

RESEARCH ARTICLE

‘Understudied and under-theorized?’ – Exploring the history, concepts and evolution of African Philanthropy

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Abstract

In recent years the African continent has been witnessing a notable increase in High-Net worth Individuals (HNWIs), a growing body of scholarly work, and a maturing network of philanthropy practitioners and institutions. Despite these developments, the history, foundational values and role of African philanthropy in political, social and economic development remains peripheral in dominant global narratives in both practice and academia (Breeze and Moody, 2016; Fowler and Mati, 2019). With major academic works on philanthropy emanating mainly from the United States of America and Europe and the most established philanthropic foundations also originating from the same regions, little focus has been trained on Africa as a contributor to the knowledge and practice of philanthropy. It has even been contended that Africa is a ‘Dark Continent’ (Jarosz, 1992) which is more a beneficiary of philanthropy rather than a contributor to the study and practice of giving and human development (Mati, 2016). Such assertions have however taken scant account of the genealogy, notions and practices of giving in Africa. This article collates and provides a chronological analysis of literature on the history, conceptual foundations and utility of African philanthropy in the development of diverse societies from the pre-colonial era to date. Empirical data from mainly African sources demonstrates that philanthropy has been intricately intertwined with the development of African societies from the pre-colonial era. The article also finds complex insights and concepts on African philanthropy that merit more in-depth study and dissemination.

Keywords: African philanthropy; Colonialism; Culture; Community; Reciprocity.

JEL classification: H2, 01, C33, 055

1. Introduction

‘Study the past if you would define the future.’ - Confucius

Even though literature has long established that the origins of the term ‘philanthropy’ lie in the Greek language, its actual practice in Africa can be traced back to primordial times amongst the continent’s pre-colonial societies (Kotiranta, 2019; Murisa, 2018; Savane, 2011). This historical fact is however not widely acknowledged in dominant global literature on philanthropy (Murisa, 2018). In his seminal work on the role and place of African philanthropy in global development, Moyo (2011), averred that;

‘Philanthropy is intrinsically embedded in the life cycle of birth, life, and death of many, if not all Africans. At any given time, one is either a philanthropist or a recipient of one kind or other of benevolence.’

Understanding that the Greek definition of the word philanthropy – *philos* (love) and *Anthropos* (mankind), means love of mankind, it can be asserted that philanthropy has always been practiced in Africa (Moyo and Ramsamy, 2014) to such an extent that to be philanthropic is ingrained in the very identity of an African (Mohamed, 2023).

Despite recent advances in African scholarship on philanthropy as a distinct discipline, the history and role of African philanthropy in political, social and economic development remains peripheral in dominant global narratives in both practice and academia (Moody and Breeze, 2016; Fowler and Mati, 2019). Most of the available research on charitable giving comes from the United States of America and to a lesser extent, Europe. Due to it being seriously under-theorized and understudied, scientific information on the history of African philanthropy is scant and difficult to collate (Mati, 2016). Consequently, most research efforts rely on external models which are largely ill-suited to the African context.

Having been labelled the ‘Dark Continent’ by Western explorers during the pre-colonial era (Jarosz, 1992) and more recently as a ‘Hopeless Continent’ by Western media (The Economist, 2000), Africa continues to face a formidable challenge towards transforming longstanding misconceptions about its history, values and contributions to human development. Africa has been further characterised as a continent of dependants and beneficiaries of philanthropy (Mati, 2016). A former high-level official with the World Bank has charged that Africa has remained behind other formerly colonised territories in terms of development because it has elected to be trapped in a coil of pride, poverty, self-pity and anger and would not be noticed at global summits were it not for colourful attire worn by African delegates (Calderisi, 2006).

Given the above, this article seeks to provide an overview of the history and evolution of African philanthropy as a contribution to available scholarship on the broader field of philanthropy. However, to help contextualize the evolution of philanthropy in Africa it is even more important to study the overall history of Africa’s economic development and the impact of colonial ideologies, power structures and practices on the continent and its people (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). In addition, this article will lay the ground for transitioning to the unfolding discourse on the purpose and nature of regulation of philanthropy globally, and in the developing world. To organize the empirical data from available literature on the subject, the researcher generally adopts the temporal classification provided by Obadare and Krawczyk (2022) wherein they divided the evolution of African philanthropy into four historical epochs; Pre-Colonial African Gifting and Civil Society; African Gifting and Civil Society During the Colonial Period; Post-Colonial Independence, and Innovations in African Philanthropy during the 21st Century. The article traces the evolution of African philanthropy through three historical epochs in sub-Saharan Africa. The first section provides an overview of philanthropic practices in African societies during the pre-colonial era, while the second section assesses developments in African philanthropy during the colonial era (1880–1980). The third section explores the nature and character of philanthropy and development in post-colonial Africa (1981–2020) while the conclusion highlights the article’s key findings and recommendations.

2. Philanthropy in Pre-Colonial Africa

‘Mutu umodzi susenza denga’ (One head cannot carry a roof of a house)

Much like in modern day Africa, institutions and society during the pre-colonial era were neither homogenous nor static. Across the continent societies were structured along diverse forms that included kingdoms, empires, tributary states, cities and principalities (Iweriobor, 1982; Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2013). On one end highly centralised and hierarchical states such as the Ankole in East Africa existed and thrived, while one could also find the Luba/Lunda kingdom in modern Angola and Congo, Munhumutapa empire that covered Zimbabwe, Mozambique and parts of South Africa, the Zulu Kingdom, Tswana, Swati and Sotho kingdoms in Central and Southern Africa (Wa Mutua, 1995). On the other end there also existed non-stratified societies that were organized

at lower levels such as Nuer in Sudan and the Konkomba in Ghana and Togo (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2013). However, in this diversity it was evident that Africa as the origin and cradle of humankind fostered the values of generosity, reciprocity, altruism and community well-being (Fowler, 2022).

According to Aziza (2001), culture is the totality of the pattern of behaviour of a specific group of people. It includes all aspects that make them unique such as their greeting habits, dressing, cuisine, music, dance, taboos, religious and philosophical beliefs, and rites of passage from birth to death. From ancient times, philanthropy as love for humankind was a central tenet of everyday life in many African societies before the advent of colonialism. Hyden (1983) posits that Africa has longstanding traditions of community, giving and solidarity in which rural societies collaborated with each other in economies of affection. Such traditions were exemplified by informal exchanges and collective action between households that provided mutual help and social protection for the purposes of production (Hyden, 1983). It is therefore evident that the values of community, solidarity, mutual-aid, reciprocity and collective responsibility are deeply rooted in African culture, traditions and philanthropy (Aina, 2013). This is in alignment with the averment from Moyo (2013) in which he asserts that philanthropy is intrinsically rooted in the life cycle of all Africans.

Mauss (1969) proposed that gifting practices can be generally divided into two categories, the first, 'agonistic' giving, is motivated by highlighting and sustaining positions of power, privilege and wealth. In most cases the giver and the recipient are not known to each other and belong to different social classes making the giving 'vertical' (Fowler, 2022). On the other hand, non-agonistic giving is characterised by a more horizontal and non-competitive approach where the giver and receiver are enjoined by common values and seek to strengthen relationships of mutual support and collaboration (Fowler, 2022). The givers and beneficiaries of philanthropy in pre-colonial African societies knew each other and were often at the same social rank (Fowler, 2017; Fowler and Mati, 2019; Obadare and Krawczyk, 2022). Giving practices in pre-colonial Africa were mainly based on reciprocity in a manner that strengthened relationships and social bonds as well as foster survival of society in the event of calamities such as war (Mati, 2017). Some scholars have explained that reciprocal giving occurs when a giver extends a gift with an expectation of a return gift albeit at another time. The gifts may not be identical but often retain equal value to the both the giver and the recipient (Fowler and Wilkinson-Maposa, 2013). At its simplest the concept of reciprocity is evident when someone gives a gift because she has also received a gift (Kolm, 2000). One ancient Shona proverb that undergirds the importance of reciprocity and remains common today says, '*Kandiro kanoenda kunobva kamwe*' – '*A small plate goes where another has come from.*' In addition to strengthening relationships, reciprocity also enhanced fairness and cooperation through placing the giver and the receiver on an equal pedestal (Mottiar and Ngcoya, 2016).

Idioms from many other African languages emphasized the importance of collective action such as the Chichewa saying from Malawi, '*Mutu umodzi susenza denga*', which translates to (one head cannot carry a roof of a house), and the Asante of Ghana who stressed that '*nobody suffices into himself for a journey*'. Various Shona-speaking groups in modern-day Zimbabwe were regarded as communalistic societies which had ingrained in themselves values that ensured that the well-being of the less-fortunate and disadvantaged members was a concern and responsibility of the entire village (Mawere and Awuah-Nyamekye, 2015). The community was a powerful institution for organising social, political and economic development as well as the foundation of the philosophy of *Hunhu/Ubuntu* which places focus on the relations of individuals and communities to each other (Shizha and Charema, 2008). Furthermore, the philosophy of *Ubuntu* emphasizes the centrality of solidarity, caring, and sharing and underlines that ultimate human achievement can only be realised in collaboration with others (Mottiar and Ngcoya, 2016).

The family, in pre-colonial Africa, was essentially the primary unit of labour and consumption,

but each family could rely on collaboration and support from other family units. In such traditional African societies parentless children could not be referred to as orphans as their welfare was taken care of within the extended family and kinship system (Mafumbate, 2019). One of the most important concepts and mode of production and solidarity in Shona societies was the *nhimbe* where members of the same community were organized into labour teams to provide help to one or more families with mainly agricultural tasks such as ploughing, weeding, planting, or harvesting (Mahohoma and Muzambi, 2021). The concept of *nhimbe* played a key role in contributing towards economic needs and sustainable development imperatives of society. Similar practices are referred to as *ilima* among Ndebele-speaking groups in Southern Africa and bear some close resemblance to *ujamaa* in Tanzania and *harambee* in Kenya. By coming together to give their time, labour and skills to community members in need, without expectation of any material payment, African communities practiced the very essence of philanthropy. The recipient family would only in turn prepare food and traditional beer to motivate the supporting community members while they worked in the fields (Mahohoma and Muzambi, 2021).

Death and funeral rites among the Shona also provide some key insights into the philanthropic impulse in pre-colonial Africa. A death in one family triggered supportive action from the community through visits to the bereaved homestead, assisting with preparing meals as well as contributions of gifts referred to as '*chema*' (Mwandayi, 2011, Muchinei, 2019).

One of pre-colonial Africa's most eminent states, the Asante kingdom, provides further examples of how deeply rooted philanthropy has already been amongst African societies. Amongst the Asante philanthropy was reciprocal and went both towards the wealthy and underprivileged (Aina, 2013). Like other societies in East and Southern Africa, the well-being of the individual was the critical responsibility of the collective. The Asante people, in West Africa, expressed their philanthropic commitment towards others through sympathy visits, voluntary labour akin to the *nhimbe* among the Shona people, as well as contributing produce from their fields. The Asante also practiced philanthropy through assisting the ill, providing education through cultural traditional fables, songs and dance. Philanthropy among the Asante was therefore centred on the esteem of the poor and directed towards addressing the root causes of poverty or misfortune such as natural disasters, illness, war or dispossession (Aina, 2013). Necessarily the practice of philanthropy during these pre-colonial times also included lobbying for legal or traditional practices that contributed towards impoverishment of some members of the community and instead focused on the long-term socio-economic development of society (Aina, 2013). Overall, the philosophy driving philanthropy among the Asante was built around three key aspects (Aina, 2013);

- i. Communal endeavours to eliminate poverty.
- ii. Self-reliance, collaboration and trade.
- iii. Development priorities determined by the needs of the receivers rather than those of the wealthy givers.

Some scholars however argue that available academic work provides little empirical data on ancient pro-social giving in Africa (Illife, 1987) and contend that what is available is simply espoused from research on African languages and rituals related to caring for the poor and sick (Feierman, 1998). Juxtaposed with the evidence provided by varied scholars cited in the sections above it is apparent that these views have little scientific support as well-established cultures of African philanthropy can be clearly traced across various parts of the continent during the pre-colonial era.

3. Philanthropy During the Colonial Era in Africa (1880 – 1980)

The advent of colonialism on the African continent marked the beginning of a major period of wholesale disruption and change which continues to influence the social, political and economic dynamics in contemporary African society (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Paine, Qiu and Ricart-Hueget, 2022;

Wa Mutua, 1995). There are however divergent views among scholars and political actors when it comes to assessments of the nature and actual impact of colonialism on Africa's development (Michalopolous and Papaiaonnou, 2020). One school of thought posits that despite its short duration colonialism is responsible for virtually all the challenges that have beset Africa and led to its state of under-development and marginalisation (Michalopolous and Papaiaonnou, 2020). The colonial epoch is therefore blamed for the current high levels of poverty, weak states, repressive political regimes, low levels of skills and productive capacities in most parts of the African continent. Another school of thought however maintains that colonialism brought positive effects on the trajectory of Africa's development as colonial powers led efforts to build modern infrastructure, education facilities, state institutions and the eventual abolition of slavery (Heldring and Robinson, 2012). Calderisi (2006) argues that the negative impact of colonialism on Africa's development is grossly exaggerated as it is not the only continent that has been subjected to Western colonisation. In-fact it is Africa's ruling political class that is responsible for the continent's malaise through corrupt practices and inept policy choices (Peemans, Gann and Duignan, 1975).

The Scramble for Africa that changed the course of African history and development, including philanthropic practices, precipitated in major European powers dividing up political and economic control over vast territories across the continent took place between 1880 and 1905 (Fowler, 2017 ; Michalopolous and Papaiaonnou 2013). When the First World War began in 1914 only Ethiopia and Liberia were the exceptions of African countries that had not yet been brought under European conquest (Michalopolous and Papaiaonnou 2018; Packenham, 1991).

According to Griffiths (1986), the political and geographical boundaries that modern day Africa inherited from the colonial processes launched at the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference are responsible for the enduring underdevelopment of Africa and the subordination of the continent's economy to the West (Herbst, 2000; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Settles, 1996). These boundaries were manifestly artificial and made with little knowledge and regard of the African geography and social organization (Aghamelo and Ibhasebhor, 2006; Michalopolous and Pappaiaonnou, 2018; Paine, Qiu and Hueget, 2022). Great Britain took control of territories in the North, West, Eastern and Southern parts of the continent. In West Africa, Britain ruled over modern-day Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone; Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe in the South; Uganda, Kenya, and part of Somalia in East Africa. On the other hand, France was given control over large parts of North, West and Central Africa including countries such as Algeria, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon, among others. Portugal ruled over Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Sao Tome and Principe while Germany took over Cameroon, Namibia, Togo, and Tanganyika (Lambert and Lester, 2004). Belgium's sphere of influence extended over Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

While different colonial powers exercised their dominance over the various African territories differently, it was notable that the partitioning of Africa and colonialism ushered in historic changes that interrupted the continent's development course and altered its social, political and economic systems (Wa Mutua, 1995). For instance, the British, Portugues and German settlers used a mixture of direct and indirect rule where they would elect to exercise direct government over a whole or part of a territory and delegate control to local traditional chiefs or private companies in another (Michalopolous and Pappaiainnou, 2018). While the colonial forces primarily used violence to subjugate pre-colonial African states, they also utilized Christian missionary organisations to pacify Africans and influence the dislodging of traditional African spiritual beliefs and practices. The colonisers also sought to advance new ways of perceiving the real world among Africans and through that promote both the conscious and unconscious abandonment of long-held values and traditions (Dascal, 2007). This is underlined by wa Thiong'o (1986) when he contends that;

'Colonialism imposed its control of the social production of wealth through military conquest and subsequent political dictatorship. But its most important area of domination was the mental

universe of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others.'

Evidently the main objective of colonialism in Africa was the extraction of natural resources and their transportation to European capitals (Manji and O'Coill, 2002). This was sustained by a rampant use of violence, repression, land dispossession, forced labour, and taxation among other methods (Bates, 1981; Dowden, 2008 and Mamdani, 2006). Colonial governments had little or no interest in fostering development in Africa or for the welfare of the African people (Michalopolous and Papaioannou, 2020). Some scholars have even argued that this colonial neglect and the institutions that were introduced by European settlers are directly responsible for the levels of Africa's current economic under-development (Acermoglu, Johnson and Robinson, 2001; Easterly and Levine, 2016; Glaeser, La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes and Shleifer, 2004). The philanthropic approach brought in by Western organisation did not seek to address the root causes of poverty but maintained a condescending attitude towards disadvantaged communities (Hilton, 2015). Provision of basic services such as education, health, social welfare was consequently assigned to missionary organisations and voluntary associations who then set out to infiltrate African societies and introduce new ideologies and forms of community organizations (Manji and O'Coill, 2002). Initially missionary organisations were not motivated by the interests or welfare of the African population but by racist ideologies that saw the European influence on Africans as a civilizing factor (Godfrey, 2022). In addition, missionary organisations and Western voluntary associations were also motivated by internal imperatives for mobilizing resources from their metropolis and sustaining themselves (Manji and O'Coill, 2002).

The colonial era therefore witnessed the emergence of new types and dynamics of social organisations. These included relief organisations, religious associations, private foundations, international non-governmental organisations, formalised village and town associations, mutual-aid groups, and burial societies (Aina, 2013; Fowler, 2017; Obadare and Krawczyk, 2022). Donor organisations were also introduced into Africa bringing in impersonal and single-direction forms of giving where the giver and the recipient were mostly not known to each other (Aina, 2013). In the earlier stages of the colonial era African gifting practices had remained largely the same as they had been in the pre-colonial era – anchored on kinship, solidarity, reciprocity and trust. However, the introduction of the new and diverse development actors as well as the growing institutionalisation of giving practices also disrupted the pro-social nature and patterns of development and philanthropy in and among African societies (Fowler, 2017; Godfrey, 2022). Over a period of four decades a novel type of civil society emerged across Africa mainly reliant on external funding and with little connection or accountability to local communities (Jordan and Van Tuijl, 2006; Semboja and Therkildsen, 1995).

Having been closely intertwined with colonial governments at the onset of colonialism in Africa, Western missionary organisations and voluntary associations had collaborated with settler authorities in suppressing anti-colonial activities as exemplified by the role played by the Christian Council of Kenya and the Women's Association in opposing the Mau Mau Uprisings in Kenya (Manji and O'Coill, 2002). This posture however began to shift significantly with the mounting African resistance to colonialism which began to grow around the end of World War in 1945 (Arnold, 2005; Manji and O'Coill, 2002). Missionary organisations and voluntary associations moved to develop closer ties with both formal and informal African community groups and began transforming themselves by replacing white staff members with indigenous Africans (Manji and O'Coill, 2002). Together with indigenous African philanthropic organisations, the new associations pivoted towards a new role in which they began to support African liberation movements, providing support for anti-colonial activists and mobilising citizens to rally for political change (Aina, 2013; Fowler, 2016; Fowler and Mati, 2019). Motivated by the ethos of pan-Africanism, some of the future leaders

of newly independent African countries either emerged or drew support from African associations including trade unions to propel the resistance efforts (Godfrey, 2022).

During the early stages of colonialism African communities did not trust the settler governments and kept their distance from them and their practices. Consequently, informal and horizontal ways of giving had been maintained among Africans (Iliffe, 1987; Mati, 2017; Mombeshora, 2004; Wilkinson-Maposa et al., 2005). However, by the end of colonial rule in the late 1950s and early 1960s, associational life and gifting practices in Africa had started to shift significantly with formal and informal associations as well as horizontal and vertical forms of giving and development increasing and beginning to operate in parallel (Fowler, 2017, 2022; Obadare and Krawczyk, 2022).

4. Philanthropy and Development in Post-Colonial Africa (1981-2020s)

Scholars widely regard the decade following the end of World War II as the most consequential period in the decolonisation of Africa (Cooper, 1996, 2002, 2008; García-Ponce and Wantchekon, 2023;). It is especially between the 1950s and '1960s, that most countries in sub-Saharan Africa secured their independence from erstwhile colonial rulers beginning with Ghana in 1957 (Arnold, 2005; Maxwell, 2005). In 1960, 17 African countries attained their independence from European colonial governments, followed by 13 in 1961 and 18 by the end of the 1960s. The early sporadic episodes of African resistance to colonial rule that began when the first settlers set up their administrations within African territories morphed into more joined up and formidable movements for the liberation of African peoples. As mentioned in the section above, African associations including trade unions, new political parties, voluntary associations and educated elites mobilised society to mount independence campaigns that culminated with the end of European colonial rule over Africa. The vanguard for these liberation movements were motivated by a mixture of the principles of pan-Africanism as well as the desire for basic freedoms such as access to land, education, freedom of association and movement (Fowler and Mottiar, 2022). It was also notable that in territories where indirect colonial rule was largely in force African independence was secured through non-violent means. However, in countries with large European settler communities such as South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya, African nationalists had to resort to armed resistance to achieve independence (Keller, 1995).

In addition to major political, economic and social changes alluded to above, the height of Africa's decolonisation period in the 1950s and 1960s also coincided with one of the most rapid expansions in the presence and activities of non-profit associations across the continent (Cullen, McCorriston and Thomson, 2022). In addition to long-established faith-based organisations, an array of European and American non-profit associations also entered the African landscape bringing a focus on socio-economic development of communities (Lindenberg and Bryant, 2001). At the end of World War II some 1,839 non-profit organisations worked in Africa while in the early years of African independence 353 British non-governmental organisations were registered and operating across Africa, France had 249 and the United States of America had 189 (Cullen, McCorriston and Thomson, 2022). New and existing laws, for instance facilitating tax exemptions, were utilized to promote the presence and activities of such organisations which were seen to be contributing to Africa's development (Fowler and Mottiar, 2022).

Even though data on endogenous non-profit associations during the post-colonial period is sparse it was also noted that African NGOs also went through significant growth. According to the International Council for Voluntary Associations, 291 indigenous African NGOs operated across the continent by the end of the 1960s. These organisations supported activities in areas such as education, healthcare, community development, vocational training, agriculture, infrastructure, relief and refugee protection among others (Cullen, McCorriston and Thomson, 2022). The growth in the numbers and reach of indigenous African non-governmental organisations during the decolonisation process and into the early years of independence was also accompanied by the transformation of

the racial profile of the personnel. There was a distinct wave of Africanisation of the non-profit sector with newly independent countries asserting their sovereignty by ensuring that Africans were represented among the staff of the various associations operating in their countries (Cullen, McCorrison and Thomson, 2022). In Madagascar, the *Mouvement Internationale de la Jeunesse Agricole et Rurale Catholique* (MIJARC) was noted to be the largest association in terms of staff with a complement of 5,000 workers (ICVA, 1968). Even though the organisation originated in France by the end of the 1960s all of its staff were Africans. Regrettably the role played by African organisations in the decolonisation process has also not been acknowledged in most scholarly works (Cullen, McCorrison and Thomson, 2022).

Spurred by the ethos of pan-Africanism and the desire to assert the right of African people to determine their own development priorities, African non-governmental organisations broadened their areas of operation, revived the traditional African horizontal philanthropic practices and highlighted the importance of accountability to citizens rather (Cullen, McCorrison and Thomson, 2022). This phenomenon increased even further in the 1990s with the end of the Cold War launching a new period of democratisation where non-profit and philanthropic organisations were regarded as critical role players in the delivery of democracy and liberalisation worldwide (Obadare and Krawczyk, 2022).

Despite the early hopes and promises of independence, several African countries faced severe political and economic challenges within the first few decades of independence. Many of the continent's erstwhile liberation movements continued to operate systems and institutions inherited from the colonial rulers (Fowler, 2017). The period of nation-building replicated inequities from the colonial era where gifting was characterised by a focus on extraction, control and utilisation of public resources for personal wealth and power (Fowler, 2017). Due to dynamics at both global and national levels, philanthropy became highly politicised and marked by mistrust between African governments and non-profit associations (Fowler, 2017). International development aid was initially used to secure support for global powers during the Cold War and later to further their economic interests assisted by political and economic governance prescriptions imposed on recipient governments (Fowler, 2017). At the same new African nationalist governments started to take greater interest in the activities of international non-governmental organisations in their countries including matters such as legal statuses, membership and partnerships, areas of operation, and sources of funding (Cullen, McCorrison; and Thomson, 2022). Some scholars have asserted that former liberation movements once in power moved to dispute the legitimacy of social movements on whom they had previously relied on as allies in the process of decolonisation (Cooper, 1992). In Tanzania the government resorted to imposing new controls over non-governmental organisations which in some instances led to the latter being co-opted into the state's development mechanism (Cullen, McCorrison; and Thomson, 2022). Elitist regimes in countries like Kenya and Ivory Coast as well as radical regimes that emerged from peasant community uprisings adopted similar approaches where they regarded political opposition and civil society as illegitimate (Cooper, 1992). After the colonial era Africa ended up, on the main, with governments which are mainly politically authoritative but socially conservative opting to put more focus on controlling the coercive and patronage levers of the State while being suspicious of non-state organisations (Cooper, 1992). The nature of these relationships between the African state and non-state organisations, including philanthropic organisations has been a subject of intense academic study and are important in laying the ground for deepening understanding on the rationale and features of regulations on the non-profit sector in contemporary Africa.

Since the turn of the 2000s philanthropy has been undergoing radical changes globally (Menkhoff, 2010). African philanthropy has not been spared from these changes and has in fact started to gain increased attention from both academia and policymakers (Kotiranta, 2019). The landscape of African philanthropy is expanding in diversity, sources and scope in the new millennium and the

legacy of arrangements and mechanisms of gifting in Africa during the pre-colonial era are being re-configured (AGN, 2013; Fowler, 2022; Murisa, 2018). African philanthropy is increasingly becoming more visible, innovative and less risk averse as its contributions towards development finance continues to grow (Helly, 2013; Kotiranta, 2019). This phenomenon can be attributed to recent spurts of economic growth and the rise of a new African middle-class, resilient Diaspora, and High Net Worth Individuals (Kotiranta, 2019; Murisa, 2018). According to the Africa Wealth Report , in 2023 there were 138,000 HNWIs with investable wealth of USD 1 million or more living in Africa , along with 328 centi-millionaires worth USD 100 million or more, and 23 US dollar billionaires (Africa Wealth Report, 2023). African countries recorded economic growth rates between 4 and 8% in the ten-year period from 2002 to 2012 (Milczarek, 2014) but this trend has slowed down recently mainly due to major global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, effects of climate change and the protracted armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine (African Development Bank, 2023).

The decade between 2000 and 2020 has also witnessed significant changes in the forms and practices of both philanthropic organisations in Africa and African philanthropic organisations (Moyo and Ramsamy, 2023). Since the pre-colonial era African gifting practices which were horizontal and mainly anchored on kinship, solidarity, trust and reciprocity have remained resilient and survived disruptions that have occurred over time. According to Hyden (1983) these ancient traditions are being demonstrated through rural communities that operate in economies of affection, mutual support and social protection among community members as well as informal collaborations through which households come together for productive purposes in agricultural and other activities.

Rural communities have responded to state failures as well as inadequacies of international development aid by establishing homegrown associations such as burial societies, mutual aid and healing groups, community savings associations, local credit and trade associations (Fowler, 2022; Murisa, 2018). The inspiration and foundation of these associations were rooted in the collectivist approach to social organisation that was prevalent in the pre-colonial and early colonial era in Africa (Murisa, 2018). Even though this requires further study it has been contended that in this context gifting at the family, local or community level is more appreciated and effective than the vertical and impersonal type of gifting that is channelled through formal non-governmental organisations (Godfrey, 2022; Obadare and Krawczyk, 2022). Some scholars have even argued that horizontal giving remains the most dominant form of philanthropy in contemporary Africa with its emphasis on personal, peer-to-peer, and solidarity modes of gifting (Fowler, 2016; Fowler and Mati, 2019; Murisa, 2018; Wilkinson-Maposa et al., 2005). In East and Southern Africa gifting is still founded on the ethos of Ubuntu (Fowler and Mati, 2019) which emphasis the interconnectedness of humanity.

While informal philanthropic associations have remained a part of the landscape there has also been a significant increase in the institutionalization of philanthropy in Africa. Between 2000 and 2010, indigenous African philanthropic organisations have emerged in the form of private, corporate , family as well as community foundations (Kotiranta, 2019; Mati, 2016). Giving by foundations established by HNWIs have reached \$1 billion and projections show that by 2030 African HNWIs could be contributing around \$319 billion in philanthropic funds (Murisa, 2018).

Some of the notable African foundations have provided support towards resolving major challenges such as health epidemics, lack of access to education, housing and other basic social amenities. These include the Higher Life Foundation in Zimbabwe, Dangote Foundation in Nigeria, and the Motsepe Foundation in South Africa. Philanthropic organisations that manage resources on behalf of other individuals or organisations mainly through grant-making have also emerged. Some notable examples include Trust Africa in Senegal, Kenya Community Development Fund, African Women's Development Fund, and the Southern Africa Trust . Corporate Social Investments (CSI) in Africa have also increased significantly both voluntarily and in response to legislation (Consumer Education and Protection Cell, 2017). These are mainly being delivered through new forms of corporate foundations and social responsibility organisations (Fowler, 2022). Remittances from the African Diaspora also

form an integral part of the African philanthropic landscape. In 2018 the African Diaspora gave \$49 billion – an amount almost par with the levels of Official Development Aid (Fowler, 2022). Beyond monetary gifting, the African Diaspora also contributes to the continent’s development through giving of skills, time, knowledge, international experiences and cultural competencies (Zook, 2017).

The insights above appear to support the assertion by Fowler (2017 and 2022) that due to effect from the history of colonial penetration, longstanding cultural principles and decolonisation, philanthropy in Africa can be characterised as dual and pluralizing. In contemporary Africa one can identify international philanthropic organisations operating within the continent, African foundations modelled along Western philanthropies as well as traditional forms of African communal gifting (Helly, 2013).

Overall, it has been suggested that gifting trends in Africa can be summarised as follows;

- i. African donors giving large gifts allocate their resources within their own countries.
- ii. Majority of gifts by African donors are directed towards addressing basic social needs.
- iii. Large portions of resources from African donors are channelled through the public sector or foundations as opposed to local non-governmental organisations (Schwier, et al., 2020).

5. Conclusion

Despite the low levels of focus on literature on African history and philanthropy as well as acknowledgement of the history and role of African philanthropy in the development of the continent, a growing number of scholars have established that philanthropic practices based on long-standing traditions and beliefs in the importance of community, solidarity, trust and mutual help have always existed in Africa (Fowler, 2016; Fowler and Mati, 2019; Mati, 2016; Moyo, 2013; Moyo and Ramsamy, 2014; Murisa, 2018; Wilkinson-Maposa et al., 2005). Through collating literature from a diverse range of scholars this article has set out a chronological narrative of the evolution and development of philanthropy across sub-Saharan Africa from the pre-colonial era through to the colonial period to the overall state of Africa philanthropy to date. The African continent is vast and complex in terms of its geographic, political, social and economic make-up and can therefore not be easily assessed in overly generalized terms. For the purposes of this study, the data that has been collected and presented is therefore focused on common elements across the different societies and countries.

Literature from various social science disciplines demonstrates that Africa’s state and non-state institutions have ostensibly been shaped by the continent’s experience with colonialism over several decades and in the process have consequently co-opted many features that were brought in by colonial powers and allied organisations. Concurrently Africa’s longstanding cultural beliefs and practices including the pillars for philanthropy and social development were also impacted by the advent of colonialism. Remarkably the cornerstones of traditional African philanthropy which are anchored on a communalist approach, reciprocity, trust and mutual help have been retained to present day and even infused into new forms of organisations that have emerged across the continent.

Africa has witnessed phenomenal economic growth over the last two decades, but major development challenges remain. A growing class of High-Net-Worth Individuals has emerged across Africa and is contributing to re-shaping the philanthropic landscape on the continent. International aid has not succeeded in resolving these challenges leading to an explosion of new forms of philanthropic organisations that are coming up with new and innovative ways of fighting poverty, inequality, corruption, and other social ills bedevilling the continent. Many of these organisations which include private foundations, community foundations, corporate foundations and other related associations are playing important roles in providing social goods that have been traditionally in the preserve of the State.

The developments cited above have resulted in a state where African philanthropy is taking on a dual and diversifying nature – one that is formal and horizontal with mainly Western characteristics,

and another which is informal and horizontal with patently African world views (Fowler, 2017, 2022).

While an impressive body of research on African philanthropy led by an increasingly recognized cohort of African scholars is emerging, African philanthropy as a discrete area of study remains understudied and under-theorized. The Centre on African Philanthropy and Social Investment (CAPSI) based in South Africa stands out as the only institution dedicated to the teaching and research on African philanthropy across sub-Saharan Africa. Research institutions in other parts of the continent should be encouraged to promote and offer teaching and study opportunities of African philanthropy. Partnerships and collaboration between researchers and the growing networks of African philanthropy organisations also present new avenues for deepening the study of the history, practice, key concepts, relationships, rules, and institutions undergirding African philanthropy. Additionally, popularizing research findings will broaden access to information on African philanthropy and draw attention from diverse sections of society. Scaling such initiatives will further foster the development of African philanthropy both as an important area for academic research and practice.

Biography notes

Marlon Zakeyo is a PhD Candidate at the Wits Business School – Centre for African Philanthropy and Social Investments. He is a trained lawyer and international development practitioner with over 20 years' experience working with national, regional and international non-profit organizations as well as government agencies and intergovernmental institutions. Currently, he serves as a Regional Development Advisor on Legal and Policy Frameworks with the GIZ Botswana and Southern Africa Development Community Office. His PhD research is focused on the regulation of philanthropic foundations in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

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