-mind. That which becomes of a people (worldview) was thought out by a member of the people. Mind with which human beings think is particular to each person, though there may be influences from language, among other significant factors. Thus, Momoh, as quoted by Azenabor, has this to say in this regard: “Even though a world view may be characteristic of a people’s communal outlook upon the universe, it does not follow that the origin or formulation of that world view was communal. A world-view definitely was initially propounded by one individual in the

distant past” (Azenabor, 1994/5, p. 73).

This said, what should be talked about is the methods, manners or ways predominant in eras in approaching or engaging in philosophy (or act of philosophizing). What is meant by this is the predominant method according to understandings; or schools through which reality or philosophy is approached in every era. In the traditional era, two broad schools or predominant manners expressed in two different understandings are rationality and religion. Nonetheless, if African Philosophy must be periodized, it necessarily has to be conscious of the following eras:

#### 4.1 The Ancient or Antiquity Era

By ancient/antiquity, the paper pictures two phases: (a) the Time Immemorial Period and (b) the Sages Period.

Talking about the ‘Time Immemorial Period’ the paper goes back to capture the concept of immemorial; and that is, the era before human beings. It pictures the facticity of existence as expressed in being or beingness among which was the *Logos* or ‘Universal Reason’ from where human beings draw reason. It was the era of the existence of natural phenomena which human beings explored and then instituted what they built life on. From the beings in that era, the principle of philosophy and act of philosophizing could be fathomed. Philosophy and the act of philosophizing were all inhered in the concept of beings, and that was what that era symbolized. This is rationally justified following the fact that philosophy is philosophy as beheld by human beings and as extractable from their activities and as experienced by them also. Many scholars have maintained this position before now (Ugwu & Abah, 2021; Eneh, 2001; Hyland, 1973; Okoro, 2004). The Time Immemorial Period of Ancient/Antiquity depicts the starting point or fact of existence. God and other beings – spirit beings, some inanimate beings like trees/vegetations, waters, mountains, mother earth, etc. were beings considered as actors in the period.

Talking about the ‘Sage Period’ the paper refers to the era when the unrecorded and recorded sages existed till the very time African experience was inhumanly distorted by European contact. That era could also be referred to as Latter Ancient/Antiquity Era. It was the era when sages who thought out ways of survival, lived. Those sages made existential intellectualism from anthropological, religious, political, ethical, moral, technological, artistic, aesthetic, cultural, economic, medicinal/herbal perspectives, and created educational and African traditional scientific impacts that the next era scholarly built on. Very many of their thoughts were not documented but stood as substantial bases or foundations to what is thoughtful and philosophical by which Africans could be identified, today. That era was one when the discourse on being was not watered, adulterated and buried with the Westernization influences. Philosophers and scholars like Imhotep, Akhenaten, Ptah-Hotep (25<sup>th</sup> and early 24<sup>th</sup> Centuries BCE), Aristippus (435-356 BCE), Ipuwer (c. 2500 BC), Hatshepsut (1505-1405 BC), Akhethete, the Cyrenaics like Arete, Anniceris, Hegesias, and many others including the Egyptian Pharaohs, Carthaginians, Egyptian Mystic Brothers were actors in that era. The thoughts of these scholars stood as the very early foundation to the Sage Period. A sort of very last set of the period included Alexandrian Egyptian scholars like the Abbot, Adrain (710 AD), Cleopatra VII, Catherine, Vibia Perpetua, Hypatia (415 AD), the Targastean Augustine (Saint) (354-430 AD), Tertullian (160-240 AD), Origen (185-254 AD), Clement (150-213 AD), Ammonius Saccas (175 AD), etc.

#### 4.2 Political Era (Era of Identity Loss or False Identity/Personality)

This era covers from any time African being was distorted by Western imperialist movement: Trans-Atlantic and sub-Saharan slave trade and colonialism. Its ending was greeted by the high consciousness for the African self determination struggle. There is no clear cut line between the Ancient and the Political Eras. However, this era could be called an upgraded era than the Antiquity Era because it was an era of scholarly engagement and documentation of what practice that characterizes the Antiquity Era most of which was not written or documented. It was a sort of ‘Dark Age’ because Africans were existentially uprooted from consciously living out their true selves or personality. Their existential realities were not there. They lived in enslavement, bitterness, torture, colonialism, inhumanity and highest level of dehumanization. But the end of that era was greeted with intellectual revolts and activities that characterize self-recovery and escape from enslavement and then entrance to an era that enabled the living out of their true selves and identity. Characteristically, the ‘Political Era’, by this, became the era that Pan-Africanist consciousness rose and ruled. To some scholars like Chimakonam (2015), it was an era when Africans grew the consciousness for philosophy/philosophizing and to create a distinct

(Africanized) identity. It was a sort of 'Pre-Modern Era'. It was a significant era in which existed the Western (European) racial ontologization, politicization and naive representation of the African political, economic and religious lifestyle solely for the European's fame and selfishness. Giving it a political definition, it was an era necessarily for the African emancipation. In comparison to other scholars' periodization attempts, this era covers some parts (if not all) of their proposed ancient and medieval periods. The very early stage of this era was characterized by the thoughtful articulations of some scholars like Anthony William Amo (1700-1767), the Ethiopian Zera Yacob (17<sup>th</sup> century), Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784), Olaudah Equiano (Essaka-1797), Louis Hughes (1832-1913), Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), W. E. Du Bois (1868-1963). Adding to this were the intellectually outstanding activities of people of African descent from all over the world in many endeavours of life - of course drawing a whole lot of influences from African experiences. Categorization of these scholars under this era creates its uniqueness as the works of these Africans-in-Diaspora ignited more, the consciousness for African political, religious, educational emancipation. This influential point makes their thoughts worthy of being considered in the periodization exercise of African philosophy for they shaped both the causes and the effects of African experiences. This categorization is an attempt to differentiate the 'thinking scheme' which manifests in 'pattern/manner of philosophizing' among Africans who resided in Africa and in Diaspora. Those Diasporas have to be included in this era as they lived together with their counterparts who lived in Africa, but in different environment. Here, we see African scholars whose thoughts, most probably would not have been heard; or who would not have had their ancestors or they themselves been taken into slavery if not by the European-African contact. They have to be categorized as Africans though with a different (Western) mental scheme of conceptualization and thinking which made their philosophizing pattern more of Western/European than African. A sort of latter Dark Age era of this periodization exercise included the works of the African nationalists and scholars like Tom Mboya, Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Aime Césaire, Kenneth Kaunda, Julius Kambarage Nyerere, Steve Biko, etc. The intellectual contribution of these scholars in the development and periodization of the African philosophy was not only for political freedom, but also for the restoration of African humanity (through ideological postulations) and redefining of the African person and personality.

### 4.3 Modern Era

This was the era of formal education, or scholarship in accordance with the Western/European format and as it concerns philosophy as a profession. It was an era characterized by influences of Westernized patterns of philosophizing, which in the bid to compare the Western and African philosophies raise questions about the reality of African Philosophy. It was an extension of scholarship that started from the Political Era from political emancipation consciousness to more critical and philosophical consciousness for a deeper human and societal development. In that, there was a sort of shift from nationalist philosophical movement to individualistic (individualized) philosophical enterprise. This individualization, documentation and training in the Western philosophical tradition were the core characteristics of 'real' philosophy (or act of philosophizing), according to some scholars. It was the era African scholars like C. B. Okolo, H. Olela, P. Tempels, O. Oruka, P. Bodunrin, K. Wiredu, T. Okere, C. S. Momoh, P. Hountondji, E. M. P. Edeh, C. B. Nze, H. Maurier, and many others would argue was when African Philosophy really began. The above listed scholars and others who significantly participated in the heat of the 'Great Debate' and their works stand for this era. It was an era of academic professionalism or exercise/prowess of intellectualism as many scholars of that era made every attempt to build some popular systems or ideologies (isms) as ways of philosophizing. But these scholars holding that this era was the real philosophical era in African philosophy made a mistake by interchanging 'intellectualism' with 'philosophy'. In other words, 'intelligence or scholarship or formal education' is interchanged with 'wisdom' - a core identifier of philosophy.

### 4.4 Contemporary Era

This is an era in which I am writing now. Strictly speaking, it stretches from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century era. It is an era in which rationality (philosophy/philosophizing) is blended with science. But from another perspective of this era, there is a reversal, a U-turn to the defence of the first and second eras with the following reasons: (a) they were eras of real philosophy for that matter, (b) they were eras when the real question of 'what is being' was raised in its reality, holism and with every sense of seriousness. That explains the boost in human consciousness in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century about traditionalism as a strong ideal backup to sciencism and technological manipulations of nature. Characteristically, the contemporary era is fast growing into demanding for a subdivision



into 1) “Early Contemporary Era” consists of the tail end of the 19<sup>th</sup> till early mid 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. High urge for scientific development and show of superiority stand characteristics. Strictly to Africa, this era manifests in scientific methodological infiltration into the affairs of philosophy. It symbolically marked a beginning of declining of metaphysics in philosophical enterprise. The consequence was huge denial of metaphysical realities as projected in previous eras. The fate of metaphysical interpretation of realities began to wade off, delineated and demeaned in this era. Philosophy became friendlier with science thereby losing elements of metaphysical essence. The worst implications explain the later contemporary era. 2) “Later Contemporary Era” consists of an era when metaphysical values have discharged from the domain of discussing reality. Metaphysical interpretation has been dwindled for the progress of scientism. Becoming more scientific hence the lost of metaphysical essence, values, especially as they concern humanity no longer matter, and human beings became more interpreted materially than metaphysically. The meeting point of these two movements culminated into a realm of consciousness where science would easily be adopted to approach humanitarian conceptual crisis, be it in the political, religious, social affairs. The Later contemporary era is characterized by two central factors: science and politics.

Talking about ‘science’, the trend towards which science (and technology) is growing today could be devastating if not curtailed. The era will be an era of super science; ‘super’ in the sense that its scientism will be higher than what is scientifically obtainable now. Nature has been intimidated and challenged; in attempt to solve challenges, human beings create more. Scientific *cum* technological activities today: cloning, production of mass destructive weapons, genetics, robotics and hybridism, etc. which gear or supposed to gear towards human welfarism are turning to threats to humanity. Their activities keep raising some fundamental, ethical and humanitarian questions as they create more worries. In attempts to scientifically explore nature, human beings have abused nature. Nature has been so much explored exploitatively through science and technology, but in response, nature has released its sting upon human beings. By extension, the scientific trending has permeated all aspect of knowledge that even philosophy is going empirical and analytical. So many concepts considered as metaphysical problems like mind, spirit, soul, reincarnation, death, determinism, freewill, etc. have all today, scientific and materialist responses. Scientism has been dominated by activities challenging human beings and humanity, and in an attempt to improve on human welfare, create threats to humanity. It has been dominated by activities that provide arsenals and invent human substitutes like robots which have ethical and humanitarian implications. Be that as it may, scientific aspect of methodology towards philosophy like verification, falsification, empiricism, etc. has its relevance; however, care must be taken to preserve metaphysical relevance to philosophical enterprise. It is upon this predicate that philosophers have to defend essencism and vitalism as core to philosophy. Science exists only on the onticality of nature, but not ontological dimension of nature. Science has its limit in the general affair of knowledge.

Talking about ‘politics’, the world has grown towards political *cum* religious alliances regardless of possible negative implications. The world has grown too politically and religiously conscious that alliances underlined by jealous and political struggle, have dominated politics. Alliances for political and religious gains are daily building up; these are all subtle preparation for war against anyone perceived as an enemy and threat. Opponents have materialized and manipulated friends or neutral countries against their rival countries perceived as threat. This is the case in Africa today in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In this 21<sup>st</sup> Century era, Western political powers are having frictions and consequently falling apart. For instance, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Western Union are backing Ukraine and have fallen apart with Russia and her alliances (China, North Korea, etc.). These frictions have manifested in wars; and alliances are building for oppositions. African countries have been manipulated having been promised protection and supplying of arsenals and other humanitarian assistance, especially against their Western allies. The science-political era is clearly glaring in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century era. To be precise, Russia-China, Russia-Asian countries especially Russia-North Korean alliances have a keen focus on African countries to form alliances with majorly Francophone countries against France and other world power(ful) countries like America, Britain, etc. The France allied countries form major influential bodies like NATO which Russia and her allied countries do not feel comfortable with and which has convinced Ukraine to its membership. This Ukraine-NATO alliance is not just the cause of the Russia-Ukraine war going on for more than two years now, but also it is a threat to Russia that has quickly rushed to China and Asia for alliance in case of any escalation of war that could lead to actual and formal Third World War scene. So there is power tussle among the Western allies, and to worsen the situation, they began to involve neutral or friendly countries for alliances. While the Russian alliance began to manipulate the

Francophone countries to infuriate France allies (NATO, Britain, America, Ukraine, etc.), the rival alliance came to use the African democratic institutions (African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), etc.) as former colonies to repel the effects of Russia-African alliances which have resulted in underground facilitation of a number of coup d'état and wars as seen in Guinea, Chad, Mali, Gabon, Niger Republic, latest of which is Burkina Faso, and a number of failed ones in Guinea Bissau, and other African countries. This being the case, African democratic institutions like ECOWAS, etc. in respect to, and pressure from the colonial powers, have come to 'discipline' the warring African countries and to, perhaps knowingly or unknowingly, ensure the imperialist dynasty in Africa by sanctioning any party against formal government recognized by the colonial masters. But the support from the Russia counter alliance would give impetus to the new-order government never to surrender to the pressure from old-order government and its allies. That is the exact scenario in Congo Republic (DR.C) where, in South Kivu Province, constant fight between the Congolese Government Security Forces recognized and supported by the former colonial French government and the military Rebel Groups led by M23 recognized and supported by other Western individuals and countries to show their hatred for France, has persisted since 2022. Same scenario is playing out in Sudan where the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) under Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and its allies (collectively the Janjaweed coalition) under the Janjaweed leader Hemedti have been in conflict since 2023. By this, Africans are used as media for hatred display and showcasing of unhealthy relationships among Western countries that have selfish interest in the peace, humanity and natural resources of/in Africa. Thus, it could be said that even within African countries, alliances have been built against one another following expectation of support and arsenal supplies from these Western countries and alliances.

Subsequently, the economic implications of these alliances cannot be overlooked as they have bred economic consciousness, development and items of commercial exchange like the BRICS for Russian alliances, ECO-currency for African ECOWAS alliances, etc., for the interest of members. These alliances have encouraged a continuous war between the central government recognized by colonial masters and any other fraction working against the central government recognized by colonial masters. For instance, in Niger Republic, French authority refused to leave Niger as her colony arguing that she does not recognize the military leadership that ousted the democratic president, Mr. Mohamed Bazoum. What would African Union (AU) or Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) do if France begins to fight Nigerians (citizens of Niger Republic)? Would they fold their hands and watch foreign (colonial) powers kill their own brothers/sisters or defend fellow citizens thereby fighting their colonial masters, bearing in mind that fighting France implies fighting other powers like Britain, Germany, America, etc. on this context? Such a fight equally amounts to blockade of aids from France and other loyalist countries. What would an African nationalist like Nkrumah who would always advocate for African-one-family do in a situation like this? These are trend of events and experiences that shape the trend of African philosophy (or act of philosophizing) because of their influences.

Today's events that have been dominated by alliances of war, and have triggered intoxication and bloodthirsty political class, power mongering individuals based on political and religious alliances are too clear to be denied (Ugwu, 2021; Ugwu & Abah, 2022). Africa is today a battlefield where Western powers are cunningly displayed for possession. They come and ignite a fight among Africans and then distance themselves but subtly support and sold weapons to them, all for the destabilization of Africans. It is clear how the president of America Mr. Donald J. Trump and the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu are pushing to dump Palestinians on African soil. But the question is, to possess wherever they are taken to, as their own; or for lease; or for tenants, and for how long? Western powers, through some highly profiled individuals, are fighting to possess Africa through many ways. Mainly, knowing the vitality of media in a people's life, African media have become number one of interest on the list. To ensure this, Africans are promised free media training outside Africa with a token being paid to them on the process. This is not truly a free and positive move, but a subtle way to equip them with false narratives and techniques to spread lies all over the world against themselves (Africans) and any other people/countries perceived as an enemy. They deploy every possible means to achieve this. They employ highly globally acknowledged influential individuals like Elon Musk, etc. to do that. They use Arab money and politics and religion, Western aids, etc. to ensure that this becomes a reality. One would wonder if this could be an agendum or subtle way through which Mr. Trump's speech that Africa needs another more hundred years of re-colonization, gets manifested ([www.globalcitizen.org](http://www.globalcitizen.org) 20/09/2017; [www.thecitizen.co.tz](http://www.thecitizen.co.tz) 27/09/2017).

The present case of Palestine (Gaza/West Bank occupants) and Israeli war is another clear case that portrays the events of the later contemporary era. America and other powerful Western allies are playing with deaths and merciless massacre of people whom they perceive as enemies and allies with other counter powerful countries or countries that are in close proximity to get help from those counter powerful countries. Over politicization of events in disregard to the worth of human dignity and the quiddity of peaceful societies has taken the upper hand. War has become the major concern people clamour for, and the war is the one they threat the usage of nuclear weapons. Humanity is in a very big danger, the activeness of conscience is very insignificant, sense of morality has vanished from people's consciousness, war to damage and show of global superiority is the priority in our polity, religious engagements, social interactions which has encouraged racism even in recent times, among other factors are what we are after today, and they characterize the later contemporary era. Alliances are building, and these events raise philosophical questions as to the future of human beings and act of philosophizing. These events are the characteristic nature of the later contemporary era. These events signify an era for they call for a special manner of philosophizing and high diplomatic approach in reasoning and strategy in managing and resolving conflicts. Thus, even when Ohanyere (2014) in his *The Third World War* complained that the First and Second World Wars were men against men, but the Third World War is nature against men, that is not out rightly true for the trend of events of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century era championed by science and politics has proved otherwise. Today many people prefer to die by some diseases with which nature could respond to human scientific exploration activities than to be killed by dangerous weapons being produced today in preparation for any uncertainty tomorrow and political alliances. Ohanyere further elaborated his position in the excerpt below:

*Nature has released diseases like H.I.V Aids, cancer and high blood pressure which are at present beyond the knowledge of science. The ozone depletion, regular earth quake and unusual ocean surges, are indications that nature is becoming more unfriendly with this generation. Like the Allied forces of powerful nations that came together to ravage mankind during the first and the second world wars, nature has allied its forces in declaration of the third world war against mankind. It has set aside the nuclear armaments, submarines, intercontinental ballistic missiles, chemical and biological weapons from being used in this war but has declared its hostility by strange phenomena and inconceivable and unmitigated catastrophes. The third world war is by nature against man. It is real and the war is ongoing. It is a threat, a great problem to humanity, a challenge to science and knowledge (2014, 41).*

It will be an era of ending. The only hope for human posterity in this era is if scholarship, as scientifically exercised, is interrogated with the U-turn perspective of the 'Contemporary Era'.

## 5 Evaluation

To establish a historiographical documentation of African philosophy is a commendable one; but it is worrisome how there seems never to be an African way of doing philosophy without aligning with the Western conceptual scheme, tradition, system and even name. For instance, it could be said to be coincidental to have quadruple periodization of African philosophy, but it may not be defended as coincidence that the names of the Western periods must be adopted to periodize African philosophy. The term 'medieval' is synonymic with Western history; that alone makes it unfitted into the parlance for dealing with African philosophy. It is from this Western perspective that its being part of African philosophical periodization becomes highly controversial for it deals with an era that is not just foreign, and the actors are not Africans, but also lacks an African root.

The concept of 'philosophy in Africa' as African scholars, especially Okolo, have posited refers to the period of ethno-philosophy that is historicized under the ancient time. But this work would try to change the narrative. This paper would propose two concepts to put in place what it argues for. 'Philosophy in Africa' and 'philosophy from African' are the two concepts. By the concept, 'philosophy in Africa', this paper refers to the philosophical exercises done in Africa but by non-African philosophers, which from the lens of history, are very significant in African philosophical historiography. They include the philosophies of most Arabian scholars whose influences were central, insightful and formative to the philosophical development in Islamized African countries, especially as domiciled in the North African regions. By the concept 'philosophy from Africa' the paper refers to the philosophies of African indigenes groomed in Western mentality. That is, Western philosophy from African minds, on African experience or from Western perspectives. The philosophical works of Saints Augustine and

Anselm, Origen, Tertullian, Walda Heywat, those scholars mentioned as very early stage of the Political Era (Dark Age), both Ethiopian philosophers with Arabic and European educational influences are instances of 'philosophy from Africa' (Chimakonam, <https://iep.utm.edu/history-of-african-philosophy>). Other scholars whose thoughts could stand for 'philosophy from Africa' include 'Claude Summer, the Ethiopian philosopher who wrote on the works of Zaera Ya'eqob, Walda Heywat who wrote on the Maxims of Skendes; the works of Wilhelm Anton Amo, J. Jahn the second historian of African philosophy,... Marcel Griaule who philosophized in Europe' (Kanu, 2014). But later scholars of the school became conscious of another African peculiar trend based on African experience. That was where and how they came close to engage African philosophy. The trend was the consciousness of the African predicament like slave trade, colonialism, etc. which part of their philosophies addressed.

## 6 Conclusion

At this point, it could be generally said that the paper has been able to interact periodization attempts by other scholars. It has also pointed out its findings as the erroneous factors behind the misfire by previous scholars to get the periodization exercise right. It argued that these factors are based on (1) the misconception of what philosophy truly means and implies, and (2) Western influences which were assimilated hook, line and sinker. In doing that, it has equally presented a quadruple periodization attempt of the African philosophy: ancient, political, modern and contemporary eras. The raw materials used in doing this are African experiences as lived yesterday, being lived today and shall (or, as expected to) be lived by tomorrow following the trend of events of today. It argued that periodizing African philosophy necessarily hast to start from the ancient era to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Contemporary) era where science *cum* technological manipulations and global politics of interest stand characteristics.

## Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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