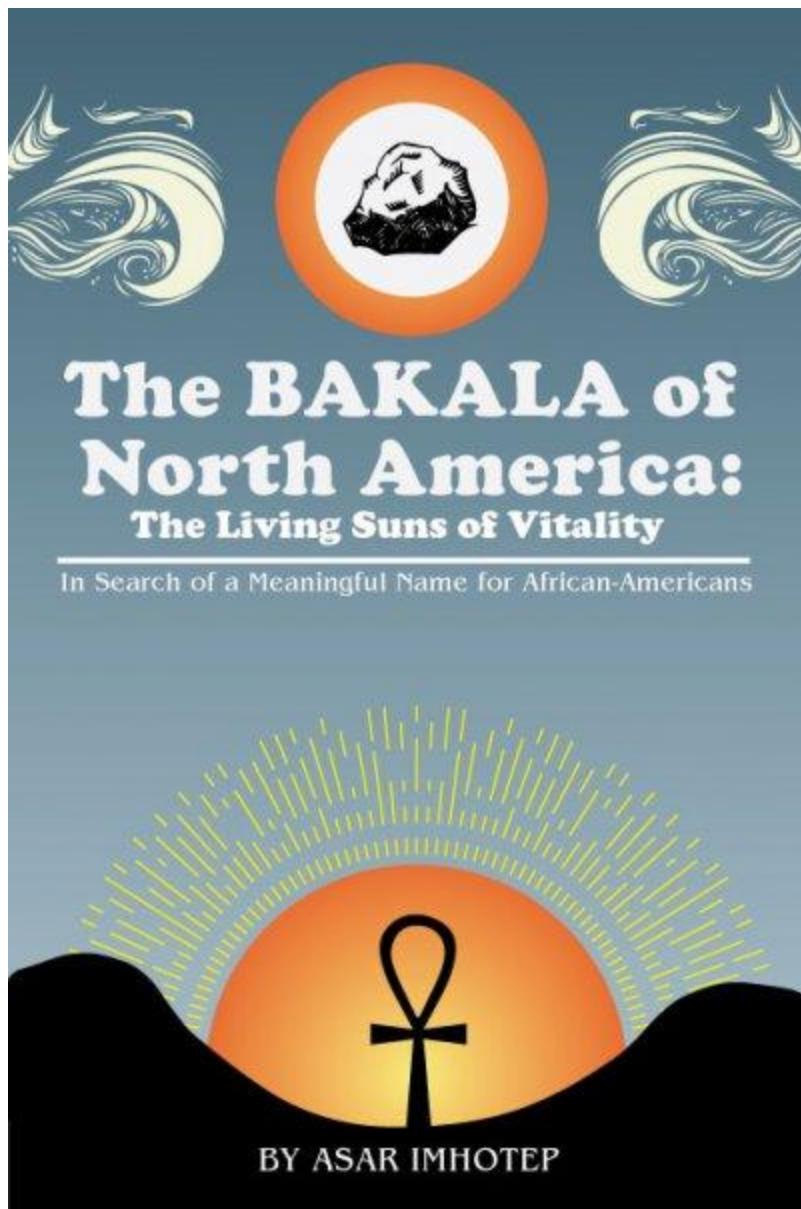


The BAKALA of North America: The Living Suns of Vitality by Asar Imhotep

Sample Chapter

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Appendix B: Simultaneous Validity

African Support for the creation of an African-American culture

In order to fully grasp the purpose of this work, one has to have a mature understanding of the 'person' in African ontology. A major characteristic that distinguishes Black cultures are its unique institutions (wisdom centers) that are designed to help the *muntu* discover new satisfying dimensions of being human. These schools of wisdom aid the human being in realizing the glory of being a *self-defining value*. It is this self-defining characteristic, which Molefi Asante calls *agency*, that distinguishes humans from the rest of nature and it is this realization that provides the thrust to continue forward with the development of an African-American identity.

To put this philosophy in context, we must understand the ancient way of viewing the person. For the pre-Western sages there was no separation between the Creator and the created. Nothing could exist outside the Creator. Everything was inside the Creator. The Creator was infinite, therefore, it was theoretically impossible for anything to exist outside of this infinity; otherwise the Creator would not be infinite.

The ancient sages of Ta-Meri imagined the Creator as an infinite, shapeless, water-like entity and they called it NU. This is one of the most ancient names for this primordial essence. As mentioned before, nothing existed outside of the Creator. The Creator created creation from within itself. Creation is a continuous evolution of phenomenal change. Therefore, everything is an aspect of the Creator, including the human being. The ancient names for man were rooted in this philosophy. You will find in various wisdom traditions that the very name of man is connected to that culture's name for the Creator to reflect man's relationship to the Creative Source. We find such an example among the *Bambara* of Mali. The name of the Creator is *Maa Ngala*. Because *Maa Ngala* gave man some of his essence, *Maa Ngala* named man in part after himself. The *Bambara* name for man is MAA. Another variant of the Creator Maa is Amen, which is pronounced *Imana* in the Great Lakes region of Africa. In the Niger-Congo languages a word for man is MANI. It derives from the relationship between man and the creator (*Imana*). Mani is the very name we get the term MAN from and has been retained in the Indo-European languages: *man* (English), *man* (Dutch), *mann* (German), *mand* (Danish), *man* (Swedish). When you say the word *man*, you are saying "child of God" or "Spirit Body," which derives from African concepts of "man."

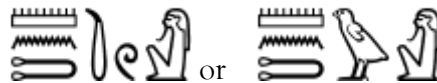
This same philosophy is found all over Africa; for you will find that many names for man are just derivatives of the most ancient name for the Creator NU: *-du*, *-nho*, *-ni*, *-ntfu*, *-ntu*, *-nwo*, *-nwu*, *-so*, *-su*, *-tho*, *-thu* and *-tu* (Ngubane 1979:63). A few examples can be seen in the following table:

LANGUAGE WORD FOR PERSON

Hausa	Mutum
Ibo	Nmadu
Yoruba	Eniya
Swazi	Muntfu
Sotho	Motho
Xhosa	Umntu
Zulu	Umntu

Embedded in the African name for person is the philosophy that man is an emanation from the Creator. The Xhosa people still refer to Black humanity as *umzi ka Ntu*, which means, “the family or descendants of Ntu.” In Rwanda they have the same phrase to explain humanity as *kazi ka muntu* which means in Kinyarwanda “the root of man.” The *root of man* is the Creator (God) in African traditional societies. This was the name given to the father of Gihanda (meaning *to create* or *creator*), Rwanda’s first human king (symbolic of creative man). For those of you familiar with Placed Temple’s *Bantu Philosophy* will remember that to the Bantu, the Creator is the elder or great MUNTU (*Vidye i muntu mukatampe*). We see this is a carry over from pharaonic times.

MUNTU



Budge 306a - A warrior “god” of Hermonthis near Thebes

The ancient iKami sages envisioned humanity as deities, gods or divine beings. This concept is better understood after a close examination of one of their words for humanity:

HUMANITY



Ancient Egyptian *rmṯ* = *remetj* (Coptic = *rome, romi, lomi*)

As we can see above, the determinate is the symbol for a deity. This clearly demonstrates the divine nature of man in the minds of Egyptian (African) sages. This philosophy was later echoed in the Biblical tradition when in the Old Testament it was said, “Ye are gods.” (Psalms 82:6, John 10:34). In the Igbo language a name for man is MMA NDU which means, “the crown of creation,” “the glory of creation,” “the glory of life.” MMA NDU is a variant of MU-NTU.

With this said, it should be understood that all is the Creator. The Creator simply evolved phenomena from itself (the primordial substance) and these phenomena began to cluster themselves together forming unique relationships. Based on the types of relationships these clusters formed, and the environment which helped to shape these new relationships, each cluster became a valid, self-defined entity in the evolution of the Creator. The laws that govern these formations are what the Zulu call the *Law of Appearing (umthetho)*

Everything inside the infinite is alive. There is no such thing as ultimate death inside the infinite. We understand this concept as the first *Law of Energy* which states that energy cannot be created nor destroyed, it can only change form. So everything is simply a materialization, using the *Law of Appearing*, of what the Zulu call the *Ultimate Value*. To have value is to have importance, worth. The *Ultimate Value* is existence. Everything exist therefore everything's ultimate value resides in the Creator who is existence. Everything you can think of has value and is important to the whole of creation. Everything is consubstantial with the primordial substance and with cosmic order. Within this context, every phenomenon 'proclaimed' or defined itself in everything it did. The self-definition proclaimed the section of *The Law* which gave the phenomenon its nature. In other words, it defined itself in its qualities. Water's ultimate value is H₂O. Man's ultimate value is spirit.

This concept is very important to understand because it is this understanding that guides the African unwritten law of *simultaneous validity* among human beings. What makes the person different is the person defines himself on his own terms. He knows who he is and what he knows is his secret; it is one's source of self-healing power. As Ngubane (1979:69) states, "*He [man] evolved into this earth and became homo in order to discover more satisfying dimensions of being human. Perpetual evolution was his destiny; his nature required that he should forever discover more satisfying dimensions of being human.*" As James Smalls would say, "We are the Divine having a human experience."

Every person defined himself in terms valid in or dictated by his environment and each such self-definition was simultaneously *legitimate, valid* and *important* as that of his neighbors. This is regardless of the fore-parents of each people. Phrased in a different way, the physical and social environments cause human beings to 'be' differently across the earth. As children of the Creator endowed with its spirit and gifts, all human beings have the right to define themselves in a manner that is befitting their circumstance. It matters not if a cluster of people belonged to a previous identity in times past. If the new cluster of people feel it necessary to redefine themselves in concert with their current conditions, by African custom and universal law, that cluster of people have the right to redefine themselves; and their definition of self is simultaneously as valid, legitimate and important as any other self-determining people on the face of the earth.

This spirit finds continuity within the Hip Hop generation of which I am a part. Remember our quote from Blast Master KRS-1 at the beginning of this discussion, "*That's why the first step in Hip Hop, change your name. First step; what are you calling yourself? You wanna be a Hip Hopper, first step, change your name. Why? It breaks you off from a history you did not create.*" This is in keeping with African tradition. It speaks to the fact that the names we were born with did not speak to our

destiny, so the only remedy was to change your name in order to set the precedence for the kind of reality you want to create. Anyone who knows me personally knows I go by a thousand and one names depending on what social sphere I am currently active in. This is a reflection of my early upbringing within Hip Hop culture.

When we named ourselves, we identified ourselves with names that empowered us to thrive beyond our current circumstances. In a social environment in which African-Americans did not have much economic or political power, the early Hip Hoppers understood that regardless of our lack of social power, we had complete power over ourselves: we were rulers of our own beings. This is why in the early days you found names such as Grand Master Flash, *Lords of the Underground*, Rakim Allah, Blast Master KRS-1, Africa Bambaataa, MC (Master of Ceremonies) Shan, Notorious B.I.G., Lord Have Mercy, Redhead Kingpin, King-T, Big Daddy Kane, Queen Latifah, Father MC, Grand Puba, Chubb Rock, Pete Rock (rock signifying the ability to make the crowd rock from side-to-side, equivalent to an MC), and so on. My emcee name was *De-Mate Da Prophet*. *De-Mate* (long [a] as in *wait*) is a made up name I created and gave the definition of 'unorthodox.' I understood at an early age that my teaching style and way of expressing myself was unorthodox. And since I was heavy into spirituality, I added the name *Prophet* so one would understand the framework in which I was operating.

These names were infused with radiations that vibrated authority, power, royalty and purpose. Contrast those names with more current names in Hip Hop such as Soldier Boy, Lil Wayne, Bow Wow, BG (Baby Gangsta), Lil Scrappy, Lil Keke, Baby (of Cash Money) and Lil Flip. All of these names radiate immaturity; not power and authority. But regardless of our feelings on the matter, these names are *valid*, *legitimate* and *important* under African custom. Each of these human beings has the right to define themselves in a manner that resonates with their spirit. Their names reflect the environment and times in which they came into a certain consciousness.

This is instructive on many levels, for the Yoruba have not always been the Yoruba. The Igbo have not always been the Igbo. The Chinese have not always been the Chinese. All of the human family originated from a central location in East Africa. As these human beings left the original homeland to populate the earth, some formed clusters in certain areas and became a new people under a new identity. They defined themselves based on the challenges of their environment. As time went on, some of those people left and formed clusters in a different region of the earth. As time flowed on the new location became just as old as the old location. Some kept record and cultural ties with the old homeland. Others, due to extreme environmental challenges, were unable to keep ties with their old family, so totally new cultures began to form under which new identities were developed. Because these clusters moved away from their ancestral home and founded new identities, this did not invalidate who they were. It was their right to discover more satisfying dimensions for being human and one dimension is through one's name.

Just as the person defines himself, so does the cluster (the community) define itself. The cluster tells itself who it is through its own interpretation of the *Law*. This interpretation of the *Law* derives from its traditions that it developed down the ages to guarantee its survival. Each

social cluster, community, family, has its own traditions for establishing its identity which must be respected (a lesson all evangelical missionaries to this date have yet to learn).

This is the story of humanity and it is no different for us African-Americans in the United States. The concept of race was irrelevant to the ancient mind. If the physical environment caused man's hair texture, skin color, cranial shape or height to change form, that did not affect one's consanguinity with the Divine. The *primordial substance*, the *Divine*, the *Laws of Appearing* and the *self-defining value* were above the false folk taxonomic notion of biological race. Because *Infinite Consciousness* is a unity, the human race is a unity. It is this unity which gives simultaneous validity to all cultural self-definitions.

This is what Dr. Rev. Jeremiah Wright was trying to get Europeans in the media (and Black folk who did not know themselves) to understand during the 2008 NAACP annual conference during the Democratic Party primary elections. The repeated mantra from Dr. Wright during the speech was "Different does not mean deficient." What Rev. Wright was expressing in this aphorism was the African humanistic concept of *simultaneous validity*: that our way of being is just as valid, important and legitimate as your way of being.

The ideal in which African civilizations have been constructed is on the belief that every person has the right to discover more satisfying dimensions of being human. This is why the ancient Egyptian society did not force newly 'acquired' territories to abandon their cultures, but incorporated them into the greater Egyptian society. Secondly, every human being is a self-defining value. Each human value is rooted in the simultaneous legitimacy, validity and importance of the different ways in which different peoples in different environments define themselves. Our circumstances have changed within the last 500 years. Social factors have forced us to become a new people. It is time that we validate ourselves by adopting a name that helps us to discover new satisfying dimensions for being human: one that guides our energies towards fertilizing our seeds of greatness.

As Ngubane (1979:60) notes,

To be human is to be able to say what and who you are and to be able to say why you are here and where you are going; it is to be able to define yourself. Ancient Zulu philosophers taught that the person was unique in that he defined himself; in that he knew the worth of the value that he was.

I argue that the terms Black, Negro, African, and African-American do not adequately capture the spirit of who we are. I added this section to answer those who would think that we have to use the names our ancestors used to define themselves. I have provided an indigenous framework that runs counter to that belief and lends support, given our historical circumstances, for the adoption of a new name. Our name will be simultaneously valid and important and as legitimate as Hausa, Zulu, Dagara, Luba, Igbo, Yoruba or Jolof. Because we come from Africa does not mean we have to use the word African as our *ethnic designation*. Africa was our former geographical homeland. If continental geography dictated identity, then we would simply be American. The origins for the

name America is hotly contested in academic circles. It is believed that it derived from the sailor who mapped parts of what is now South America by the name of Amerigo Vespucci. However there is dispute over this claim whose articulation would take us outside the scope of our discussion. At this point know that the same issues that surround a definite origin for the term Africa plague the name America as well.

So since we don't know what the name America means or where it came from, and because the name American was forced on us by way of genocide and enslavement by non indigenous people, I cannot support the adoption of American to be our *ethnic* identifier either: especially since the name does not reflect our *history, gifts, vision* and *purpose*. Also I find it disrespectful to the indigenous of this land to reinforce the European hegemonic practice which renamed not only the land but the people of the land after conquest. If we simply associate ourselves as being an American when we are in foreign countries, in the context of citizenship, then I don't see a problem with that. I would simply say that I am from America of the BAKALA people. We will now discuss in *Appendix C* the BAKALA definition of the human being.



BAKALA

