Globalization and Cyberculture

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An Afrocentric Perspective

palgrave
macmillan

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ISBN 978-3-319-47583-7
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-47584-4

ISBN 978-3-319-47584-4 (eBook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016957409

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Printed on acid-free paper

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The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

*This book is dedicated to my Mom and Dad
for their unconditional love*

FOREWORD

It is an honor to have been asked to write the foreword to this impressive book that has been written by one of the rising figures in social media communication. Kehbuma Langmia, Professor and Chair of the Department of Strategic, Legal and Management Communication at Howard University's School of Communications, is an African-born scholar with a global experience of having studied and worked in Africa, Europe, and North America. This new publication of his brings a sigh of relief to scholars and students of cyberculture communication and globalization who have been yearning for an Afrocentric perspective on the burgeoning subject.

Undeniably, the World Wide Web has revolutionized communication in a way never envisaged by even communication experts a few decades ago. Cyberculture communication, in particular, has framed and given new character to human-to-human communication where humanity's hitherto close-knit interpersonal rapports are being replaced by voice, numbers, and letters. If this comes with a profound effect on cultures, it definitely comes with more profound effects on cultures in oriental settings where people have to face the challenges of employing the new communication paraphernalia in languages that are often foreign to them. Tropical Africa is an excellent example of a setting grappling with this new communication dispensation, and this book focuses on the challenges faced by users in this part of the world as well as the effects of cyberculture in this often forgotten continent. The author begins by tracing a long-standing communal way of life of African peoples and

their mode of communication. What caught my attention in this regard is the author's aversion that

The small people in South Eastern Cameroon (Joiris 1996) and the Bushmen and Hottentots in South Africa still practiced their old communicative methods to get to other human creatures. Drums, gongs, vuvuzelas and other man-made tools of communications were still being used in kingdoms and chiefdoms in West Africa especially among the non-western educated citizens

The notion of social communication practice in Africa predates the colonial experience. The background material of communication in precolonial Africa derived from the cultural, social, political, and historical happenings in people's lives in often dramatic fashion. One of the peculiar characteristics of this mode was that they were always communal. There was hardly a clear distinction between interlocutors. Those festivals held around planting and harvesting or before and after wars were commonplace communal activities. Jomo Kenyatta's portrayal of the *Ituika* ceremony among the Agikuyu of Kenya in *Facing Mount Kenya* (1965) is a detailed articulation of a communal performance in precolonial Africa. The duration of *Ituika* spanned several months during which everybody in the community would participate at the scheduled events. Here, even performances marking transitions of any type in the lives of individuals, like the rites of passage from childhood to adulthood and marriage or initiation into any of the vital societies in the community, were communal. Reducing these ceremonies into private occasions would be impossible in a setting where the individual was pretty much an expression of the community in the same manner that the community was an expression of its constituent individuals. This strong sense of interdependence between the individual and the community translates into constant exchanges between the actors, those performing at the center of the playground, and the audience; those acting at the center were by design an extension of those watching and vice versa. At any point in time, those watching or listening could suddenly be the ones being watched or listened to. In the same vein, those acting could at any stage of the performance be the ones watching. This age-old interactive communication model would be challenged by colonial establishments during the colonial period. The struggle over performances was essentially over who was in control of the form and

the social relevance to which the form was put. It was primarily the struggle over form to control content as the colonial establishment sought to be in control to demonstrate power while the anticolonial institutions yearned for the same control to implement their revolutionary agenda against colonization. This thorny binary relation continues with the post-colonial dispensation where the governments of African countries are in firm control of the media.

The long-standing control over the media by respective establishments in the continent faced an epic challenge in the action of a culminating figure and Egyptian social media activist, Wael Ghonim. Ghonim is the architect of the 2011 Facebook/Twitter revolution in Egypt, a continuation of a string of revolutionary movements that would result in what is commonly referred to as the Arab Spring. Arab Spring saw the ousting of age-old dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Burkina Faso from power. Social media provided spaces hitherto marginalized and subdued people saw as theirs.

This novel text can be used as a stand-alone exploration of the impact of the state of communication revolution in tropical Africa. It is an excellent supplement to numerous text books on the subject that pay cursory attention to the communication revolution on tropical Africa or does not explore the continent at all. The wealth of knowledge to be tapped from this book is vindicative of the age-old African proverb that “until the lions have their own historian, the history of the hunt will only glorify the hunter.”

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank my Heavenly gifts: Irmagard Nambu Langmia, Brandon Kehbuma Langmia and Gabriel-Phil, Anchang Langmia. You are the reason I get up and look up to the sky every day.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AM	Amplitude modulation
AOL	American Online Line
APPs	Applications
AU	African Union
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN	Cable Network News
DARPA	Defense Advanced Research Project Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
ECT	Electronic Communication Theory
EHR	Electronic health records
FM	Frequency modulation
FtF	Face-to-face
GNP	Gross national product
ICT	Information communication technology
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
LBGT	Lesbian bisexual gay transgender
MSN	Microsoft Network
MTV	Music Television
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NSA	National Security Administration
NWICO	New World Information and Communication Order
OAU	Organization of African Union
PC	Personal computer
SACSAW	South African Cybersecurity Awareness Workshop
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
SW	Short wave