

# THE HISTORY OF THE CONQUERING OF THE BEING OF AFRICANS THROUGH LAND DISPOSSESSION, EPISTEMICIDE AND PROSELYTISATION

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of colonisation in the conquering of the Being of Africans. It is pointed out that the colonisation of Africa became possible only because the church – particularly the Catholic Church and the Protestants – gave backing to it. Colonialism and Christianity are often associated because Catholicism and Protestantism were the religions of the colonial powers. Thus Christianity gave moral and ethical foundation to the enslavement of Africans. Colonisation is a concept which involves the idea of organising and arranging, which etymologically means to cultivate or to design. Therefore, it is the contention of this paper that this organising and arranging of colonies had a dire impact on the Being of the African people. Colonisation manifests itself through land dispossession (which in South Africa was given theological backing by the Dutch Reformed Church), epistemicide and proselytisation. Colonisation was informed by the idea of the scramble for Africa, which was blessed and commissioned particularly by the Catholic Church; and the notion of geopolitics of space, according to which the world has been divided by Europeans into two – namely the centre (occupied by the Europeans) and the periphery (occupied by non-Europeans). This division was informed by the articulation that ‘I conquer; therefore I am the sovereign’. Therefore, following the *ego conquiro* (i.e. I conquer), which was followed by the Cartesian *ego Cogito* (i.e. I think) then those who possess both the *ego conquiro* and *ego cogito* felt justified to colonise those who lacked these. This was felt in Africa through land dispossession, and Africans were forced to go through a violent process

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which alienated them from their ancestral land. Land is ancestral in the Being of the African people, and therefore any disturbance to the relation between the land and the Africans will result in them losing their Being (or self) – becoming pariahs in their ancestral land. This made them a conquered people and empty shells that accepted everything coming their way. It is against this background that the paper will explore the role of colonisation in the conquering of the Being of Africans through land dispossession, epistemicide and proselytisation.

**Keywords:** African Being; conquer; colonialisation; land dispossession, epistemicide; proselytisation

## INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to examine the role of colonisation in the conquering of the Being of Africans. It is the contention of this paper that the colonisation of Africa became possible only because also the church – particularly the Catholic Church and Protestants – gave backing to it (Amponsah 2013; Asante and Hall 2011, 1-24; De Klerk 1975; Fasching, DeChant and Lantigua, 2001; Lephakga 2015; Okon 2014; Rountree 2009). Asante and Hall (2011, 3) note that Christianity gave moral and ethical foundation supporting the enslavement of Africans and also profited extensively from exploiting Africans, thereby increasing the wealth of the church and expanding the territory controlled by the church. It must, however, be pointed out that colonisation is a violent process (Fanon 1963, 27) and subsequently the conquering of the Being of Africans was also a violent process (Fanon 1963, 27-84; Lephakga 2015). Thus, the conception of conquering (take over or defeat) the Being of the African was largely informed among other things by what Dussel terms the geopolitics of space. This formed an integral part of the socialisation process of the Europeans; that is, the idea that the world has been divided into two, namely between the centre (which is occupied by Europeans) and the periphery (which is occupied by non-Europeans) (Dussel 1985, 3-6). Another contributing factor was the idea of the scramble for Africa (Mudimbe 1988) which was blessed by the Catholic Church (Rountree 2009) and the Protestants (De Klerk 1975; Lephakga 2015). It is vital to point out that, as a result of the division of the world into two, following the Dusselian notion of geopolitics of space (Dussel 1985, 3-6) that is, the division between the centre (occupied by Europeans, who are Beings as a result of their occupying the centre) and the periphery (occupied by non-Europeans who are non-Beings as a result of their occupying the periphery) then the imposition of the centre to the periphery was justified because those who are in the periphery are non-Europeans and thus non-Beings (Dussel 1985, 3-6; Fanon 1963). Hence Hegel (2004) said: ‘Africa has no history for it is no historical part of the world.’ It is against this background that this paper argues that colonisation comes to its *eschata* (its peak) through the conquering of the Being of its subjects (Africans in this case) (Fanon 1963, 35-95;

Memmi 1974). Mudimbe (1988, 15) refers to the peak of colonisation as a colonial structure which embraces the physical, human and spiritual aspects of the colonising experience. This colonial structure developed three complementary hypotheses and actions, namely: 1) the domination of the physical space, 2) the reformation of natives' minds, and 3) the integration of local economic histories into the Western perspective (Mudimbe 1988, 15). This paper argues that the colonisation of Africa needs to be understood within a context where the conqueror was nurtured (Dussel 1985; Memmi 1974) under the indulgent belief that 'I conquer, therefore I am the sovereign' (Ramose 2003, 543). Furthermore, colonisation needs to be understood within the framework that the Being (i.e. being human in the world) of African people is deeply rooted in the land (Lephakga 2012b) and as such any disturbance of this relation (between the land and the African people) will result in them losing their self (Lephakga 2012a; Lephakga 2012b; Nyamiti 1984) or becoming pariahs of their Being (Plaatje 2007). It is vital to note the relation between the *ego conquiro* (I conquer), the *ego cogito* (I think), and the ontological peripheral status that the non-Europeans found themselves in throughout the period of colonisation. It is the contention of this paper that the *ego conquiro* and *ego cogito* gave moral justification to the colonisation of Africa (Asante and Hall 2011) and the idea of the scramble for Africa (Mudimbe 1988, 14).

## THE ONTOLOGY OF COLONISATION OR DOMINATION: THE RELATION BETWEEN *EGO CONQUIRO* AND *EGO COGITO*

This section will explore the connection between *ego conquiro* and *ego cogito*, which formed an integral part of the socialisation process of the Europeans. This is because *ego conquiro* and *ego cogito* gave moral justification to the colonisation of the others – in this case Africans (Maldonado-Torres 2007; Ramose 2003) and subsequently the conquering of the Being of Africans (Maldonado-Torres 2007). Thus Asante and Hall (2011, 3) note that the church, given its support of colonisation, was caught between the contradiction of supporting colonisation on the one hand, and on the other hand operating in the name of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the church in responding to this contradiction, aligned itself with pseudo-scientific and religious justifications which describe persons of African descent as inferior and/or evil (Asante and Hall 2011, 3). This is because Christians believe that humans are divine and God exists within an individual and as such, the colonisation of *the human* would be against the will of God. Thus in order to justify colonialisation, the church had to place in question the ontology or the *humanity* of those who were being conquered (Asante and Hall 2011, 5). Therefore, the connection between *ego conquiro* and *ego cogito* must be understood against the Dusselian notion of geopolitics of space (Dussel 1985, 3-6) under which the Europeans, having assumed the position of a Being (with

a capital B), divided the world into two. This division is between the centre, which is occupied by them as Beings (with a capital B) and the periphery, which is occupied by non-Europeans who are regarded as non-beings (Dussel 1985, 3-6; Fanon 1963). It is for this reason that Hegel (2004) says Africa does not have a history and it is not part of the historical work – and this is because Africa is in the periphery and everyone who lives in Africa is a non-being (Asante and Hall 2011; Dussel 1985, 3-6; Fanon 1963). It is also for this reason that those in the periphery are regarded as people who cannot think because they are non-beings. This is because when those in the centre claim that they can think - *ego cogito* (i.e. I think), they also insinuate that others cannot (Fanon 1963; Ramose 2003). As such, those in the centre felt justified to impose themselves on those in the periphery (Dussel 1985, 3-6; Fanon 1963). It is for this reason that this paper contends that colonisation was informed by the articulation that ‘I conquer, therefore I am the sovereign’ (Ramose 2003, 543). Dussel rightly points out that *ego conquiro* predates Rene Descartes’s articulation of the *ego cogito*. This implies that the Cartesian *cogito* (thinking) for modern European identity has to be understood against the background of an unquestioned ideal of self expression in the notion *ego conquiro* (Dussel 1996). Also, note that behind *ego conquiro* is the idea that ‘war is the origin of everything’. Dussel notes that by ‘everything’ one understands the order or system that world dominators use their power and armies to control the dominated. Dussel (1985, 1) further notes that ‘we are at war: a cold war for those who wage it; a hot war for those who suffer it; a peaceful coexistence for those who manufacture arms; and a bloody existence for those obliged to buy and use them’. This means that those in the periphery (the poor, non-Europeans and colonised) find themselves in a battlefield, a geography studied to destroy an enemy, a territory with fixed frontiers. This is different from the abstract idealisation of empty space as in Newton’s physics or the existential space of phenomenology (Dussel 1985, 1). Regarding the notion of space or spatiality, Dussel (1985, 2-3) says that the world is divided into two. It is divided into the centre, which is occupied by Europeans, and the periphery which is occupied by non-Europeans (like Africans). This spatial division raises questions like: ‘Are the Amerindians [i.e. non-European] Beings?’; and ‘Are they Europeans, and therefore rational animals?’ (Dussel 1985, 3). The theoretical response to these questions is less important. We are still suffering from the practical response. The Amerindians were regarded as suited for forced labour; if not irrational, then at least they were uncivilised, wild, under-developed, uncultured – because they did not have the culture of the centre (the Europeans) (Dussel 1985, 3). With regard to the ontology of colonisation, Dussel (1985, 3) points out that this ontology did not come from nowhere. It arose from a previous experience of domination over other persons – of cultural oppression over other worlds – which is rightly articulated by Ramose (2003, 543) when he says ‘I conquer, therefore I am the sovereign’. It is important to observe that for a very long time the centre has imposed itself on the periphery (Dussel 1985, 3). As a result of the imposition of the centre to the periphery; those in the periphery always direct

themselves towards the centre. According to Dussel (1985, 4) ‘Critical thought that arises from the periphery, including the social periphery, the oppressed classes, the *lumpen*, always ends by directing itself towards the center’. Thus, Dussel (1985, 4) states that those in the periphery (as a result of the centre being imposed on them) also end up thinking that the reality of the centre is the only reality. He argues that ‘Outside its [the centre’s] frontiers is nonbeing, nothing, barbarity, non-sense’.

## THE ONTOLOGY OF COLONISATION AND LAND DISPOSSESSION

We have seen that through the ontology of colonisation, the colonisers firstly conquered the territory of Africans by violently colonising them and their territory through among other things, the scramble for Africa (Mudimbe 1988). As a result of this territorial conquering through colonisation Africans were made pariahs in the land of their birth, as was evident in the passing of the Land Act of 1913 in South Africa (Lephakga 2013; Pheko 1984; Plaatje 2007). Colonisation also conquered the Being of Africans, that is their existence in connection with their land, which formed an integral part of their identity and faith central to the notion of belonging. Lephakga (2012b, 2-3) observes that the sense of belonging/attachment has the following defining attributes: 1) the experience of being valued, needed or important regarding other people, groups or environment; and 2) the experience of fitting in or being congruent with other people or the environment through shared or complementary characteristics. This paper also argues that apartheid<sup>1</sup> became a final seal to the conquering of the Being of the African. This emphasises the importance of territory, belonging and being African through attachment to the land. Also, it points out the consequences of disrupting (through colonisation) this belonging and being African through attachment to the land. Milligan (1998, 9) points out that when place attachment is disrupted, the individuals involved lose both a link to a past experienced as meaningful and a link to a future imagined as potentially meaningful. Furthermore, colonisation has disrupted an important connection between the African and the land. This paper argues that it was only through land dispossession that Africans were conquered and that colonisation came to its *eschata* (ultimate end) with the conquering of the Being of Africans. According to Lephakga (2012b), colonisation (i.e. the idea of designing and cultivating through the expansion of one territory to another) (Mudimbe 1988) which comes to its *eschata* with conquering, has disrupted the place attachment of Africans. Milligan (1998) further highlights the disruption of Africans’ attachment to their land, which is a known location for all the activities that have happened to an individual, and all experiences that comprise

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1 Thus, Maimela (1987, 4) rightly points out that apartheid, despite the name, is not a modern creation of current Afrikaner rulers. It has always existed, but the government (i.e. National Party-NP) carried it to its logical conclusion.

the interactional past of the site. When activities occur in a known location, that site will obtain an interactional past for the person who becomes linked to that past by virtue of having experienced occurrences in the same site as previous activities. Such a place becomes imbued with meaning because of the experiences an individual has had at the site and associates with it (Mudimbe 1998, 9). This points out how the conquering of being African must have had dire consequences for them. This is not only because Africans are attached to land, but it is in their nature to be protective of their territory, which forms an integral part of what makes them Africans. Thus, the conquering of Africans through land dispossession has stripped them of their natural functionality of protecting their territory and being African. As a result of colonisation (which resulted in the conquering of Africans) Africans were left in a state of being conquered or defeated. And this state (of being defeated) resulted in Africans becoming empty shells who accepted everything coming their way. Thus, Biko (2004, 31) rightly points out that the black man (African) has become a shell, a shadow of (a) man, completely defeated, drowning in his own misery, a slave, an ox bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity.

It is thus necessary to bear in mind that among Africans the idea of being conquered resulted in them being stripped of their Being, and this has had dire consequences for them. Nyamiti (1984, 16) states that, as a result of Africans being forced to neglect their ancestors who are in the land, their ancestors are angry with them. As a result of this, Africans were forced to transcend or even re-create themselves (Biko 2004). We re-emphasise that the Being of Africans 1) is deeply rooted in the land, and 2) the identity, the knowledge of being African, and the entire existence of Africans are deeply rooted in the land (Lephakga 2012b). This indicates how the expansion of Europe into non-European territories (which is what colonisation was simply based on) had dire consequences for Africans, especially that of alienating them from their African self, which is connected to the land. Mosoma (1991, 26) observes that for blacks land is sacred and central to their whole civilisation. It cannot be bought or sold, for it belongs to the living, the dead and the yet unborn. It cannot be ravaged and exploited beyond its capacity for renewal, since it is the living link between past memories and an expectant future in which the new generation will actively participate. This indicates the important link between the living Africans and the dead (referring to the ancestors and the yet unborn) and the next generation. Land dispossession forced Africans to neglect their ancestors and Nyamiti (1984, 16) points out that when ancestors are neglected or forgotten by their relatives, they are said to be angry with them and to send them misfortunes as punishment. Thus, this paper argues that the land dispossession project of the conqueror alienated the Africans from themselves and resulted in destructing Africans' state of being Africans (of the land). It is thus imperative to mention that at this final stage of colonisation, the Being of Africans goes through a process which makes it difficult to have self-consciousness, and this Being of Africans starts seeing itself through

the other (coloniser-conqueror) (Du Bois 2008). The idea here is that as a result of the conquering of the Being (the existence) of Africans, Africans were forced either to hate themselves (Asante and Hall 2011, 107-133) or to try by all means to flee from themselves (Lephakga 2012a). This is because the coloniser presented himself/herself as a benchmark of what it means to be a full human Being (with a capital B) contrary to a human *being* (with lowercase b) – it is vital to note that throughout the process of colonisation, the colonised were denied their humanity up to a point where they were left with no other option than to try and flee from being African and black (Fanon 1963).

## CONQUERING OF THE BEING OF AFRICANS THROUGH COLONISATION

‘Being is the very foundation of the system’ (Dussel 1985, 4). This is because Being denotes, among other things, the idea of being there or the presencing of the presence (Heidegger 2000). The very idea of existence or being in the world, needs to be understood against the background of the Dusselian notion of geopolitics of space, which deals with the centre *vis-à-vis* the periphery (Dussel 1985, 2-4). This is because the colonial system that has divided the world into the centre and the periphery decides who is human and who is not. Dussel (1985, 4) rightly points out that Aristotle, the great philosopher of the classical period, reared to accept slavery and pursue self-centred-ness, and that the Greeks were human. In his view, the European barbarians were not human, because they were unskilled; nor were Asians human, because they lacked strength and character; slaves were not human either; women were halfway human and children were only potentially human. The human Being par excellence is the free man of the *polis* of Hellas.

For the purpose of this paper, we will explore the ontology that developed within the centre, which is occupied by (European) Beings. Dussel (1985, 6) notes that power, domination and the centre are identical, regarded as above the colonies with other cultures, and above slaves of other skin colours. He further notes that the centre is, and the periphery is not. Where Beings reign, they reign and control the armies of Caesar, the emperor. Being is; Beings are what are seen and controlled. It is thus important to note that during the Greek civilisation, for instance Permenides – a Greek philosopher – once pronounced that ‘Being is; non-being is not’ (Copelston 1993, 48). So, Being relates to itself and to the universe; thus Dussel (1985, 4) proclaimed that ‘Being is the foundation of the system’. But, if we follow this proclamation by Dussel (1985, 4) and the system that has divided the world into the centre and the periphery, while also considering Permenides’ proclamation (see Copleston 1993, 48), then we can deduce that from an early stage the Greeks saw themselves as the centre and anyone outside was in the periphery (Dussel 1985). Therefore, Dussel (1985, 5) notes that: ‘Being is that which is Greek, the light of the Greek culture.

Being extends as far as the frontiers of Hellenism. Over the horizon is non-being, un-civilisation.' Also, he goes as far as to say that this sense of ontology is found in the political thought of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and the Stoics.

This article contends that the idea of conquering the Being of Africans through colonisation became possible only through land dispossession (Pheko 1984). This is because of the significant role that land plays in the making up of an African. Terreblanche (2002, 5-6) rightly points out that South Africa's history over the past 350 years is an unpleasant tale of intergroup conflict, violence, warfare and plunder. It is interesting to note that Terreblanche also points to conflicts, violence, warfare and plunder in his discussion of the special relationship between power, land and labour. This is because land is central to Africans and its protection is also central. Colonisers had to use violence to dispossess and colonise Africans. Asante and Hall (2011, 1) rightly ask: 'How does a person who is a member of a persecuted group, in the course of oppression, find common cause with the oppressor?' They posit that it is only through violence. Terreblanche (2002, 6) notes that each of the different ethnic, racial and/or language groups tried to enrich itself by robbing the others. If one considers the multitude of group conflicts and wars in South Africa during the past 350 years, one can distinguish certain patterns. One of the clearest patterns is that during the long period of European colonialism and imperialism, the colonial masters were mostly victors in group conflicts, and the indigenous population groups were mostly losers. Terreblanche (2002, 6) observes a second pattern, which is linked to the first, that in the post-colonial period local whites (the descendants of the settlers from erstwhile colonial Europe) were again (at least until 1974) mostly conquerors, and therefore in a position to enrich themselves, mostly at the cost of the indigenous people (Africans). The discussion on the conquering of the Being of Africans needs to be understood against this background.

The concepts of colonisation and colonialism are important for the purpose of understanding the notion of conquering (to take over) the Being of Africans in particular. This paper argues that the idea behind the colonisation of non-European territories was the expansion of Europe to non-European territories. Those involved in this expansion operated under the assumption that those non-European territories were either uncivilised and their occupants were uncivilised; thus they were lesser Beings, or at most those who looked like Beings (the other) (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 240-270; Stevens, Franchi and Swart 2006, 208-209). This expansion was done through cultivating and designing these non-European territories into European satellites (Mudimbe 1988, 14). The occupants of these non-European territories, who were now conquered, were expected to conform to the standards of 'being human' as set by the conquerors. This resulted in Africans being forced to see themselves through the other (the conqueror). It is against this background that Du Bois (2008) observed (though reflecting about the Negroes in America) that after the Egyptian and the Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort



of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in the American world. This is a world that yields him or her no true self-consciousness, but only lets him or her see himself or herself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's 'self' through the eyes of the other, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.

Following Du Bois's observation of double-consciousness, two-ness involves two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, and two warring ideals in one dark body, though Du Bois (2008) observes that despite this feeling of two-ness within the conquered, there is a dogged strength which keeps the conquered from being torn asunder. He emphasises that throughout the process of colonisation, which eventually comes to its *eschata* through conquering, the coloniser assumes the status of Being, which is the yardstick of being human. This the coloniser does by presenting himself or herself as civilised with a right God and religion (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 240-270; Ramose 2005). It is also imperative to note that this is done through universalising the Being of the coloniser. As such, any act or Being which is different from that of the coloniser, is regarded as being inferior or barbaric (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 240-270; Ramose 2005). So, it is important to observe that throughout this process of expanding Europe to non-European territories, non-Europeans (Africans) were taken through a process which strips them of their 'selves' (Being) or they were made to hate their 'selves' (Asante and Hall 2011). The expanding process created a *thee* territory and a nation of *thee* Beings. This is because the coloniser, through the process of stripping the colonised of their 'selves', created a different class of Beings. For example, in South Africa there was a distinction made between Europeans (non-natives) and non-Europeans (natives). Mamdani (2002, 34) points out that the apartheid state spoke the language of rights to Europeans (the white population) and separated the native population (blacks) into tribal groups. Each tribal group was administered under a separate set of laws to enforce customs. Rights and customs were two different and contradictory languages: the former claimed to circumscribe to power, the latter to enable it – that is power. The former claimed to be a rule of law; the latter claimed the legitimacy of custom and tradition. This resulted in the Fanonian zones of Being and non-being with the Europeans (non-natives or the white population) occupying the former (the zone of Being) and non-Europeans (the native and the black population) occupying the latter (the zone of non-being) (Fanon 1963).

It is also necessary to mention the rationalisation of how colonisation comes to its ultimate end with the conquering of the Being of those who are being conquered. This resulted in creating two zones of Beings, namely the zone of Being, which is occupied by the coloniser (the white population or non-natives) and the zone of non-being, which is occupied by the colonised (the black population or the natives). These zones of Being create a different place where the occupants of these different

zones stay. This aims to differentiate, on the one hand between the Europeans and non-Europeans and; on the other hand between full human Beings (with a capital B) and those who only look like and have some characteristics of human beings (with lowercase b). These differentiations make the colonised (non-Europeans) to desire everything about the coloniser. Thus, Biko (2004, 31) rightly points out that his (the African/black) heart yearns for the comfort of white society and makes him blame himself. Fanon (1963, 30) notes that the look that makes the native turn to the settler's town is a look of lust, a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of possession – all manners of possession: to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in the settler's bed, with his wife if possible. Against this background, Fanon (1963, 30) rightly states that the zone where the native lives is not comparable to the zone inhabited by the settlers (the colonisers). The settler's town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly-lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the wastes, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you're never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes, although the streets of his town are clean and even without holes or stones. The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easy-going town; its belly is full of good things. The settler's town is a town of white people. Fanon (1963, 30) further notes that the town belonging to the colonised is a place of ill fame, of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how they die there. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, meat, shoes, coal and light.

According to Mudimbe (1984, 14), the notions of colonisation and colonialism basically mean to organise and to arrange (though it must be mentioned that these notions are derived from the Latin word *colere*, which means to cultivate or to design). But then it becomes problematic to organise and arrange through expanding your territory to another territory without the consent of the occupants of that territory. So, Mudimbe (1984, 14) rightly observes that these words 'colonisation' and 'colonialism' do not reflect their peaceful connotations in practice. They reflect that in expanding Europe through conquering, the colonialist did not only cultivate and design non-European territories into European constructs, but they also cultivated and designed the (Being) inhabitants of those non-Europeans territories into European constructs. This paper argues that the Being of African people has been destructed for the purpose of Europeanising it. It also argues that through the process of Europeanising the non-European territories, non-European territories were controlled and administered in Europe through, for instance, governors. The result of Europeanising these non-European territories was that the occupants of these territories were forced to be like their colonisers. Thus, Fanon (1952, 3) rightly observes that the black man (African) wants to be white. He further points out that when the Negro (African-Black) makes contact with the white world, a certain sensitising action takes place. If his psychic structure is weak, one observes

a collapse of the ego. The black man stops behaving as an actional person. The goal of his or her behaviour will be the other (in the guise of the white man), for the other alone can give him or her worth.

According to Maldonado-Torres (2007, 240-270) '[Colonisation and] Colonialism denotes a political and economic [and spiritual] relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation which makes such a nation an empire'. However, this paper contends that the notions of colonisation/colonialism, which result in the conquering of the Being of Africans, should not only be viewed as the conquering of the economic and political sovereignty (i.e. being independent) of a particular territory and/or country. Colonisation/colonialism should also be viewed in its entirety as the conquering of: 1) the **Being** of the people of the territory or the territory itself; 2) the **power** of the people of the territory or the territory itself; and 3) the **knowledge** of the people of the territory or the territory itself. This is because it is in the nature of colonisation, after its so-called demise, to continue to hold a grip on its former colonies through controlling, among other things, the Being, the power and the knowledge (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 240-270).

For the purpose of this paper, the concept of conquering a Being is understood as a process that destructs traces of the existence of those who are being conquered (the colonisers were using a computer-like strategy – that of deleting everything and thus installing something new). This includes destructing the history of those who are being conquered, and the worldview of those who are being conquered. Regarding history, the conquered are always told of a history of being uncivilised, primitive and barbaric (Mudimbe 1984). They are also told of a history of being a defeated people. Thus, Mudimbe (1984, 14) argues about how the history of Africa is presented, especially that of a Hobbesian picture of a pre-European African in which there was no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continued fear and danger of violent death. The history of their existence is presented as that of underdeveloped people. Thus, the process of conquering takes the conquered through a route of being disconnected to everything that makes them a people, and it instils doubt in their psyche. This doubt includes the doubt of own existence and history and results in the conquered feeling like a people without a history (Hegel and Hoffmeister 1975).

The conquering of a Being is not a painless process. It is in the nature of conquering to enforce your design and cultivation of Europeanising the non-European territories through force. But contrary to enforcing, there is also a natural reaction from those who are being conquered. That is, the conquered are always resistant throughout the process of being conquered. Asante and Hall (2011, 1) argue that 'humans are naturally opposed to bondage; victims who are subjected to it [bondage] are thus forced to endure psychological and emotional torment capable of compromising their human spirit in order to tolerate an otherwise unnatural state'. It is essential to note that the conquering of a Being is a violent process on its own. This points out

that the conquered are always subjected to violence for the purpose of forcing them to adhere and find common cause with their conqueror. Asante and Hall (2011, 1) pose the following question, which is imperative to understand the process that the conquered go through: ‘How does a person who is a member of a persecuted group, in the cause of oppression, find common cause with the oppressor?’ This question is imperative because it remains mysterious that the conquered/oppressed people always, as a result of the conquering process, are forced to accept and even normalise their situations. Asante and Hall (2011, 1) further argue that: ‘The psychology of human bondage is complex, and victims do not cooperate with their captor unless those victims are subjected to some form of violence, either by threat or physical attack.’

This systematic process (of conquering) creates structural and institutional conditions to perpetuate the notions of being a victor and being defeated. Being a victor and being defeated are used interchangeably, because this paper argues that being a victor results in those who have managed to conquer others, to assume the status of being rational Beings, chosen Beings and special Beings. On the contrary, being defeated results in those who are defeated to assume a status of being sub-beings, irrational beings, the others and inferior beings. Therefore, conquering creates two interchangeable processes which the conquered and the conqueror go through. For the conquered, they go through a process of being emptied and conquered. That is, they go through a process of: 1) losing the knowledge of themselves and knowledge of their ancestry; 2) losing the status of being human (i.e. being full human); and 3) dispossession. The conquered also go through a process of being re-socialised. That is, they go through a process of: 1) assuming the status of being irrational beings; 2) assuming the status of being inferior for the sake of the superior; 3) fleeing from being who you were prior to colonisation, and thus; (4) going through a process of wanting to be like the conqueror. The conqueror also goes through a process of being a conqueror, namely: 1) Being the superior at the expense of the being of the inferior; 2) being a rational Being who exists for the purpose of being the guardian of the conquered who have assumed the status of being irrational beings, and (3) being a chosen nation and special Beings. That is, Beings who possess soul that is ordained by God/deity contrary to the inferior whose souls lack this special ordination. The conqueror also goes through the process of being re-socialised. That is, he or she goes through the process of being re-socialised by their condition of being superior Beings.

## CONQUERING OF THE BEING OF AFRICANS THROUGH EPISTEMICIDE AND PROSELYTISATION

At this stage it is crucial to observe *how* colonisers as self-appointed heirs of reason and a soul ordained by God managed to conquer the Being of Africans as the colonised.

Also, it is crucial to replicate that the logic of colonisers, being the heirs of reason and souls ordained by God, got through to Africans only after land dispossession. With the land Africans knew who they were, had a good relationship with their ancestors, and everything was going well for them (according to their expectations) (Lephakga 2012a; Lephakga 2012b; Pheko 1984). In order for colonisers to convince them otherwise (away from the idea of conquering) the Being of Africans through reason and proselytisation needs to be understood. The concept of being (existence) within Europeans was heavily influenced by their ideas of being 'special Beings' contrary to those they must conquer, because of the questionability of their being human. This was obviously influenced by their long European history of being rational Beings and Beings whose soul God has ordained. This idea was based on the pseudo-understanding that those who possess reason/rationality are special Beings chosen by God. They are chosen guardians of those who unfortunately lack the capacity to possess rationality/reason and thus lack the soul that is ordained by God; as such they assume the status of being the other. This logic morally justified how to treat those who lack rationality/reason and soul given by God. We must note that the Europeans became the self-appointed heirs of the right to reason (Ramose 2005; Santos 2014) and the right to possess a soul that is ordained by God (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 240-270; Ramose 2005).

The thought behind the logic of colonisers possessing rationality and souls that are ordained by God, contrary to those who lack the capacity to rationalise and lack souls that are ordained by God, was mainly to render an opinion that some groups of people possess a certain special status (of being human) contrary to others (who look like human beings but are not full human Beings). This logic was mainly popular in a Greek society where they had free men (those whose intellect overpowered their body and/or emotions) and the slaves whose intellect (if they had any) could not overpower their body or and emotions. Hence free men in a Greek society are expected to be guardians of the slaves (who are supposedly irrational 'Beings') and this meant that some enjoyed a special status (Aristotle 1962). To understand that, the logic of rationality, as a distinctive factor in defining who was human and who was not, is based predominantly on the construction of a Greek society which included the following Beings: 1) free men, 2) slaves, 3) children, and 4) women. Note that slaves, children and women are at the same level in terms of development stages, based on the development of rationality in Beings (Aristotle 1964). There is the possibility for children to graduate from this developmental stage, contrary to women and slaves, who do not have a chance to graduate through some stage in the developmental processes. Hence their reason or rationality status remains the same. Ramose (2005, 1) argues that the 'Aristotelian belief that man is a rational animal did not include the Africans and women for that matter'.

As a result of the so-called status of being rational Beings (Beings who can think, contrary to those who cannot think) and Beings whose souls have been

ordained, they have the right to conquer those who are irrational and who have no soul due to their wrong religious beliefs. Therefore, Ramose notes that: 'Since Aristotle, the finger pointed to reason as the distinctive and the decisive criterion of the definition of human Being.' But the notion of reason or rationality as a criterion of defining 'human' has deep philosophical and religious underpinnings. According to Asante and Hall (2011, 3): 'The effort to influence the African – that is, to make the African a slave and to groom the house Negro – had philosophical antecedents in Europe; it was something grounded in the religion and literature of a great deal of European thought.' It must be noted that these authors refer to the process which led to the enslavement of Africans, which this paper equates to conquering. Also, the idea behind reason or rationalisation as being the distinctive and decisive criterion of the definition of human, was based on the pseudo-idea that reason or rationalisation can be universalised, and that sameness regarding reason or rationalisation was the definite pointer to one being a human Being or not. It is beneath this pseudo-universalisation of reason or rationality that the idea of one human race is based, though within this universalisation or sameness of reason or rationality it was always understood that there would be cultural differences. The point here is to show how the pseudo-idea of the universalisation or sameness of reason or rationality gave moral justification for the conquering of some by some (Ramose 2005, 13).

In relation to conquering, and being and reason, it is important to note that those who have assumed a position of being heirs of reason make it difficult for (the) other(s) to possess reason or rationality. Hence Gordon (2011) engages 'Reasoning in the Black' notes. For instance, in relation to being and reason W.E.B. Du Bois argues that the Negro is always a problem because reason or rationality puts him or her in a negative. Gordon (2011) further notes in Fanon (1963) that a Negro/black who supposedly took a position of being a rational Being is always put in a negative by reason, simply because those who are supposedly heirs of reason always move the goal posts of reason every time a Negro and/or black comes closer to being a rational Being according to their standards. Gordon further argues in Fanon (1963) that 'if reason continues to refuse him (Fanon), he (Fanon) faces the contradictions of reason being in a word unreasonable. If he (Fanon) attempts to force reason's submission, he (Fanon) will be subordinating reason, which would make him, unreasonable. He (Fanon) faces then the task of struggling with reason *reasonably*' (Gordon 2011). It is therefore befitting to note that reason or rationality and/or sameness in reason or rationality was used as a powerful tool to give moral justification for conquering and thus using non-ethics of war (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 240-270). Asante and Hall (2011, 3) make a very interesting assertion when they argue that: '...without apparent reason, blackness itself was viewed as denigration in all facets of Western civilisation. Leading European intellectuals such as Hegel and Voltaire expressed their negative opinions about Africans and blackness without critique from their peers.' Similarly, Gordon (2011) notes in relation to reason or rationality as being a

tool for conquering: 'The ancestors of the people who today we call Africans had no reason to think of themselves as either African or black prior to the emergence of a series of historical events that fell upon them as if out of the sky.'

Within the pseudo-notion of sameness of reason or rationality cultural difference was tolerated, but only so far as they were not in conflict with the intent of colonisation and Christianisation. But if cultural difference was in conflict with the intent of colonisation and Christianisation, then they would be eliminated. Therefore, they based their idea of conquering and dominating on the background of the sameness of reason or rationality. According to Ramose (2005, 13): 'Christianity justified its domination and elimination of indigenous African religions by appeal to Jesus Christ's instruction: go ye and teach all nations. Christianity or pseudo-usage of Christianity became a powerful tool for colonialisation.' He further asserts that: 'So it is that colonisation and Christianity assumed epistemological dominance crystallising in their unilaterally conferred, though no less questionable right to determine and define the meaning of experience, knowledge and truth on behalf of the indigenous African.'

The pseudo-notion of sameness or universalisation of reason/rationality gave moral justification to all voyagers who happened to be conquerors and who used pseudo-Christianity to do whatever they were doing in the parts of the world and were planning to conquer. The idea behind the pseudo-notion of sameness regarding reason or rationality was either part of their commitment to ignorance or an intentional tool to be used for conquering (Ramosé 2005, 13). The idea of conquering is informed by the understanding that the supremacy of reason and/or rationality defines who is human and who is not human. Because of this we argue that those who are supposedly irrational or lack reason, must be under the guardian of those who are rational or those who can reason (Aristotle 1962).

Undoubtedly the mission behind the voyages was conquering, whether for the Christianisation of the world through the usage of reason or rationality and/or biology which they believed should be universal. Their primary task was to conquer different parts of the world under the pretext that they were Christianising the whole world. The Cartesian philosophy captures this notion of conquering accurately when Rene Descartes declared that 'I think, therefore I am' (contrary to I cannot think, therefore I am not) which came at the background of the notion 'I conquer therefore I am'. The idea behind the Cartesian philosophy, when applied to conquering, is based on the use of reasoning or rationality being the determining factor to decide who is human and who is not human. So, those who can think, according to this Cartesian philosophy, have the right to conquer those who cannot think, due to the implausibility of their humanity (Maldonado-Torres 207, 240-270). Reason or rationality determines who is human and who is not. In this regard Ramose (2005) notes that a difference in rationality would be regarded as just mere irrationality, which only means one thing: others look like human Beings but they are not. So, in their (voyagers) encounters

with other Beings, they encountered different Beings. These Beings looked like human Beings in their appearance, but some of their actions distinguished them from real human Beings. Though they walked like human Beings, though they had the same reproductive systems or desires, their distinguishing factor was that their reason or intellect appeared not to have the capacity to overpower their emotions or actions and/or they had no reasoning capacity (Aristotle 1962). Because of the difference of rationality between the voyagers and the encountered, this proved that they appeared to be human Beings but they were not full human Beings. Thus the notion of otherness was used to refer to them (Ramosé 2005, 13). It is for this reason that J.M. Coetzee, a novelist, refers to a series of disturbing depictions of racial otherness which says: 'The local natives have everything in common with the dumb cattle, barring their human nature...[they] are handicapped in their speech, clucking like turkey-cocks' (Stevens et al. 2006, 205).

The voyagers' encounter with the Beings, whom they declared to be other Beings or in fact sub-humans, and their biology and spirituality obviously being below reason, played a crucial role in affirming or denying the human Being-ness of these human Beings. Ramosé refers to the comments of Isaac La Peyrere, a French writer, a Calvinist and a Catholic convert who lived in the Netherlands, and whom he (Ramosé) regarded as a well-known founder of religious spiritual racism. La Peyrere denied that those they referred to as the 'other' were created by the same 'God' who created the voyagers (Ramosé 2005, 17). The denial of the human Being-ness of the 'other' is interestingly based both on spirituality and rationality, hence La Peyrere argues that 'the God who created Adam and Eve could not have been and was not the creator of the Africans...'. La Peyrere further questions the souls of the 'other' or sub-human when he argues that 'if these other creatures had any soul at all, it certainly could not be the same as that of the descendants of Adam and Eve'. Thus, Ramosé (2005, 17) argues that: 'In this way not only biology but spirituality which affirmed the myth that "Man is a rational animal" was not spoken of the African.' The pre-Adamist doctrine of La Peyrere made the boundary between the rational and sub-human animals much more lucid.

J.M. Coetzee further refers to a series of disturbing depictions of racial otherness when regarding the Khoi-San: '...their eating of unwashed intestines, their use of animal fat to smear their bodies, their habit of wrapping dried entrails around their neck...their inability to conceive of God...many of these items...constitute some more obvious differences between the Hottentot and the [West] European' (Stevens et al. 206, 205-206). Therefore, the idea of difference as mentioned by J.M. Coetzee gave the voyagers or colonisers (i.e. Jan Van Riebeeck and this crew) moral justification to conquer as a sign of becoming the guardians of those they encountered in their conquest expeditions of Africa. This is because, as already noted, reason or rationality informed the humanity or non-humanity of others. This meant that those



who had a different rationality or reason would exist under the benevolence of those who can reason or rationalise.

## CONCLUSION

This paper gives historical argument and demonstration on how the Being of Africans was conquered through colonisation (that idea of cultivating and designing non-European into European satellites). To be specific, this was the idea of expanding one territory to another with the aim of transferring the sovereignty of a nation to another nation; thus making that nation an empire. Colonisation, which manifested itself, among other things, through land dispossession, epistemicide and proselytisation resulted in the conquering of the Being of Africans. Africans are closely rooted in their land, their identity is rooted in the land, their Being (existence) is rooted in the land. Therefore, as a result of land dispossession and the idea of Europeanising non-European territories like South Africa, the Africans were stripped of their African self, which was understood as being within the land or together with the land. Land dispossession made it possible for the colonisers to conquer the Being of Africans through reason and religion. It was only possible after land dispossession, which left Africans in a state of being defeated, that colonisers managed to impose the idea that colonisers possessed rationality and souls that are ordained by God, and thus are special Beings or full human Beings. Reason was used together with religion to prove who was human and who was not. This was done through convincing themselves (the colonisers) given the influence of some historical backgrounds (e.g. the Greek background) that those who can rationalise or who possess (rationality) reason, are free or noble men and thus full human Beings (contrary to those who lack rationality/reason but look like human Beings). This was also done through convincing themselves (the colonisers) – given their religious background – that they possess a soul that is ordained by God, contrary to those (the conquered) whose soul was either not ordained by God or by a wrong God.

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