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Traditional African Values and the Right to Communicate

by Cecil Blake

Abstract

This paper examines the nature and classes of the speech act in traditional African settings against the background of African traditional values and the right to speak. The writer attempts to portray certain aspects that could be viewed as planks to form bases for a classification of a folk system of communication in Africa, which he terms as African rhetorics.

The author points out that the objective of the paper is to show how traditional African values are critical in our efforts to understand communication philosophies, ethics, processes, structures and genres in traditional African settings.

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Valeurs Africaines Traditionnelles et le Droit de Communiquer

par Cecil Blake

Résumé

Dans cette étude, l'auteur examine la nature et les classes du parler dans des cadres africains traditionnels sur une toile de fond des valeurs traditionnelles africaines et le droit de parler. L'auteur s'essaye à mettre en évidence certains aspects qui pourraient être considérés comme des planches susceptibles de fournir une base de classification d'un système populaire de communication en Afrique. Le terme "rhétorique africaine" est celui qu'il utilise pour désigner ce système.

L'auteur souligne que l'objectif de cette étude est de démontrer la grande importance des valeurs traditionnelles africaines pour celui qui veut comprendre les philosophies, l'éthique, les procédés ainsi que les structures et les genres dans un contexte africain traditionnel.

Introduction

For purposes of this work, the expression "traditional African values" refers to a composite set of principles, and to an extent knowledge and beliefs that are held in high esteem embedded in African societies, and that are deemed worthy of being regarded as the guidelines for human behaviour in interpersonal, group and inter-group communications and relationships.

The presupposition here is that African societies share certain fundamental values that guide the day to day life of inhabitants in traditional African settings. The values of interest here are mainly those that guide the various processes of communication. There are, for example, certain "rules" that guide discourse in the deliberative, forensic and epideictic genres. The "rules" are grounded in values such as respect for elders; acceptance of the supremacy of hierarchical structures; performance of certain rituals in respect for ancestors; performance of rituals for various occasions ranging from farming to death and burial ceremonies; sibling relationships, etc.

It should be noted right from the start that the objective of this work is not to catalogue traditional African values as such, but rather to work from the assumption that the values, some of which are mentioned above, are critical in our efforts to understand communication philosophies, ethics, processes, structures and genres in traditional African settings, hence the presentation of a "rhetorical checklist" in this work.

The "right to" has become a clarion call by several groups in Africa in recent times. The call ranges from the right to form free associations in the forms of political parties, movements, campaigns and even revolutions to the rights of women in African societies. These "rights" are grounded in warrants that are universal—Universal Declaration on Human Rights, supranational—the charters of the United Nations and the OAU and continental—the African charter on Human and Peoples rights.

In examining the above warrants, however, one has to distinguish between declarations and practice. Even when we look at the major conventions on issues such as the disposal of hazardous wastes, they contain clauses with lofty ideals but which are consistently flouted.¹ Constitutions also guarantee rights. When it comes to evoking such "rights", however, certain individuals and disfavoured groups in society suddenly become disenfranchised even to the extent of institutionalizing discrimination.

The United States, struggled and continues to struggle with the issue of rights of several groups as guaranteed by the constitution.

South Africa and Israel have until the present day institutionalized forms of discrimination — notwithstanding the existence of various forms and types of declarations and conventions etc. The same obtains in several African states. Essentially, therefore, when we discuss the issue of "rights" we have to understand the issue at two levels — as an ideal and as a practice.

Beyond the levels mentioned above, however, is the realm of communication, which is the concern of this paper. In this context, we are interested in the right to speak, to communicate through various channels, and to express ourselves freely. The rights that govern the speech act though guaranteed in international declarations have their roots in the traditions of the societies we wish to understand. In that regard, traditional values become an important point of departure.

The values embedded in a given tradition also form the basis for some form of "knowledge" about how one goes about fulfilling his rights in society. This "Knowledge" has been referred to by some as "traditional" knowledge or "indigenous" knowledge. It is this knowledge that equips the individual to know when to speak, to whom, at what place and at what level of involvement. The knowledge acquired depends upon the socialization process — the way a man or woman is taught to speak, his/her choice of words, his/her style and a full understanding of context. The composite set of factors mentioned above represent the value system that guides discourse.

When we examine the "published" declarations on "rights" of the individual, these are invariably grounded in traditions of the North. The guiding principles are Northern through the titles of such declarations are "Universal". The Northern origins of the "rights" movement is not the issue here nor is the concept challenged. As mentioned earlier, the existence of these declarations does not mean that people indeed enjoy such rights. The point that is being made is that the "rights" issue in its contemporary form is Northern driven.

Having said the above, African tradition and history are replete with cases of "rights" being exercised and/or demanded. Despotic leaders at the Chieftaincy level and higher are challenged and deposed as a result of popular up-risings. Women, who in contemporary literature are portrayed as "rightless" (which incidentally is true in so many instances) have exercised their rights within traditional contexts ranging from the right to divorce to the right to rule. In West Africa, there have been several women who were chiefs and Paramount chiefs of their chiefdoms. There are many of them today still holding chieftaincies. The issue of rights, therefore, is one that is not strange to African tradition and value systems. What perhaps, we could talk

about is how one goes about exercising these rights and/or seek redress when these rights are flouted.

At the level of communication, the issue of rights within African traditional contexts and values systems is discernible in several loci of African society. There are, of course, certain conventions that serve as guides for the exercise of such rights. As an example, when one is offended, there are guidelines that dictate the approaches the offended has to utilize to make his case. Forensic occasions are plentiful in traditional society and are a pleasure and delight to observe. The African forensic tradition is documented in journals of western explorers since the advent of western contacts with the continent. In reading novelists like Achebe and others, we can also observe a clear and rich African rhetorical tradition.²

Besides forensic occasions, the right to communicate during deliberative events is also based on guiding principles that point to status in society and power relations.³ The same could be said for epideictic occasions which in this instance includes all forms of rituals. On face value, therefore, one could argue that traditional African values do not hinder the individual's right to communicate as long as there is an understanding of the guiding principles upon which such rights could be exercised. It is true, however, that in several African societies, women do not seem to participate in deliberative events other than those mentioned earlier — in their capacity as chiefs.

When it comes to an elaborated view of the right to communicate as through the print and electronic media against the background of traditional African values, however, we are entering into an entirely different realm. As could be expected, one could hardly talk about the right to express one self in an oral traditional setting by means of the print and electronic media. Such media do not generally exist in traditional African settings. In addressing the subject matter of traditional African values and the right to communicate, therefore, it seems logical that we would have to confine our discourse to the speech act, since the communication tradition is mainly oral.

If the above is the case, we would have to deal with the nature and classes of the speech act in traditional African settings against the background of African traditional values and the right to speak. Such an exercise would further confine our discourse to African rhetorical systems. The problem that would be encountered from the outset is the paucity of sources in dealing with the subject.

It is against the background above that this paper will approach the subject matter at hand by examining what it takes to understand and set up a folk system of African rhetorics. As we look at the stages required to set up such a system, a concomitant treatment of the right

to communicate will also be discussed.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to discuss what could be viewed as stages that form the bases for a classification of a folk system of communication in Africa. The rationale for such a discourse is grounded on the need first of all to understand the sources of African rhetorics and secondly to determine how traditional African values treat the issue of rights of the individual to communicate. Furthermore, an understanding of those forms could assist in utilizing them effectively to communicate innovations within a context that the rural African would readily grasp. It is precisely because of the perceived need to exercise the right to communicate comprehensively to all segments of African society that this discussion is initiated. But first a few words about some aspects of the methodology I adopted in finding an entry point to handle the task upon which I have embarked.

Methodology

The first step taken in the preparation of this text was a substantial bibliographical search albeit utilizing both the traditional manual and modern electronic approaches. To my dismay, it was extremely difficult to get significant citations that deal with traditional African values and the right to communicate. Works on traditional African values could be found in Anthropology, sociology, the writings of those European "explorers" and administrators⁴ before and during the colonial days; and a few written by Africans.⁵ The vacuum, however, is so wide when one tries to find and use sources that link the two concepts — traditional values and the right to communicate.

There are statements in some of the sources that pertain to issues of governance, jurisprudence and ritual.⁶ There are available, articles on the various forms and patterns of traditional/indigenous communication?⁷ The approach to this paper, therefore, is one that is developed on the basis of sources consulted — written and oral, followed by a presentation that calls for the study of African rhetorics in an effort to systematize that which we could unearth, since the clear point seems to be in the realm of rhetoric.

African Rhetorics and Rights Issues

The reason for calling upon scholars and researchers to engage in studies on African rhetorics mainly is due to the fact that African communication in rural/traditional settings is largely oral. Communication through the print medium is fairly recent, notwithstanding the fact that a country like Sierra Leone had a

newspaper as early as 1808.⁸ In rural Africa, the print medium is a recent phenomenon. The journalistic tradition in the continent is largely urban, where, whatever is left of traditional values is highly bastardized.

When we attempt to examine the bases for African rhetorics, however, we find ourselves wanting in terms of approaching the subject matter as a system. What is meant as a system here is that which constitutes what we could refer to as the various classes of speech acts that comprise the corpus of African rhetorics, in the first instance, and also the essential elements of folk communication in traditional African settings. The concern also extends to the issue of the right to communicate within such a system.

There is a considerable percentage of Africans who still live in rural areas and who practice folk patterns of communication in conjunction with other contemporary forms.⁹ Such a population should be incorporated within any development plan not just as receivers of packages for "modernization" or "development" but also as sources for the preparation of message packages with "development" content.

Existing within a cultural and historical context that is rich in indigenous forms and structures of communication *still in use* in many African states, it is incumbent on those States to pay attention to the development of indigenous communication structures and forms. If due attention is to be given to such forms and structures, we need to know what they are. The following, therefore, represent the key topics to be discussed in this paper: (1) the aggregation of data on African rhetorical systems; (2) codification, and (3) articulation.

Stage 1: Aggregation

The practice of rhetoric and public address is essentially human, and inherently involves the right of the individual to free speech. Being human, it is inherently tied in to our daily involvement with others and institutions. In fact, western scholarship emphasizes on the importance of democratic ideals in order for rhetoric to thrive in society. Since rhetoric and public address as one subject is tied in to human activity, its relevancy and meaning could only be discerned if we take a broader look at the subject from a universal perspective, thus, placing the subject within the general human condition. Before Wingspread in 1970¹⁰, Kenneth Burke had looked upon rhetoric as a redeeming factor of bringing order and unity in society. I.A. Richards¹¹ on the other hand, looked to rhetoric to help study misunderstanding and identified metaphor and meaning as two elements that may present remedies to misunderstandings in communicative settings.

Wingspread broadened the scope of rhetoric, and we observe after Wingspread, a plethora of articles and scholarly documents on the rhetoric of confrontation, or for some, agitation and control, and others black rhetoric emerged. The social and rhetorical imperatives of the late 1960's and early 1970's gave new blood to rhetoric and sparked inquiries into rhetorical acts and behaviour in societal conditions of turmoil in North America.

The miserable conditions in which people in Africa, Asia, Latin America and other parts of the so-called Third World, find themselves could be partly ameliorated by comparative studies in rhetoric, enabling people to understand their rights and to exercise them. A serious implication that derives from such a posture is the need to devise mechanisms required to detect the parts and pieces of rhetorical acts particularly in Africa and the rest of the developing areas, in order to facilitate message development and diffusion.

Why such a posture? Three paramount reasons could be discerned. First of all, the condition in which many countries in the so-called Third World find themselves is deplorable. Development messages are seemingly not making an impact on the masses. Secondly, the methods and modes of communication utilized by governments in Africa remain largely western, having no regard for indigenous methods and modes of communication. Thirdly, in terms of research, what we have extant in rhetorical studies does not address the current communication imperatives of Africa. In short, we do not have the parts and pieces of rhetorical acts aggregated from Africa.

If rhetoric as a constituent element of the discipline of communication is to justify its continued existence and utility, it has to address the malaise in society as far as attempts to communicate remedies are concerned. Rhetoric's mission, it seems, comes from the general human condition at the dusk of a tumultuous century — a condition badly in need of amelioration. In order not to be misunderstood, the claim here is not that people have not attempted to ameliorate the human condition by utilizing what some leaders have deemed to be effective communication.

Hitler, for example moved millions of Germans and others with his rhetoric. He sought, as far as he was concerned, to ameliorate a condition that he felt was an obstacle to Aryan dominance. Though his rhetoric may be characterized as demagogic, he was successful in addressing Germans. The question here is not about the ethics (a legitimate question) but rather about the parts and pieces of Hitler's rhetoric that made his followers not only believe in him but actively supported him.

The peculiar epoch of Hitler's tyranny is by no means a

recommendation for the present malaise that confronts developing countries in seeking to devise means of utilizing "effective" rhetorical strategies to move their populations. It is the duty of rhetoricians in developing areas and the rest of the world for that matter to look comparatively at rhetorical acts and systems. Understanding the above also will assist people in asserting their rights in the appropriate manner.

What the rhetorician of the late twentieth century should be concerned with rises far above the practice of rhetorical analysis and theory in order to legitimize the field. S/he is the field observer of rhetorical acts. S/he aggregates on a first-hand basis rhetorical acts. S/he deals with an on-going process of communication. S/he observes and catalogues constituent parts and pieces of rhetorical acts and utterances. S/he does such observation not in the classroom or in university laboratories, but rather within the environment of the general human condition. S/he is a traveller who makes excursions into various rhetorical universes.

The rhetorician's mission is restricted to the discovery of the constituent parts and pieces of human discourse. S/he does not gather his information from a distance, nor does s/he simply look at delivered speeches or written documents and performs a critical autopsy. S/he is concerned with discourses that are alive and affecting the daily lives of people. The method utilized is not "empirical" in the sense we broadly view that term today because s/he cannot afford to deal with limited samples. The method cuts across the "empirical", the ethnographic, the participant observation and the historical critical methods.

The rhetorician is essentially an informed eclectic who designs an instrument that will assist in revealing those parts and pieces of discourse in "far" and "strange" lands with the hope of helping to improve the general human condition. Rhetoric thus obtains its mission from the universal human condition. Such condition is deeply rooted not only in sociology or psychology, but also in philosophy, politics, history, anthropology, linguistics, economics, and geography. Since the rhetorician of the late twentieth century and early twenty first century is concerned with the general human condition, she/he has to be fully committed to the pursuit of knowledge across several disciplines in order to conduct research effectively. Such research should help in addressing the issue of the right of the individual to communicate.

The above characterization of the rhetorician seems superfluous if not erratic. Yet, we cannot demand less. Cicero, for example, required the orator to be fully educated and committed to statesmanship.¹² His

was a concern for the enhancement of the quality of life of Romans. Ours today is a concern for the enhancement of the quality of life of Africans and other peoples of the South, so as to take their proper places in the global community. If domestic concerns in the western world were instigators for a new look at rhetoric at the Wingspread Conference in 1970, international tensions, culture and politics, human rights and development in the post colonial era are the factors today that should prompt our new look at rhetoric twenty two years after Wingspread.

Ehninger,¹³ correctly looked at the growth and development of western rhetorical theory, grounding each epoch upon a firm base. The classical epoch he grounded in "grammar". Modern rhetorical theory on the other hand was grounded in psychology. The rhetoric of our times—the end of the twentieth century—is grounded in human development studies which cut across disciplinary boundaries. The call for a retreat to examine the parts and pieces recognizes the need to aggregate rhetorical acts in non-western societies. My concern for the general human condition reflects my recognition of the importance of the humanities, psychology, sociology, and the other pertinent social sciences disciplines. My concern is thus comprehensive.

The process of aggregation is not an easy task. Faced with resultant post colonial societies that had been exposed to alien forms of rhetorical discourses, the richness of traditional rhetorical practices of African societies have been altered though not obliterated. In attempting to aggregate data on rhetorical acts, discourses and basic structures to support both action and discourse, it could be quite misleading if the interplay between western rhetorical behaviour and traditional patterns is not placed in a proper context.

The first rule, therefore, in aggregating data on rhetoric in Africa and elsewhere where we still find a preponderance of what is left of traditional/indigenous values is to conduct an extensive review of the dominant traditional forms of discourse such as story-telling; parable; myths, dance; song; ritual; forensic; and other convivial and deliberative forms of discourse.

The second rule for aggregating data on the subject is to employ all the expertise available in oral traditional—"orature"—and work hand in hand with theorists and critics of orature.¹⁴ Such a cadre now exists particularly at research centres that study African literature and languages. The need to incorporate orature experts is obvious. Such experts do not usually look at the rhetorical dimensions of their subject. Originally trained in literature, they tend to look into poetics rather than rhetoric. If we are to accept the influence of the new rhetoric, it stands to reason that poetics and all other forms of human discourse—

verbal and non-verbal fall within the purview of our exercise.

The third rule relates to training. It would be foolhardy on the part of interested personnel in such an exercise—data aggregation—not to be trained to a significant extent in the area of rhetorical theory and analysis. Even though the training that is available so far is western in structure and orientation, a disciplined and sensitive researcher in the subject would realize that his or her training, among other things is aimed at disciplining the mind in order to ask intelligent questions about the field regardless at times, of locale.

The above is the reason why a one dimensional methodological approach cannot be utilized in seeking the needed information Training thus becomes a central point.

The question of where to obtain the type of training that would now be appropriate is an entirely different aspect. Various initiatives could be taken at the national and international levels to design appropriate training programmes. In the meantime, current researchers who are experts in rhetorical theory and analysis with a solid social science background, in addition to their already solid grounding in the humanities—particularly African history and culture, could set up research teams, recognizing the constraints within which they have to function.

As in all subjects that pertain to human discourse, "rules" are not there to be applied on a "hard" and rigid basis. Present day society negates such application. They serve to guide not to control; to facilitate not to impede. The above "rules", therefore, are presented to facilitate the first stage in the overall discussion on the stages that form the bases for a classification of a folk system of communication in Africa. The crucial stage of data gathering, is initiated well, and conducted expeditiously, prepares the research team to move on to the next stage—codification.

In essence, what the above discussion seeks to present are the following: (i) In order for us to begin an investigation into the parts and pieces of an African folk system of communication, we need to understand, in our times, the "mission" of rhetoric; (ii) That each epoch in history is guided by epistemological influences which dictate rhetorical acts. Within the African context, the argument is that basic African folk custom, tradition, beliefs, values, attitudes, philosophy, world-view, religion, continue to influence to a large extent, the rhetorical acts of rural Africans who constitute the majority of the population of the continent. There exists, of course, modern forms of media communication, and also western forms of rhetorical discourses in parliaments and "learned" contexts. More importantly, we have to bear in mind the dominance of western epistemological and pedagogical

influences in schools at all levels.

It is precisely within the above context that the aggregation stage becomes crucial and difficult. The interplay between African indigenous forms and structures of communication and those of the western trend makes aggregation a difficult task. Discerning one from the other and where they overlap is quite significant. Successful aggregation could mark the beginning of a process that will yield as a result, a body of knowledge in African folk systems of rhetorical communication that could be structured for pedagogical and research uses.

The above represents the rationale for referring to the first stage as that of aggregation of data. We cannot talk about codification if we do not initially aggregate the various components that will give a wholesome picture of the many communication processes that exist.

Stage 2: Codification

In utilizing the term codification, one creates the possibility of multiple interpretations of the concept. In the present work, codification refers to the tool that assists the researcher who seeks to unearth and classify the various forms and sources of a folk system of African rhetorics. The tool represents a simple checklist or inventory on rhetoric and rhetorical transactions. Presented below is the Checklist/Inventory on rhetoric and rhetorical transactions:

1. Sources of philosophical assumptions about the nature of communication:
 - History
 - Religion
 - Tradition
 - Culture
 - Epistemology
 - Folklore
2. Taboos and permissibles in communicative acts:
 - Who talks to whom
 - When to talk
 - Order in which to talk
 - How to talk
 - Concerns for rank
 - Rituals of speech - e.g. taking the dock; swearing of oaths etc.: Verbal and Non-verbal
 - Oral media, e.g. Okeame; Kusumira
3. Types of discourses:
 - Informative
 - Deliberative

- Epideictic
 - Forensic
 - Other (fully explain)
4. Modes of establishing proof and credibility:
 - Ethos
 - Pathos
 - Logos
 - Other (fully explain)
 - (a) Determine essential source of each mode
 - (b) How to develop an argument
 - (c) Steps one adopts to persuade
 5. Checklist of essential amplification devices and patterns of organization:
 - Story-telling
 - Parables
 - Myths
 - Legends
 - Maxims
 - Song
 - Dance
 - Drama
 - Ritual
 - Other (specify)
 6. Essential stylistic devices
 7. Essential sources of topics:
 - Human
 - Animal (wild/tame)
 - Abstract (*trees, rocks other inanimate forms*)
 8. Speech and time relationships
 9. Communication and ritual settings
 10. The non-verbal means;
 - Eye contact - with whom?, when?, when told?, how?
 - Touch - who, when, how?
 - Body movement
 - Gestures
 11. How institutions (e.g. chieftaincy) communicate:
 - Philosophical assumptions about persons and their rights and relationships to institutions and society
 - Media - Instruments; message arrangement; and transmission.
 12. General observations.

Articulation

Having presented the checklist required to assist the researcher in codifying that which has been aggregated, it would be useful to examine how one can observe and then analyze speech acts that fall into the various classes identified. Again, it must be reiterated that the reason for focussing on the speech act is mainly because it is difficult to present scenarios that are extant in literature regarding the topic. As a matter of fact, when one reads through the publication: *Human Rights and Development in Africa*,¹⁵ the key areas targeted are mainly in the political and legal realms. There are references to labour and industrial relations, womens' rights but within the political sphere, and organizations that deal with human rights issues. Mention is made on freedom of speech, under which we could deal with issues of the press. There are, however, no concrete treatment of the concerns we have here — traditional African values and the right to communicate.

For our purposes here, we shall focus on some specific instances that demonstrate the articulation stage. The specific instances will be restricted at this time to observations in Kenya. Through these examples, we would be able to discern the issue of traditional African values and the right to communicate particularly as such right pertains to gender issues. Three such examples will be presented.

There are classic cases in Kenya that one could really examine to understand the role of traditional African values and the right to communicate. These cases mainly concern the position of women within the African traditional value system. Furthermore, a couple of the cases involve inter-ethnic marriages.

The first case involves a woman from the Kikuyu ethnic group who was married to a Luo. They had settled in Nairobi and for all practical purposes, the capital was considered to be their home. They had built their lives within the above context. The gentleman died. As per the Luo tradition, the clan to which the deceased belonged would normally take charge of the entire funeral and burial arrangements. In this instance, the wife is seen as secondary to the clan. The clan decided that the deceased would have to be buried in his ancestral home, against the wishes of the wife. The wife challenged the decision of the clan and wanted to take full responsibility for the funeral and burial of her husband. An impasse emerged and the case had to be taken to court.

According to the tradition of the deceased, the spouse (the wife) had no say in decisions that involved the eventual resting place of a member of the ethnic group concerned. The court in this instance decided in favour of the clan. The deceased could not be buried in

Nairobi, let alone in Kikuyu land! The above case is a celebrated one because it demonstrates the power and force of traditional Luo values and the rights of women within that value system.

The other case involved the death of a well-known Luhya politician who also was highly respected nationally and occupied a significant leadership position in his ethnic group. The nature of his death gave rise to all types of speculation—from foul play to natural causes. The wife of the deceased was not a member of the Luhya ethnic community. She took firm control of the entire funeral and burial arrangements to the dismay and annoyance of the clan which had concurrently been making arrangements for the funeral and burial of the deceased as per the Luhya tradition.

There were key areas of contention between the clan and the family spear-headed by the wife. Disagreements ranged from the decision of the wife not to have an autopsy done on the deceased to the timing of embalming, and the mode of transportation of the corpse to its eventual resting place. In this instance, the wife prevailed over the clan. A basic tenet that has to be realized in this example is that though the wife prevailed, the Luhya tradition was considered flouted.

The third case involves a marriage couple from the same ethnic group—the Luo. The deceased was a man of high standing nationally and within his ethnic group. His death was also quite an event that invited controversy and speculations. The senior wife was being pressured to adopt a stance that would run counter to the positions adopted by the funeral committee of the clan. In this instance, the wife categorically told those who were pressuring her that she was only a “woman” and could, therefore, not go against the wishes of the clan. The clan, of course, prevailed. The essential point with regard to this issue is that the woman validated the Luo traditional values as espoused by the clan and in so doing also demonstrated the position of the Luo woman in the traditional value system of the Luo.

There are numerous examples that could be given in which a clear demonstration could be made of the power of traditional African values in several speech contexts. Besides the cases mentioned above, there are deliberative events as in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, (the debate on whether or not one Community should wage war against another), that reveal rhetorical brilliance, and the rules of the game with regard to the speech act in deliberative settings. The game thing applies in forensic and epideictic contexts. Observations, followed by cataloguing of various events in the speech genres referred to above or others that could be discerned utilizing the checklist, could contribute greatly towards our understanding of the rhetorical structure of African discourse, based on African traditional values.

In concluding this paper, it must be stressed that the concept of human rights still faces a problem of what I would refer to as universal validation, notwithstanding the existence of the declarations mentioned at the beginning of this work. The People's Republic of China for example, rejects all external efforts and pressures to address the issue of human rights, claiming that it would deal with the issue as the Chinese government sees fit. When a permanent member of the security council adopts such a position, how could the international community handle racist and oppressive regimes in the world?

Perhaps one way to tackle the dimension of universal validation of the concept of human rights is to aggregate at a global scale, regimes that constitute the rights of individuals in the major civilizations of the world — African traditional values/knowledge systems; Asian, Latin American and other traditional values/knowledge systems of non-western societies. It is quite feasible to develop such data bases.

As it stands currently, not only are the rhetorical structures, traditional values and knowledge systems of the Euro-American (white) world known to us, they have been proselytized as *the* norm for human and societal conduct to the extent of defining others. Conformity or non-conformity to those norms could result at times in blatant aggression against weak nonwestern states. Given the above, we still have a lot to do on the issue of rights whether within the realms of communication, politics, religion, law, or any realm of our choice.

Notes

1. During the months of September and October, 1992, the Executive Director of UNEP, Dr. Mostapha Tolba shocked the international community with revelations of breaches of the conventions governing hazardous waste disposal by two European countries. Somalia was reported to be the dumping site.
2. See for example, Gamito, A.C.P. *Estudos De Ciencias Politicas Socias No 42: King Kazembe*, Volume I. Lisboa: Centro De Estudos Politicos E Socias, 1960; See also Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (The Film) Worthington: Ohio, Sundania Inc. 1988
3. *Ibid.*
4. See for example, Lord Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, Hampden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1965, passim.
5. Sibthorpe, A.C.C. *The History of Sierra Leone*, New York: The Humanities Press, 1970, Passim. Also Blyden, E.W. *African Life and Customs*, Freetown, 1906
6. *Op cit*; Sibthorpe; Blyden.
7. Blake, Cecil, "Understanding African National Development: Some Challenges to Communication Specialists," *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 12 No. 2, December, 1981, especially pp 210-216; see also, Ugboajah,

- F.O. "Developing Indigenous Communication in Nigeria," *Journal of Communication*, Autumn, 1979.
8. Sibthorpe, op.cit; p.22
 9. Blake, Cecil "Communication Research and African National Development," *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 10 No 2, pp. 218-230.
 10. A major conference was held at Wingspread Wisconsin in which leading scholars in Rhetorical/Communication did comprehensive review of the status of rhetoric and indicated future directions. A publication resulted from the conference, titled *The Prospect of Rhetoric* (eds) L. Bitzer and E. Blac, New York: Prentice Hall. 1979
 11. Richards, I.A. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1965; Binke, Kenneth, *A Grammar of Rhetoric*, and *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1962.
 12. Hadas, Moses, (ed) *The Basic Works of Cicero*, New York, 1951.
 13. Ehninger, Douglas, "On Systems of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, Vol. 1, Summer, 1968 pp. 131-144.
 14. M. Mugo of the University of Nairobi used the expression "orature" consistently at a lecture delivered at Harvard University in 1980 in reference to African and literature. Others interested in research in this area are Prof. M. Cham, African Studies Research Centre, Harvard University, Washington D.C., and Dr. M. Broderick formerly of Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria.
 15. Ngcongco, L.D. et al., *Human Rights and Development in Africa*, Gaborone: National Institute for Development Research and Documentation, 1985 pp 1-59.