

“Remembering” as a Decolonial Praxis in African HCI and Design

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ABSTRACT

The fourth wave of HCI sought to engage with the ethics, politics, and values of design as an engine of modernity/coloniality. In doing so, we’ve witnessed a series of critiques and reflections on how the broadening of context and application in the third wave does not equate to any substantial structural changes in the ontologies and epistemologies informing HCI research and design. This can be attributed to the inevitable chaos of multiplicity inherent in HCI - and issues that we reckon could further implicate the efforts towards politicizing design as applied in the context of Africa. In this conceptual paper, we take the politics of design to another level by integrating distinct religious and sociopolitical practices across Africa in showing the colonizing dimension of the entirety of modern design enterprise. We argue that remembering the onomatopoeic dynamic of *Amun-RA* and *the Ekumeku* - both as theological thoughts and political praxis that are situated in African traditions - could provide a powerful instrument for ‘asking questions’ and ‘forming conversation’ on how technology can be developed and evaluated in/from African communities. Building on this year’s theme of ‘beyond limit’, this study showcases how decolonizing African design entails, on an abstract level, a decolonisation of the imagination. To go beyond colonially imposed limits in computing research and design, we ought to remember our histories and cultures clearly, there is a designerly power in remembering.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The evolution of HCI comes with dynamic shifts in paradigms. The first wave of debates focusses on the biophysical aspects of the human, the second generation offers a shift from human factors to human actor, and the third wave broadens the processes and materiality’s of design towards new cultural context and domain of application [10, 11]. The three waves brought about an influx

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of theoretical perspectives - from the ecological approach, cognitive models, and activity theories, to distributed cognition, situated actions, and ethnomethodological approaches [36]- thus emphasizing how the multiplicity of experiences/perspectives could expand HCI’s application area and communities of practices. The different approaches imported, applied, and developed in HCI have been used largely to provide descriptive accounts of user behaviour, act as high-level analytical concepts for modelling user-machine interactions, or generative/prescriptive guidance for design. This has brought about a shift from merely adopting formal engineering methods or guidelines in design processes to an understanding of the complex social dynamic of the spaces upon which interaction systems might be designed, embedded and used. Even with the acknowledgement that the Design enterprise is neither neutral nor value-free, the politics of design continuously promotes reflective approaches to the design of ethical and inclusive digital artefacts or even an entire technological ecosystem.

More recently, the rally towards the fourth wave of HCI emphasizes how design decisions and processes are socio-politically driven with implications for the social structures and power dynamics of the human computer interactivity [6]. This is essentially “politicizing design” as a discipline, an activity, and a practice’ engendering critical investigation of the socio-cultural and geo-political dimension of technology design and adoption in the global south [7, 8, 23]. The integration of geo-politics into the design community of practice entails the democratization of the entire scientific and technological ecosystem by allowing relevant stakeholders to participate in the design process and decisions – thus ensuring that the design outcome aligns with the particularities of context.

Evidently, the global HCI community has engaged the politics of difference to denote how technology design is a deliberate enterprise of negotiation and reconciliation of conflicting values. As a deliberate enterprise, technology design is imagined within global political economies that embrace “difference as a ground for multi-polar global governance” where cultures of design and context of use are re-construct as a site for possibilities, a transient space for celebration and contestation [23, p.3]. This is also brought to the fore of the politics of design in HCI the forms and functions that African culture of design might take to bring about a subtle re-invention of the African perspective on innovation beyond the tropes of gaps and lack. With African HCI as an eclectic program that is loosely attached to epistemologies and methodologies of the global south, we recognize that decolonizing the social imaginaries directing its delinking/detaching from the zero-point epistemologies might be a difficult (perhaps impossible) intellectual pursuit; decolonizing the social imaginaries - as a set of ideas, values, and beliefs - that African actors know and think of the pluriverse is not a one-time off intellectual activity but rather a mechanistic (and dialectic) process of dismembering and remembering.

To re-invent the African perspective on innovation, recent research in HCI has approached "coloniality of imagination" as thinkable interventions where the subjectivities of technical beings could render the decolonization of the African social imaginaries do-able (See. [2]). When normative cultures of design are conceived as an inevitable by-product of the performativity of the colonizing power [5], one can begin to articulate how decolonization of the technical social imaginaries directing design in African culture could render actionable the invisible performativity of power in computing research and design [16]. It is this possibility and learnability that the decolonisation of the social imaginaries might present in the politicizing design that we're attempting to entertain in this paper.

Following upon the intellectual traditions of postcoloniality and decoloniality that point to the ontological dimension of modern design [33, 44, 45], this reflection essay aimed at enhancing design thinking by fostering an interdisciplinary dialogue intended to provoke sustained discussions on contemporary design models and approaches domesticated in African HCI. Here, both postcoloniality and decoloniality are conceived as a political project concerned with border thinking, detaching, delinking, dismembering, and remembering. Also, there is the assumption that the decolonization of African design is not loosely considered "as a straightforward liberatory process" but a "contest over the very meaning of liberation itself" [23, p.5]; and particularly one that adopts the metaphors of 'difference/similitude' in re-assessing the epistemic conditions upon which African design are thought about in HCI. Going beyond the performativity of binaries, we argue that the metaphor of 1). *Amun-RA* – the invisible one - as a theological standpoint for remembering the African personalities' alternative conception of sense-hood; and 2). The *Ekumeku* – the silent ones - could act as political praxis, and a steppingstone for remembering the African person's ontological specificity/wholeness of personhood; thus, could amplify the foresight and actioning of social actors across Africa toward emerging challenges and opportunities for innovation.

As a conceptual piece, the authors adopted a narrative essay approach to analysis and discussion (see. [2, 10]). For Bodker [10], the constructive analysis of elements associated with the second wave of HCI theories and models provides the basis for critical discussion on their implications to third-wave agendas where practices of design are broadened towards new cultural context and domain of application. More recently, Adamu [2] engaged in critical reflection on various historical tropes associated with post-colonialism and post-development in HCI, which provided the basis for a more sustained discussion on the future dimensions of African HCI as a futuring exercise. For both authors, discussing elements of the 2nd and 3rd wave HCI, and the assumptions underpinning post-approaches to HCI4D, bring to the fore of HCI, the dialectic between the past and the future. Therefore, the drawing upon theological and political perspectives across Africa is to further explicate how/and why, interrogating the particularities of modernity/coloniality in design entails, on an abstract level, a decolonisation of the imagination. Put differently, the paper is attempting to show how the ethics of remembering the African personalities' ontological densities of sense-hood and personhood might draw into focus the complexities of politicizing inventions imagined and practised within the Western canon of representation. The adoption of theological and

political imaginaries within African historical perspectives, perhaps, provides a powerful instrument for 'asking questions' and 'forming conversation' on how technology can be developed and evaluated in/from African communities. To go beyond colonially imposed limits in computing research and design, we ought to remember, that there is power in remembering our histories and culture clearly.

In the remainder of the paper, we situated our work within the fourth wave of HCI that is primarily concerned with ethics, values, and politics of design [11], and then discuss how remembering the onomatopoeic dynamic of Amen-RA and the Ekumeku - both as theological thoughts and political praxis that are situated in African traditions - could provide a provisional language for interrogating the colonizing logic of our design(s) - in term of metaphors, concepts, and artefacts. By drawing into faith-based and political narratives in African studies, HCI and design, this paper contributes to long-standing efforts that sought to position African HCI discourses beyond tropes of gaps and lack [2, 32] which has been identified as fundamental to the futuring of African HCI identities.

2 ETHICS OF COMPUTING RESEARCH – FROM SECULAR TO FAITH-BASED APPROACHES

The computing research literature has been largely driven by Western scientific scholarship. Building on the tradition of modernity, one might argue that computing as a socio-cultural phenomenon emanates from Eurocentric systems of thought that are premise on the utilities of technical rationality, universality, and calculability. When the development of computing research is likened to Western modernity [4, 25], one has to account for how the science leading to the secularization of research epistemologies and methodologies thesis implicate more pertinent issues such as the ethics and politics of design and HCI.

With specific emphasis on the fourth wave of HCI, the field an inter-discipline concerned with the design, evaluation, and implementation of interactive computing systems for more-than-human use has continuously grappled with the chaos of multiplicity inherent in its expansion. From its inception, HCI has placed the human user central to its analysis to the point that the fourth wave of HCI emphasizes the ethics of designing for/with the other. Within this emerging space, there is the recognition of how the secularization of computing research alongside modernist scientific values might reinforce a particular way of designing/ and engaging with interactive systems [18, 27, 35, 43]. This is an ethical issue that necessitated recent efforts towards a post-secular perceptive in HCI [3]; the question is to what extent can HCI, design, and computing become de-secularised? Or questioning the extent to which the neutral ethical stand of computing systems might hold when placed within historical and geo-political contexts.

First, there is the need to recognize how the modern scientific enterprise embraces the values of rationality, secularity, and universality as a metaphor to gain legitimacy as an alternative to monotheistic religiosity. Under the secular mode of thinking, recent computing technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning have relegated alternative modes of conception (or knowing and thinking) as anti-scientific [1, 29]. What is evident is that

the secularization of science and technology wasn't a one-time off intellectual activity but rather a continuous mechanistic process where machines, algorithms and models are permeated as capable of a 'life-less form of thinking'.

Second, the secularization of modern science presented the idea that rationale intelligence presupposes life as conceived in Judeo-Christian traditions, and that modern technologies' untamed capabilities to *know* and *think* beyond the confide of those traditions denote a higher logical model of intelligence. AI is often perceived as a science or a scientific enterprise of mimicking human reason and sociality to the point of singularity; one that needs to be decolonized [1, 28]. Such a social system of thought implies that technical rationality is purposefully changing our conception of what it means to be an intelligent human being to the point that social life is de-spiritualized as an inevitable consequence of the formative neutralization of society. The ethical relevance of the secularization of modernity – as in computing and AI in particular – is that specific norms of knowing and doing are privileged at the expense of others, often colonizing. What is more problematic in HCI is the imposition upon the human user and the non-human machine an impulse towards anti-theological idealization and ethical universalization [3].

As a result of the secularization of science and technology studies, dominant political views such as scientific rationalism and universalism relegated religious values to the background of computing research, which ultimately impacts the framing of the user, the logic of design, the metaphor of interaction and embodiment, and the discourse of digital innovation. This is an issue that has begun to receive considerable attention across HCI and design, particularly by showing how the design and adoption of computing systems are implicated by faith-based cultures, values, and norms [27, 35, 41–43].

For some researchers, shared beliefs and values across the two major monotheistic religions (Christianity and Islam) provide the basis for designing for/with the particularity of a context in HCI (see. [18, 19, 30, 34]). These studies have focused attention on how constructs such as national identity, sexual orientation, and geopolitics influence the ways in which digital innovations are adopted (and adapted) to new cultural contexts. This is evident in how specific banking models, for example dealing with interest in financial services, exclude a spectrum of the Muslim population in the global south [30]. Or the ways in which modern digital technologies might not support the relational conception of God, creation, and meaningful life by the continuous de-spiritualization of modernity [18]. This calls for a critical reflection on subtle ways in which Africa's historical thoughts can be adopted as instruments for designing and deploying digital technologies that reflect emerging challenges and opportunities for innovation.

In the first part of the discussion, we explore how the metaphors of “Amun-RA, āmeen, or آمين can provide a way of remembering the African personalities' ontological densities of sense-hood/ or sense-making. By drawing into faith-based narratives in HCI and design, we contribute to the effort that sought to position African HCI discourses beyond tropes of nativism/primitivism, which has been identified as fundamental to the futuring of African HCI identities [2].

3 POLITICS OF DESIGN IN HCI – FROM POSTCOLONIAL TO DECOLONIAL TACTICS

In design-related disciplines such as information systems, ICT, HCI, and CSCW, we've witnessed continual efforts to decolonize computing research and application. Echoing Lazem and colleagues' provocation that "as far as computing is characteristic of a modern world, it is also characteristic of a colonial movement" [25, p. 167], we are particularly pointing attention to how the “failure to interrogate the particularities of Western modernity/coloniality in the postcolony (as in the here and the now) might signal the performance of a colonizing reality that promises progress but instead threatens the prospects of being and living in a satisfactory society” [2, p.24-25]. Even when there is the recognition that colonial ontologies and epistemologies direct computing research [4, 44, 45], the effort towards decolonisation tends to be an abstraction of intellectual critiques [37] rather than a dedicated ethical agenda that investigates the body-politics and geo-politics of design [25].

In postcolonial and decolonial computing research, we build on extensive work that highlights the subtle ways in which colonial legacies direct the transnational encounters and exchange of resources, expertise, and capital [4, 8, 9, 15, 22, 25]. This is evident in how the ideologies of optimism and solutionism have normalized the thinking that social issues such as abject poverty, social inequality and environmental injustice can be reduced to objects of design to be codified, predicted, and modelled [2]. Even when the foundation tenant of postcolonial theories was to delink from the zero-point epistemologies of Westernization, what we've witnessed within the computing literature is how what was labelled as interrogating modernity/coloniality might not be postcolonial after all; but rather a precept for post-colonial modernity (See. [2, 25]). This is not an isolated case as recent research has further demonstrated how the entrenchment of technology as a modernist enterprise necessitated developing new spaces and approaches for design as an endeavour of negotiation and reconciliation of power relations [12–14, 24, 32].

Furthermore, we draw upon decolonial perspectives that have examined the postcolony of modern society. The use of the postcolony here is to denote the experiences of modernity as a global system of organization. For example, in postcolonial theory, the emphasis has been on how 'remembering' the experiences of coloniality-as-modernity can be conceived as a powerful instrument were remembering the past – as in origin rather than the destination – is an actionality that inspires dismembering the zero-point epistemologies of technoscience. For Gandhi, decolonisation entails recalling the violence of coloniality and reassessing its profound effect on modernity, which might render a more visible account of the performativity of the coloniality of being [17]. This is an act of embracing the ambiguity of possibilities, of knowing how to regain the subjectivity of the self in the other, of thinking how to, where to, and what to put together of the fragmented other selves to give rise to (as in re-birth and re-emergence) a subaltern self. From this perspective, decolonisation as a purposive action is neither introspection nor retrospection re-action to the violence of coloniality, but rather a cyclical process of distortion/restoration, of breaking and making.

Specific to the African school of thought, Wa Thiong'o argues that 'remembering' is the fundamental ontological step towards

emancipation as it entails a deliberate disorientation of the logic and language that banalised human beings as man, the other, and the other selves [46]. As noted by decolonial theorist, Achille Mbembe, "in African tradition, human beings were never satisfied simply being human beings, they are constantly in search of a supplement to other human hoods. Often, they added to the human hood various attributes of the properties taken from the world of animals, plants, and various objects" [26, p. 218]. This suggests that the colonized being's remembrance of the ontological densities of the other-selves - which is not an individual self that is forcefully produced by the condition of technicity - provides a temporal space for negating the assignment of genre-specific attributes such as the other, the primitive, the savage, the or the subaltern. From both perspectives, this continual act of remembrance/ dissemblance denotes a consciousness of prior personhood that transcends the Eurocentric logic of representation.

In decolonizing the logic of the techno-scientific enterprise, the proposition is that the metaphor of 'remembering', as a decolonial option for regaining/restoring the African personality's ontological specificities as agential being(s), can render "coloniality of imagination" as think-able and do-able. By engaging profoundly with the metaphor of 'remembering', from postcolonial and decolonial traditions [17, 46] to the tropes of technology design in HCI [2], we contribute to the postcolonial computing literature in HCI that sought to challenge the subtleties of colonial impulse and legacies directing how digital technologies ought to be designed and adapted to support diverse ways of living.

4 PATHWAYS FOR DECOLONIZING AFRICAN DESIGN

In this section, we consider how remembering 'Amun-RA' as a non-linear conceptualization of being might expand HCI efforts towards a deeper engagement with de-secularized thoughts and more-than-human-centered design(s). Also, remembering the *Ekumeku* as a dynamic political resistance that was difficult to articulate/predict in thought and tactics could act as a praxis for politicizing design. Although the decentralised techniques of the *Ekumeku* resemble that of the guerrilla military warfare system of modernity, its spiritual and psychological tactics of subversion are under-utilized in design thinking. The two propositions are relevant to African HCI engagement with the situated perspective of design as ontological and epistemological, particularly the *ambiguity* of the Amen-RA and the *uncertainty* of the *Ekumeku* as a critical and subversive design strategy that relied on localized deities and supernatural wisdom in resisting colonial imposition [39, 40]. By remembering 'Amun-RA' and the 'Ekumeku's as indigenous conception of sensehood and personhood, we show how the design performativity of *visible powder/power* were complicated by the *invisible powers* of the invisible one and the silent one; thus could provide some inspiration for designing for/with the complexities of culture/context and against the operative logic of linear modernity/coloniality.

4.1 Rethinking Design Imaginaries via Situated Praxis of Sense-Making

In the Egyptian deity, *Amun-RA* denotes the invisible Gods, the fusion of the Sun and Air Gods, that were later characterised as

Zeus-Amman and Jupiter-Amman in Greek and Roman mythology. In pre-historic African traditions, *Amun-RA* was conceived as the invisible one that doesn't live in any natural phenomenon/or form but exists as the creator of life and earth. However, in Abrahamic faiths of Christianity and Islam, *āmeen* or آمين, denotes prayer to the GOD's. Often, worshippers utter that expression at the end of prayers to suggest the proclaiming of the proceeding statement or the plead of the proceeding statement coming to being. In the Hebrew language, *āmeen* means to confirm in an affirmation of a statement that preceded, whereas in the Arabic language, آمين, denotes the faith of something being so. For the Dogon people of West Africa, particularly those that reside in present-day Mali, *Amma'* depict the act of bringing forth, the birthing of the universe, the coming into being. By adopting the metaphor of 'remembering' as a decolonial pathway for understanding the ambiguous dialectics between "*Amun-RA*, *āmeen*, آمين, we are bringing to the fore the ethics of designing the multiple interpretations that underpin African personalities' conception of sense-hood or meaning-making.

Even with the continual secularization of computing systems, HCI researchers have begun to question the assumption that alternative perspectives of sense-making e.g., divine interventions, miracles, and magic ought to be subjugated to scientific methods of investigation [2]. This is evident in faith informatics literature on how the design and adoption of computing systems are implicated by faith-based values and norms. When we design for specific experiences, we are not merely designing aspects of a social culture into a system, but rather enacting a cultural practice that influences how the technology is adopted and used. With HCI's emphasis on the embodiment of interaction and the perception of interactivity in ubiquitous computing, faith-based approaches foreground, for example, the re-conception of sustainability when God and nature are afterthoughts outside the realm of life. As noted by Ahmed, "post-secular HCI does not mean an absolute relativist position about ethics. . . but essentially a call for advancing our understanding and improving our practice of ethics in HCI" [3, p.86]

Honouring the call for critical reflection on how Africa's religious thoughts can be adopted as a political instrument for technology design and evaluation, ambiguity as a 'relational entity' for inquiring about the past, present, and future of interactive systems across historical spectrum proves useful [39]. In decolonized ways of being (s), ambiguity denotes a provisional disruption in knowing against the records, an improvement of thinking about lived experiences, and thus a resource in place, a pedagogy in practice. As human experiences evolve, we continuously engage in designing our world(s) as a social process of negotiations, of collectively re-imagining widely held beliefs about the nature of the social world, of re-calibrating human vulnerability and interdependence, and ultimately accepting the limit of human subjectivity as part and parcel of the human experience. The ethical aspiration here is that embracing the ambiguity associated with the conception of *Amun-RA*, *āmeen*, and آمين denotes a generative quality of learning (and re-learning) from our collective experiences.

Even when uncertainty/ambiguity has been negatively characterized across the science, HCI has appropriated its use as a provisional concept: first as a "generative resource for the design of artifacts and systems", and second as a structural approach to design inquiry where its "neither seen as a problem to be addressed or a resource to

be leveraged, but instead a site for questioning how the political or cultural context shape our engagements with uncertainty such as" [40, p. 3]. It is this possibility and learnability that the ambiguity of knowing might present in the African culture of design that we're attempting to entertain.

4.2 Reimagining Design Thinking via Localized Model of Organization

In the postcolonial history of sub-Saharan Africa, the Ekumeku (or the silent one's) that occupied the Asaba hinterland of present-day Southern Nigeria were considered a militant group that resisted/defied British imperialism between 1898-1911. As a resistance movement, historians have grappled with the specific dialectic of the *Ekumeku*: as implying the *silent one* or the league of *prohess men*. With little known about the motive for their dynamic formation, some historians have argued that the Ekumeku as a de-centralized grouping came about under diverse premises [31, 38]. First, they are often portrayed as neither anti-European nor pro-African groups that fought to preserve pre-colonial systems of organization. Earlier members consisted of the entrepreneurial class that traded in tobacco, cotton, slaves, and kernels. With the abolition of slavery across America, the group repositioned their focus as a resistance movement that sought to defy British administration and missionary interest in economic and political matters. Second, as a non-centralized group that fought against colonial consequences, the silent one was characterized and celebrated as invisible but forceful, individualistic in mindset yet communal in operational dynamics. This has led historians to believe that their psychological and guerilla warfare tactics have inspired the anti-colonial across Africa, e.g., the Mau Mau of Kenya [38]. What lesson can we learn from the *Ekumeku* to inform the 'politicization of design' in transnational space?

The authors argue that the *Ekumeku* as a political praxis can be adopted as a steppingstone for remembering the African personality's ontological specificity/wholeness towards personhood. Adopting the concept in design thinking provides an alternative perspective on how design can be political, allowing for a comparison between Western and localised systems of conceiving the Human, the user, and the other in Design thinking. Even when the group were perceived to be overly individualistic (an issue that led to their downfall), their political structure of multiple hierarchies and relations denote, by design, the materiality of their tactics as communal. The design lesson here would be how those tactics, e.g., codified signal intelligence, trumpets, and gesticulation were enacted to disengage the enforcement of the external logic of organization. When we view design as ontological – as a way of knowing beyond the mere fabrication of matters to a given form as artefacts and to serve a function - we make the case for appreciating the design thinking underpinning their organisational structures of sustainment, or even entire ecosystem of sociability.

The geo-politics of design also encourages us to trace how specific protocols or logic of computing come to be, and the legacies that those systems have on the future. Thinking of the syntax of our programming tool in relation to the English language, does it foreclose other ways of coding, of course? The implication here is that it subsidizes who will be doing computing (body-politics

of coding as commodified labour), where they will be doing it (i.e. geopolitics of cheap labour in India), and what will be considered as innovative computing (i.e. the emphasis is that design thinking as expertise is too expensive to be outsourced, more reason that the iPhone is designed in California and assembled in China [20]). What might be the material implication of those differences where the US is rendered as the space where creativity and innovation prevail, and China as the mechanical laboratory for assemblage of things? As Irani has rightly pointed out, an iPhone is not merely a gadget, it is a complex system that directs how we interact and experience in digital space – but often not interrogated.

Furthermore, we can make the case that although the decentralised model of organization within the Ekumeku resembles that of a modern guerrilla military warfare system, its spiritual and psychological tactics of subversion are under-utilized in design thinking. The point to be raised here pertains to how what might be perceived as the margin was rendered central to defying the imposition of the Western Enlightenment project - Commercialization, Christianization, and Civilization. In African HCI for example, African design is often mirrored across tropes of technology appropriation, localisation, and adaptation where narratives about computing resources, expertise, and capital implicated as a result are rendered as natural phenomena and not a by-product of the underlying power relations of the design enterprise. The point to be made here is by remembering the Ekumeku, and their tactical resistance towards colonial imposition, we might be better positioned to fully appreciate the design complexities of the computing ecosystem as a modern colonizing enterprise. In a nutshell, the Ekumeku and other African resistance movements often highlighted the importance of protecting and celebrating indigenous values to sustain the sociocultural identities that were threatened by global politics. This will not only encourage cultural pride but will also engender a sense of belonging in the members of the community.

5 IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND DESIGN

With the rapid expansion of HCI across disciplines, traditions and geographies, there has been a critical discussion on whether the "cottage industry culture" has had any significant implication on the work practices of researchers and practitioners in HCI. These discussions have centred around two conflicting perspectives: some have argued that "there definitely needs to be a theoretical foundation to address the difficult design challenges ahead that face the HCI community. . . .while others argue "that theory has never been useful for the practical concerns of HCI and that it should be abandoned in favour of continuing to develop more empirically-based methods to deal with the uncertain demands of designing quite different user experiences using innovative technologies" ([36] p.3). Our reflection in this paper speaks to the former position where strong theoretical foundations from within African traditions are needed to support the development of context-specific and empirically informed methods of interaction design.

As identified by Rodgers, "designers and researchers need to begin to engage in dialogue, identifying areas of conceptual richness and design articulation" [36, p.33]. And this paper's reliance on the onomatopoeic dynamic of *Amun-RA and the Ekumeku* - both

as theological thoughts and political praxis that are situated in African traditions - is meant to provide the basis for more sustained conversations on how technology can be developed and evaluated in/from African communities. For example, the ambiguity associated with the conception of *Amun-RA*, *āmeen*, and *أمين* denote a generative quality of learning (and re-learning) from our collective experiences. By embracing ambiguity in design spaces, we might be better positioned to interrogate the current frame of reference in HCID where social issues such as inequality and injustice are rendered in-solvable within the problem-solving paradigm in HCI.

As have attempted to show, theological perspectives in design spaces imply that different modalities of sense-making (and not mere religious beliefs) bring into focus clues for designing new experiences of social interactivity. The shift from human factors to human technology nexus in the second wave of HCI presented interactivity as information communication. Due to the plurality of experience(s) and meaning (s), the HCI community was faced with the issue of "hyper-relativization" where complex social relations are to be transformed (and translated) into design entities. This has presented significant knowledge transfer challenges where mechanisms for translating theoretical prescriptive or descriptive accounts into applied practical form are readily scarce - and perhaps the need for cultural ideas that could complement formal methods of design become pronounced. Therefore, it is argued that the turn inward into faith-based design thinking might support high-level concepts for mapping external structures and relations within design spaces e.g., interest-free banking [30].

Consequently, the Ekumeku tactics of subversion, as design strategies, relied on localized deities and supernatural wisdom in resisting colonial imposition. The uncertainty associated with their tactics and strategies, by design, presents a pathway for re-assessing the epistemic conditions upon which African designs are thought of in relation to normative attributes such as appropriation and localisation. The point we are making here is this: there is power within the politics of difference/similitude. Accounting for the differences in the engine of modernity foreground brings to the fore, what was once perceived as the periphery e.g., ethics, value, and culture, to the center of fourth wave HCI discussions. The politics of the Ekumeku signifies the vitalities of adaptability and flexibility, of adapting to changing conditions of work and context of application. As a result, African designers and researchers can embrace this adaptive design mindset where social problems are approached as modular predicaments that require responsiveness to evolving conditions of work and context of use. In comparison to the technical advantages of the Western colonialists, the members of this movement had to rely on the limited resources at their disposal, innovatively utilizing them to sustain their livelihood; thus, denoting scalability and sustainability. We see ample opportunities where designer practitioners can emulate these sustainable design principles, where local materials and expertise that promote recycling and upcycling are upscaled.

By remembering '*Amun-RA*' and the '*Ekumeku*'s as the indigenous conception of sense-hood and personhood, we've attempted to show how the design performativity of *visible powder/power* were complicated by the *invisible powers* of the invisible one and the silent one; thus, could provide some inspiration for designing complexities of African culture/context and against the operative logic

of linear modernity/coloniality. From the theological standpoint of '*Amun-RA*' (as the silent one), we argue that faith-based concepts expand human-centered design approaches where more-than-human design thinking supports interrogating liner conceptualization of being.

The ambiguous dialectics between "*Amun-RA*, *āmeen*, *أمين*", has led to the proposition that there is a unifying force that directs the perception/ experience of life as a totality, where the recognition of the invisible one might support deeper engagement with de-secularized technologies of the self and the community. In the Foucauldian sense, technologies of the self are conceived as those ethical techniques that individuals adopt to understand, transform, and dominate themselves and others, particularly those that affect ways of being. The constitution of the human or the user in HCI denotes a prior assignment of properties to an entity, whereas the self-constitution of the user as an ethical being denotes a passage through/enabling by technologies that are embedded within the kingdom of cultures. When the ethics of computing research and design are reduced to objects of technicity and calculability, pluralistic approaches that frame the design of the self and the community as a deliberate endeavour of reconciliation of social relations would be identified and utilized. This way, African design as we perceive and practice will alternate as either a civic activity or a personal endeavour, but nevertheless political.

From Ekumeku's grassroots team-building mechanism, African designers and researchers can draw some inspiration for engaging more profoundly with target communities in design activities, where solutions are iteratively co-created to either build capabilities or address social concerns (or both). Practical design clues can be inspired by their principled intentions by reflecting on the various approaches utilized by these resistance movements and integrating them into distinct technology products, design concepts and visual aesthetics. One of the tools is storytelling and visual communication, which offers a means to inspire people and galvanize communal participation. Design can take advantage of this approach to share information, and campaign for social change. Visual communication tools such as graphics and multimedia can be utilized to promote positive values and tackle socially harmful narratives. This collaborative and participatory approach to design ensures that outcomes at various stages are not only sociocultural sensitive but also contextually appropriate.

6 CONCLUSIONS

In this conceptual paper, we discuss how the decolonial perspective of 'remembering' the onomatopoeic dynamic of *Amen-RA* and the *Ekumeku* - both as theological thoughts and political praxis that are situated in African traditions - could provide a temporal mode of interrogating the colonizing logic of our design(s). By engaging profoundly with the ethical discourse of secular and faith-based computing, we contribute to the postcolonial and decolonial computing literature that has sought to challenge the subtleties of colonial impulse and legacies directing how digital technologies ought to be designed and adapted to support diverse ways of living. This led to the consideration of how the culture of sociality implicates the politics of design, which shows the intricate social relations that inevitably influence how digital innovations are adopted

(and adapted) to new contexts. In situating African design as an inter-related enterprise that has both ontological and epistemological implications, remembering ‘Amen-RA’ and the ‘Ekumeku’ contribute to the theme of beyond limit by emphasizing that decolonisation is not an abstraction nor a metaphor, but rather a purposeful dialogue/reflection on the entire scientific knowledge enterprise as given [45]. We encourage the African HCI community and beyond to engage more with the subtleties of Design as politics, and technology design as the political study of the ethical values upon which the socio-economic and geo-political relations of computing systems are embedded.

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