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Contribution of Odera Oruka's philosophic sagacity concept to the development of traditional African wisdom

Faustine Muchui Ndumpa *, Jonathan Kathenge and Pascal Mwina

Department of Humanities, Chuka University, Kenya.

Abstract

This paper critically examined the contribution of the concept of philosophic sagacity to the development of traditional African wisdom. Odera Oruka's work primarily centered on identifying and documenting the wisdom of individual sages within African communities, challenging the stereotype that African cultures lack philosophical traditions. The article analyzed the concept of Odera Oruka's philosophical sagacity in the context of Tharaka traditional wise sayings to understand its contribution to the development of traditional African wisdom. There has been an over-emphasis on systematic Western philosophy that has continued to devalue traditional African wisdom which was not only a foundation of African philosophy but also the wisdom behind African traditional societal development. The study used rational-analytical philosophical approach. The study employed postcolonial theory to interrogate the enduring impacts of colonialism on cultures, societies, and intellectual traditions. The study was library-based, drawing resources from published and unpublished works, journals as well as digital sources. The study found that philosophic sagacity has significantly contributed to the development of traditional African wisdom by bridging oral traditions and written philosophy, recognizing the philosophical depth of African wisdom, emphasizing communal knowledge, enriching global philosophical discourse, and inspiring contemporary African philosophers.

Keywords: African wisdom; Wise saying; Sagacity; Stereotypes; Western philosophy; Communal knowledge

1. Introduction

Odera Oruka's passion on African Philosophy was influenced by his colleagues in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Nairobi who were mainly missionary theologians who disputed the existence of traditional African wisdom (Presbey, 2023). It is from this influence with the missionaries and clergy that Odera Oruka surveyed philosophic sages to counter negative claims that; unlike Western Greek sages who used reason, literacy, and criticality of thought, African sages were considered to have mere oral traditions, beliefs, unanimity and communality of thoughts that discouraged individual critical thoughts (Presbey, 2023; Oruka, 1991). Oruka's study on African philosophic sage as a response to the Western claim of lack of African criticality of thought and literacy was used in this study as a comparative knowledge to study the manifestation of philosophic sagacity to Tharaka ethnic community wise sayings.

In his response to the negative claim that African sages do not engage in philosophical thought, Odera Oruka laid his focus on the picture created by Western philosophers like Hegel that, while the sayings of numerous Greek sages such as Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus, and other Pre-Socratics were regarded as philosophical, those of traditional African sages like Akoko and Chaungo were not (Oruka, 1991). This bias arose out of implicit belief from Western philosophers like Edmund Hegel, Spinoza among others that philosophy was the privileged activity of certain races "the West" who were able to think critically, and reasonably and have reflective minds that encouraged individuality of thoughts unlike the Africans who are communal in their way of thinking (Lajul, 2024). Oruka believed further, that this unjustified belief

had led to the image of philosophy as the restricted property of the Greeks, or Europeans, or even more exclusively, the property of the White men.

Thus, in disputing this claim and in defense of the existence of African wisdom from Africans who were critical in their thinking, Oruka believed that concepts and wise sayings expressed by indigenous African sages like those of Akoko in the Luo community and Chaungo in the Bukusu community were no different from those expressed by earlier Greeks philosophers like Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes and Pythagoras (Oruka, 1991) and those ideas and wise sayings from Africans wise men and women qualified to be philosophical. Given such a scenario therefore, Oruka was led to wonder, why the sayings of Akoko and Chaungo for example, not be similarly regarded as philosophical after they are committed to writing by a professional philosopher like him (Masolo, 2006). African philosophy refers to the collective intellectual heritage of African communities, including both the reflective thoughts of individual sages and the communal wisdom encapsulated in proverbs, wise sayings, and oral traditions (Ugwuanyi, 2023; Wada et al., 2024). African sagacity refers to the logical and critical body of thoughts of persons considered wise in their African traditional communities (Irabor & Andrew, 2020; Lajul, 2024).

1.1. Problem statement

In the study of philosophy, there has been a longstanding overemphasis on the contributions of individual sages and thinkers from Western traditions, while the philosophical contributions of African sages have been largely marginalized or ignored (Irabor & Andrew, 2020; Lajul, 2024; Oruka, 1991). Western philosophy has long been privileged as the primary source of critical thought, rational inquiry, and ethical frameworks, with figures like Socrates, Aristotle, and Descartes being celebrated as the cornerstones of philosophical discourse. This Eurocentric perspective has led to the exclusion of African wisdom traditions, which are often dismissed as mere folklore or ethnophilosophy, lacking the rational and critical foundations deemed essential for "true" philosophy (Wada et al., 2024). The problem, therefore, lies in the continued neglect of African sages and their role in shaping traditional wisdom, which not only limits our understanding of the global history of ideas but also perpetuates the marginalization of African intellectual traditions. To address this imbalance, there is a need to critically examine the concept of *philosophic sagacity* and its contribution to the development of traditional African wisdom. This study highlighted the intellectual depth of African thought and still challenged the prevailing narratives that privilege Western philosophy as the sole or primary source of critical and rational inquiry.

Research Objective

- To critically examine the contribution of the concept of philosophic sagacity to the development of traditional African wisdom.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Oruka's Philosophic Sagacity

The core of Odera Oruka's concept of philosophic sagacity is the recognition and documentation of the deep insights of African societies' critical and reflective thinkers (Lajul, 2024; Mosima, 2022; Oruka, 1991). According to Lajul (2024) and Mosima (2022), it is agreeable that the wise men, though frequently ignored in official philosophical circles, provide insightful viewpoints on justice, morality, knowledge, and human nature. Oruka's work was mainly concerned with individual thinkers, highlighting the intellectual capacities that had been undervalued because African traditions were oral. His work was crucial in rebutting the prevalent Eurocentric narrative that disregarded African intellectual traditions and establishing the legitimacy of African philosophy.

Even with Oruka's important contributions, the discussion of African philosophy could still be incomplete if the collective dimensions of folk wisdom are not taken into account. African philosophy is essentially communal in nature, with individual sages frequently acting as messengers for their societies' common knowledge (Onebunne, 2023; Sekano & Maditsi, 2024; Ugwuanyi, 2023). For instance, Sekano and Maditsi (2024) demonstrated that proverbs, or wise sayings, represent the experiences, morals, and ethical standards of the community and are a prime illustration of this collective wisdom. These proverbs express profound philosophical concepts that have been passed down through the ages and are more than just catchphrases. Therefore, while Oruka's emphasis on individual sages brought attention to the critical and introspective aspects of African thought, it's also vital to recognize the community framework in which this wisdom is born. This study argued that it is possible and important to extend Oruka's concept of philosophic sagacity to include communal knowledge, as focusing solely on individual sages might overlook the collective wisdom and the communal context from which these insights emerge (Lajul, 2024; Mosima, 2022). The concept of philosophic

sagacity provides an insightful prism through which to view the wisdom ingrained in different African communities. This study looks at the wise sayings of the Tharaka people in an effort to show how philosophic sagacity is ingrained in and expressed via community knowledge.

To shed light on how the wise sayings of the Tharaka community embody wider philosophical insights and cultural values, this study focuses on how Oruka's philosophic sagacity manifests itself in these sayings. Philosophic sage started as a reaction to a position that Europeans and the West had adopted about Africa, that Africans are not capable of developing philosophy (Oruka, 1987). Therefore, Oruka's idea to counter such a claim was one of the goals of the philosophic sage. Oruka (1997) also tried to find out if there was something African that Africans could bring to the field of philosophy. Philosophic sagacity, therefore, rejects the holistic approach to African philosophy that was more of ethno-philosophy rather than rational, reflective, individualistic, critical, and coherent thoughts of professional philosophy (Bodunrin, 1981; Bodunrin, 1991). The study of a people's general worldviews, traditions, myths, and beliefs was not something that philosophic sagacity promotes. Instead, it is that philosophy that is derived from the thinking or the thoughts of wise persons who are said to have exceptional wisdom (Bodunrin, 1991)). According to Precious (2010), philosophic sagacity is a reflective evaluation of thought by an individual African elder who is a repository of wisdom, knowledge, and rigor in critical thinking.

2.2. Reflections of African Traditional Wisdom in Odera Oruka's Philosophic Sagacity

Philosophic sagacity plays a crucial role in affirming the legitimacy and richness of oral traditions as significant sources of philosophical insight within African cultures. Scholars such as Gyekye (1997) argue that oral narratives, proverbs, and folktales encapsulate profound ethical and existential reflections that are integral to understanding African worldviews. These oral forms serve not merely as entertainment but as vehicles for transmitting knowledge, moral values, and communal wisdom across generations. For instance, the use of proverbs in various African societies is not only a linguistic art but also a method for conveying complex ideas succinctly, thereby fostering critical thinking and reflection among listeners (Oruka, 1987). This recognition aligns with the views expressed by philosophers like Menkiti (1984), who posits that traditional African philosophy is deeply rooted in communal experiences and collective memory, emphasizing that philosophic sagacity validates these oral traditions as legitimate philosophical discourse rather than mere folklore.

Moreover, the concept of philosophic sagacity underscores the importance of context in interpreting these oral philosophies. As noted by scholars such as Paulin Hountondji (1996), understanding the socio-cultural backdrop against which these narratives are situated enhances their philosophical significance. The interplay between language, culture, and philosophy becomes evident when examining how oral traditions articulate concepts such as justice, morality, and identity within specific communities (Hountondji, 2002). By recognizing oral philosophy's contributions to epistemology and ethics, philosophic sagacity enriches our comprehension of African thought systems. It challenges Western-centric paradigms that often dismiss non-written forms of knowledge as inferior or primitive. Thus, through this lens, one can appreciate how traditional African wisdom is not only preserved but also dynamically engaged with contemporary philosophical inquiries.

The concept of philosophic sagacity plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between academic philosophy and traditional African wisdom. Scholars such as Kwasi Wiredu have emphasized the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge systems into contemporary philosophical discourse, arguing that traditional African thought is not merely a relic of the past but a living, dynamic framework that can enrich modern philosophical inquiry (Wiredu, 1996). This integration fosters a dialogue that respects and elevates traditional wisdom, allowing for a more holistic understanding of human experience. By recognizing the epistemological contributions of African philosophies, scholars can challenge Eurocentric paradigms that often dominate academic discussions. For instance, the work of Paulin Hountondji highlights how African philosophers can reclaim their intellectual heritage by situating their ideas within global philosophical conversations, thus promoting an inclusive approach to knowledge production (Hountondji, 1996).

Moreover, philosophic sagacity encourages a critical examination of ethical frameworks derived from traditional wisdom. Scholars like Menkiti (1984) argue that communal values inherent in African philosophies provide alternative ethical perspectives that contrast sharply with individualistic Western paradigms (Menkiti, 1984). This shift not only broadens the scope of ethical considerations in academia but also validates the lived experiences and moral insights of African communities. By engaging with these indigenous frameworks, scholars can develop more nuanced understandings of concepts such as justice, responsibility, and community—elements that are often overlooked in mainstream philosophical debates. Thus, philosophic sagacity serves as a vital conduit for enriching both academic philosophy and traditional wisdom, fostering mutual respect and understanding between diverse epistemologies.

The concept of philosophic sagacity, as articulated by scholars like Henry Oruka, has significantly contributed to the preservation and understanding of traditional African wisdom. Oruka's work emphasizes the importance of documenting the thoughts and teachings of African sages, who are often seen as repositories of indigenous knowledge (Oruka, 1991). By systematically recording their insights, Oruka not only preserves these valuable perspectives but also elevates them to a level comparable with Western philosophical traditions. This documentation serves multiple purposes: it provides a rich resource for academic inquiry, fosters cross-cultural dialogue, and challenges the often Eurocentric narratives that dominate philosophical discourse (Davis, 2024). For instance, scholars such as Wiredu (1996) have highlighted how this approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of African epistemologies, which are frequently overlooked in mainstream philosophy. The preservation of sage wisdom thus becomes an act of cultural reclamation and intellectual validation.

Moreover, the impact of philosophic sagacity extends beyond mere documentation; it actively shapes contemporary discussions on ethics, governance, and community values within African societies. The teachings derived from sages often emphasize communal well-being over individualism, providing a counter-narrative to Western capitalist ideologies. As noted by Mbiti (1990), traditional African thought is deeply rooted in communalism and relationality, aspects that are crucial for addressing modern societal challenges such as corruption and social fragmentation. By integrating these traditional values into contemporary frameworks, scholars and practitioners can foster a more holistic approach to problem-solving that resonates with local contexts. Thus, the contributions of philosophic sagacity not only safeguard traditional wisdom but also facilitate its application in addressing current issues faced by African communities.

The concept of philosophic sagacity significantly contributes to the development of traditional African wisdom by emphasizing the importance of experiential knowledge and communal values. Scholars such as Kwame Gyekye argue that African philosophy is deeply rooted in the lived experiences and cultural practices of its people, which are often overlooked in mainstream philosophical discourse (Gyekye, 1997). This perspective challenges the Western-centric view that prioritizes abstract reasoning over practical wisdom. By integrating philosophic sagacity into discussions about African thought, scholars highlight how wisdom is not merely an intellectual exercise but a holistic understanding that encompasses moral, ethical, and social dimensions. For instance, the work of Ifeanyi Menkiti underscores the idea that in many African cultures, personhood is defined through relationships and community engagement rather than individual achievements (Menkiti, 1984). This relational aspect of wisdom fosters a more inclusive approach to knowledge that values collective well-being over individual success.

Furthermore, philosophic sagacity serves as a bridge between traditional African wisdom and contemporary global philosophical dialogues. As noted by philosophers like Mudimbe (1988), incorporating African perspectives into global discussions enriches our understanding of human existence and ethical considerations (Mudimbe, 1988). The emphasis on sagacity encourages a reevaluation of what constitutes knowledge and wisdom in various contexts. It invites scholars from diverse backgrounds to recognize the validity of indigenous epistemologies that prioritize harmony with nature and community solidarity. By doing so, it challenges hegemonic narratives that often marginalize non-Western philosophies. The integration of philosophic sagacity into academic discourse not only affirms the richness of African thought but also promotes a more pluralistic understanding of philosophy as a whole.

The concept of philosophic sagacity serves as a vital source of inspiration for contemporary African philosophers, encouraging them to engage deeply with their cultural heritage. This engagement is not merely an act of nostalgia but a critical re-examination and revitalization of traditional wisdom that has been historically marginalized in global philosophical discourse. Scholars such as Kwasi Wiredu emphasize the importance of indigenous knowledge systems, arguing that they provide a rich repository from which contemporary thinkers can draw (Wiredu, 1996). By integrating traditional African values and practices into modern philosophical frameworks, these philosophers can articulate original ideas that resonate with their lived experiences. This synthesis not only enriches African philosophy but also challenges the dominant Eurocentric paradigms that have often overlooked or misrepresented African thought.

Moreover, philosophic sagacity encourages a dialogical approach to knowledge production, where African philosophers actively engage with both local traditions and global philosophical currents. As noted by Paulin Hountondji, this dialogue fosters a critical awareness that allows for the questioning and re-evaluation of inherited wisdom (Hountondji, 2002). In doing so, contemporary philosophers are not merely passive recipients of tradition; instead, they become active participants in its evolution. This dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation leads to the emergence of new philosophical insights that reflect the complexities and realities of modern African societies. Consequently, philosophic sagacity becomes a catalyst for intellectual growth and cultural affirmation within Africa's diverse contexts.

The concept of philosophic sagacity plays a pivotal role in the preservation and appreciation of traditional African wisdom, which is deeply intertwined with cultural heritage. By advocating for the recognition of indigenous knowledge systems, philosophic sagacity encourages communities to value their historical narratives, practices, and ethical frameworks. Scholars like Kwame Gyekye (1997) have argued that traditional wisdom encapsulates a wealth of insights into human existence, morality, and community living that are essential for social cohesion. This perspective aligns with the views of other scholars such as Menkiti (1984), who posits that African communalism is rooted in these traditional values, emphasizing the importance of collective identity over individualism. The promotion of such wisdom not only fosters a sense of belonging among community members but also serves as a counter-narrative to colonial legacies that often undermine indigenous knowledge systems.

Furthermore, the emphasis on philosophic sagacity facilitates intergenerational dialogue within African societies, allowing elders to impart their wisdom to younger generations. This transmission is crucial for maintaining cultural continuity and resilience against globalization's homogenizing forces. As noted by scholars like John Mbiti (1990), African time consciousness and worldview are intricately linked to traditional practices and beliefs that shape societal norms and values. By integrating philosophic sagacity into educational frameworks and community practices, there is an opportunity to revitalize interest in local customs and languages, thereby reinforcing cultural identity. Empirical evidence from various ethnographic studies indicates that communities actively engaged in preserving their traditional wisdom report higher levels of social cohesion and cultural pride (Nwoye, 2017). Thus, the contributions of philosophic sagacity extend beyond mere academic discourse; they are vital for fostering sustainable cultural heritage within African communities.

The concept of philosophic sagacity plays a pivotal role in the development and articulation of traditional African wisdom, serving as a bridge between indigenous knowledge systems and contemporary philosophical discourse. Scholars such as Kwame Gyekye (1997) argue that philosophic sagacity embodies the practical wisdom derived from lived experiences, cultural practices, and communal values inherent in African societies. This form of wisdom is not merely theoretical but is deeply embedded in the social fabric, influencing moral judgments, decision-making processes, and community cohesion. For instance, the emphasis on communalism in many African cultures reflects a sagacious understanding that individual well-being is intertwined with collective welfare. This perspective aligns with the views expressed by philosophers like John Mbiti (1990), who posits that "I am because we are," highlighting the interconnectedness of individuals within their communities. Such insights underscore how philosophic sagacity enriches traditional African wisdom by validating experiential knowledge and promoting ethical frameworks rooted in cultural contexts.

Moreover, philosophic sagacity contributes to educational resources by providing a rich repository for teaching African philosophy and showcasing its intellectual traditions globally. The works of scholars such as Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984) emphasize that traditional African thought systems prioritize relationality and context over abstract reasoning, which can be instrumental in developing curricula that reflect these values. By integrating philosophic sagacity into educational frameworks, educators can foster critical thinking skills while respecting indigenous epistemologies. This approach not only enhances students' understanding of African philosophies but also encourages cross-cultural dialogues that challenge Eurocentric narratives prevalent in academic settings. As noted by Paulin Hountondji (1996), acknowledging the contributions of traditional wisdom allows for a more inclusive understanding of global philosophical discourse, ultimately enriching both local and international scholarship. Thus, the concept of philosophic sagacity serves as a vital tool for preserving and promoting traditional African wisdom within educational contexts.

2.2.1. Ethno-philosophical Critique

The concept of philosophic sagacity plays a pivotal role in critiquing ethno-philosophy by advocating for a more nuanced understanding of African philosophical thought that transcends generalized cultural beliefs. Ethno-philosophy often tends to homogenize African thought, presenting it as a monolithic entity devoid of individual contributions and critical engagement. Scholars such as Kwasi Wiredu argue that this approach undermines the rich diversity and complexity inherent in African philosophical traditions (Wiredu, 1996). By emphasizing philosophic sagacity, which focuses on the wisdom and insights of specific thinkers within their historical and cultural contexts, there is an opportunity to appreciate the depth of individual contributions that have shaped traditional African wisdom. This shift not only enriches our understanding but also aligns with contemporary philosophical practices that value personal agency and intellectual rigor.

Furthermore, the critique offered by philosophic sagacity encourages a reevaluation of how traditional African wisdom is perceived and taught. As noted by Paulin Hountondji, the recognition of individual philosophers allows for a more dynamic discourse that incorporates critical thinking and debate rather than mere acceptance of cultural norms

(Hountondji, 1996). This perspective fosters an environment where traditional wisdom can evolve through dialogue with modern philosophical frameworks, thus enhancing its relevance in contemporary society. By acknowledging the contributions of specific thinkers—such as Anton Wilhelm Amo or Ngugi wa Thiong'o—philosophic sagacity not only validates their intellectual legacies but also demonstrates how these figures have engaged with both local and global philosophical discourses (Agada & Van Norden, 2021; Williams, 1999). Consequently, this approach not only preserves traditional wisdom but also revitalizes it, ensuring its continued significance in addressing modern challenges.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

2.3.1. Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory emerges as a critical framework that interrogates the enduring impacts of colonialism on cultures, societies, and intellectual traditions. It seeks to deconstruct the narratives established by colonial powers and advocates for the recognition of indigenous knowledge systems (Gandhi, 2018). This review will explore the relevance of postcolonial theory in validating African philosophy, critiquing Western hegemony, and illustrating cultural resilience through the lens of African philosophical traditions.

One of the primary contributions of postcolonial theory is its role in challenging the marginalization of non-Western intellectual contributions, particularly those from Africa. Historically, Western philosophical paradigms have dominated academic discourse, often relegating African philosophies to the periphery (Kebede, 1999). Postcolonial theorists argue that this marginalization is not merely an oversight but a deliberate act that reflects broader power dynamics rooted in colonial histories (Gandhi, 2018). African philosophy encompasses a rich tapestry of thought that includes communal values, oral traditions, and indigenous knowledge systems. By advocating for these perspectives, postcolonial theory promotes a more inclusive understanding of philosophy that recognizes diverse epistemologies. This validation is crucial not only for academic scholarship but also for fostering a sense of identity and pride among African communities. The works of philosophers such as Kwasi Wiredu and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o exemplify this validation process. Wiredu emphasizes the importance of engaging with traditional African thought while simultaneously critiquing Western philosophical frameworks. Ngũgĩ's advocacy for writing in indigenous languages underscores the significance of language as a vehicle for expressing unique cultural identities and philosophies.

Postcolonial theory serves as a powerful critique against Western-centric philosophical paradigms that have historically dominated global discourse. This critique extends beyond mere acknowledgment; it actively challenges the assumptions underlying Western thought processes and their claims to universality (Gandhi, 2018). Western philosophy has often positioned itself as the pinnacle of rationality and enlightenment, dismissing other forms of knowledge as primitive or inferior. Postcolonial theorists argue that this perspective not only distorts historical realities but also perpetuates systemic inequalities in contemporary society (Gandhi, 2018). By foregrounding communal and oral traditions as legitimate sources of philosophical knowledge, postcolonial theory disrupts the narrative that privileges Western modes of thinking. For instance, many African communities rely on oral traditions—such as proverbs, folktales, and storytelling—as vital means for transmitting wisdom and ethical teachings (Oruka, 1991). These forms are not merely anecdotal; they embody complex philosophical ideas about existence, morality, community relations, and environmental stewardship. Recognizing these traditions as valid expressions of philosophical inquiry challenges the hegemony established by Western intellectual frameworks. Moreover, scholars like Achille Mbembe have explored how colonial legacies continue to shape contemporary political landscapes in Africa (Mbembe, 2015). His work illustrates how postcolonial critiques can illuminate ongoing struggles against neocolonialism while advocating for alternative visions rooted in local contexts.

A significant aspect of postcolonial theory is its focus on cultural resilience—the ability of communities to adapt and thrive despite historical traumas inflicted by colonialism (Gandhi, 2018; Mbembe, 2015). By analyzing specific cultural artifacts such as wise sayings from communities like the Tharaka people in Kenya, scholars can illustrate how these expressions encapsulate profound philosophical insights that counteract colonial narratives. The Tharaka community's wise sayings serve as repositories of collective wisdom that reflect their values, beliefs, and worldviews. These sayings often emphasize themes such as community solidarity, respect for nature, and intergenerational knowledge transfer—elements that are frequently overlooked or undervalued within dominant Western discourses (Oruka, 1991). Through careful analysis and interpretation of these sayings within a postcolonial framework, researchers can highlight their significance not just as cultural artifacts but also as living philosophies that inform daily life and decision-making processes within these communities. Such analyses challenge reductive stereotypes about African cultures while showcasing their depth and complexity (Owakah, 2022). Furthermore, examining cultural resilience through wise sayings allows scholars to engage with broader questions about identity formation in post-colonial contexts. As communities navigate modernity while holding onto traditional values, they create hybrid identities that reflect both historical legacies and contemporary realities.

Postcolonial theory plays an essential role in advocating for the recognition and validation of African philosophical traditions while challenging entrenched Western hegemonic views. (Gandhi, 2018). By emphasizing inclusivity in philosophical discourse, it opens pathways for dialogue between diverse epistemologies—encouraging mutual respect rather than hierarchical relationships between different knowledge systems. The study's focus on communal wisdom from specific cultures like the Tharaka community exemplifies how local knowledge can enrich global conversations about philosophy while asserting its legitimacy alongside more established traditions. Ultimately, postcolonial theory not only critiques past injustices but also envisions futures where multiple voices contribute to our understanding of what it means to be human across different contexts. As scholars continue to engage with these themes within postcolonial frameworks—validating indigenous philosophies while critiquing hegemonic structures—they contribute significantly toward reshaping academic landscapes into more equitable spaces where all forms of knowledge are valued equally.

3. Methods

The study was library-based, drawing resources from published and unpublished works, journals as well as digital sources. This study adopted qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. The use of qualitative methods worked especially effectively for research that needed a thorough comprehension of intricate and subtle phenomena. These philosophical and cultural components could be explored in great detail through qualitative approaches, which were able to pick up on intricacies and complexities that quantitative methods could have missed (Cresswell, 2013). The approach that was selected was adopted because it was interpretive. This study's interpretive research questions center on comprehending and elucidating philosophical ideas and cultural wisdom. A fundamental element of qualitative research, hermeneutic analysis was necessary for analyzing texts and revealing hidden meanings within their historical and cultural contexts. This approach was ideal for achieving the goal of the research, which was to contextualize and analyze the wise sayings of Tharaka and the philosophical writings of Oruka.

Findings

The concept of philosophic sagacity, as introduced and developed by Odera Oruka, has made significant contributions to the development of traditional African wisdom. The study identified several key areas where philosophic sagacity has enriched and expanded the understanding and appreciation of African philosophical traditions. Philosophic sagacity has played a crucial role in bridging the gap between oral traditions and written philosophy. African wisdom has traditionally been transmitted orally through stories, proverbs, and wise sayings. Owakah (2022) cautioned that indigenous knowledge could be eroded if it continues to be ignored and undocumented. Generation-to-generation transmission of knowledge is facilitated by oral traditions. In African communities, storytelling serves as more than just amusement; it is an essential teaching tool that helps people understand difficult concepts like morality, life, and social standards (McCall et al., 2021; Oduor, 2022). These tales, which often center around ancestors or mythical characters, teach lessons relevant to the experiences of society. Proverbs are short, sharp sayings that typically sum up important truths in an easy-to-understand way.

The history of knowledge transmission and documentation from oral to written philosophy is noteworthy. Written philosophy permits permanence and wider accessibility, while oral traditions depend on memory and performance for transmission (Odularu et al., 2024). This change started during the colonial era when African academics tried to record native concepts as a reaction to outside stories that frequently distorted their cultures (Oruka, 1991). This shift is made possible by philosophical sagacity, which offers a framework for the interpretation and written expression of oral wisdom. The significance of recovering African tales through writing that represents native ideologies rather than Western perspectives has been underlined by academics like Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Williams, 1999). By documenting the thoughts and philosophies of individual sages, Oruka provided a written record of these oral traditions. This documentation has made African wisdom more accessible to a global audience and has helped preserve it for future generations.

Oruka's work transformed the rich oral traditions of African communities into a written form, allowing for greater dissemination and academic scrutiny. This transition has helped to validate African wisdom within the global philosophical community, showcasing its depth and complexity. Written philosophy and oral traditions interact to provide a dynamic connection in which both forms benefit from one another (Odularu et al., 2024). Written works are informed by core principles from oral traditions, which also provide challenges to written works to ensure their continued relevance in modern contexts. For example, contemporary African philosophers frequently use proverbs from traditional African cultures to bolster their claims or challenge Western philosophical theories (Williams, 1999). Moreover, recording oral traditions does not mean they are lost; on the contrary, it might make them more significant

by making them accessible to a larger audience. These oral traditions will continue to affect future generations and adapt to new societal situations thanks to their written records.

Oruka's work has been instrumental in challenging the misconception that African philosophy is simplistic or non-existent. By documenting the sophisticated thoughts of African sages, he has shown that African cultures have unique, rich, and complex philosophical traditions. The recognition of African sages as philosophers has helped to establish the legitimacy of African philosophy within the global academic community. This recognition has paved the way for further exploration and acceptance of African philosophical ideas.

By recording the philosophies of individual sages, Oruka ensured that the nuanced insights and teachings of African wisdom were preserved. This preservation has made it possible for scholars and practitioners to study and engage with African philosophy more comprehensively. Scholars and practitioners have been able to explore African philosophy in greater detail and comprehensively thanks in large part to this act of preservation (Oruka, 1991). Oruka's study dispelled the widely held belief that African countries lacked formal philosophical traditions by providing a verifiable foundation that emphasizes the intellectual richness and diversity present within African cultures. Oruka's transcription of these sages' ideas protected priceless cultural heritage and provided a forum for academic discussion and critical interaction. This has made it possible for African philosophy to be acknowledged more widely as an important and respectable topic of study, which has helped to ensure that African traditions' wisdom continues to inform and influence modern thought as well as its inclusion in international philosophical discussions.

The concept of philosophic sagacity has challenged and overturned stereotypes that African cultures lack philosophical traditions. By highlighting the profound insights and critical thinking of African sages, Oruka demonstrated that African wisdom possesses significant philosophical depth and rigor (Oruka, 1991).

While Oruka focused on individual sages, his work also highlighted the communal nature of African wisdom. African philosophy is deeply rooted in the experiences, values, and traditions of communities. This communal aspect is essential for a holistic understanding of African wisdom (Oruka, 1991). Philosophic sagacity underscores the importance of collective wisdom, showing that the insights of individual sages are often reflections of the broader community's values and experiences. This collective dimension enriches the understanding of African philosophy by situating individual insights within a communal context.

Oruka's emphasis on communal knowledge has helped to highlight the interconnectedness of individual and collective wisdom in African philosophy. This interconnectedness is a defining feature of African philosophical traditions, which are deeply embedded in cultural and social contexts (Oruka, 1991).

Philosophic sagacity has contributed to enriching global philosophical discourse by introducing African perspectives and insights. This inclusion has broadened the scope of philosophical inquiry and has fostered greater intercultural understanding and dialogue. The inclusion of African wisdom in global philosophical discourse has helped to broaden the horizons of philosophy (Oruka, 1991). It has introduced new perspectives and approaches that challenge and complement existing philosophical paradigms.

Oruka's work has facilitated greater intercultural dialogue by showcasing the value and relevance of African philosophical ideas. This dialogue has promoted mutual respect and understanding between different philosophical traditions.

The concept of philosophic sagacity has inspired contemporary African philosophers to explore and develop their own philosophical ideas. Oruka's work has provided a foundation for further philosophical inquiry and has encouraged a new generation of African thinkers to engage with their cultural heritage (Lajul, 2024; Oruka, 1991).

Oruka's documentation of African sages has inspired a new generation of African philosophers to engage with and build upon traditional wisdom. This engagement has led to the development of new philosophical ideas and approaches that are rooted in African cultural contexts (Lajul, 2024; Oruka, 1991).

The recognition of philosophic sagacity has encouraged continued exploration of African wisdom and its relevance to contemporary issues (Lajul, 2024; Oruka, 1991). This ongoing exploration has helped to keep African philosophical traditions vibrant and dynamic.

4. Conclusion

Philosophic sagacity has significantly contributed to the development of traditional African wisdom by bridging oral traditions and written philosophy, recognizing the philosophical depth of African wisdom, emphasizing communal knowledge, enriching global philosophical discourse, and inspiring contemporary African philosophers. Oruka's work preserved and validated African wisdom, making it accessible and respected globally. It also fostered a holistic understanding of African philosophy by highlighting the interplay between individual and communal insights and encouraged continued exploration and development of African philosophical ideas.

Recommendations

This study makes the following recommendations: first, educational institutions should incorporate African philosophical traditions into their curricula. This approach could promote a broader understanding and appreciation of African wisdom among students and scholars globally. Again, there is need for creating platforms for contemporary African philosophers to explore and develop new philosophical ideas rooted in African cultural contexts. This may significantly ensure the continued vibrancy and relevance of African philosophical traditions.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

There are no possible conflicts of interest.

Statement of ethical approval

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