



**Epitome : International Journal
of Multidisciplinary Research**

ISSN : 2395-6968

**In Search of a Hybrid World: Rethinking Eurocentric Conception of Primitivism: a
study of Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness***



Dr. Tse Valery Anye,

Assistant Lecturer,
University of Dschang,
E-mail: tsevalery7@gmail.com

Abstract

This study is an attempt to deconstruct the Eurocentric conception of primitivism as it examines the inter human relationship between the whites and native South Africans. The paper reveals the stereotypical classification of the natives by the whites as wild and primitive as a result of their indigenous cultures, customs and traditional practices. The stereotypical consideration of the blacks was a strategy which aimed at subjugating the natives, thereby creating a fertile ground for domination. The study stems from the premise that the whites who considered the blacks as primitive, and thus, need to be redeemed from primitivism, are instead being suffocated from their sophisticated cultures due to the effects of modernisation and thus, are rather the ones in need of redemption through the elements of the indigenous culture which are still pure and have not been adulterated by socio-ideological and economic factors. The whites had assimilated the cultures of the

natives to primitivism and therefore seek to redeem this uncivilised set by teaching their cultures. This is because, from the colonialist standpoint, domesticating a group is enabling them to move from primitivism to civilisation, and the European civilising mission was to be achieved through Christianity and the teaching of English. However, time has proven the futility of the civilising mission as the whites are now returning to the remotest areas of the African continent which had once been considered as “the heart of darkness” to enjoy the peace that reigns, commune with pure nature and partake in the sacred rituals of the natives, as a means to redeem themselves from the excesses of globalisation. The Heart of Redness presents tensions and divisions in South Africa in the colonial era as a result of the racist discourses ascribed on to the natives which caused them to believe in their claimed primitive nature, and backward cultures, creating room for easy colonisation, and the hardship, torture and

torment which followed. However, we argue that the whites who considered the blacks as primitive due to their cultural practices, rights and rituals, are now turning to these same practices as a means of obtaining peace, comfort, and fulfillment in pure nature as an escape route from the devastating consequences of globalisation. This paper, thus, questions the Eurocentric idea of primitivism and redemption, as the westerners who considered the Africans as primitive rather find redemption here in Africa because Africans cultures are still pure. The analysis demonstrates that even though some blacks in contemporary South

Africa still consider aspects of their cultures as marks of shame and primitivism, Mda shifts into the past to copy those aspects of the indigenous cultures which are gradually being rejected by youths in the contemporary era as prerequisite for the forging of an ideal African identity which can redeem the world from its present predicaments.

Keywords

primitivism, racist/colonialist ideologies, redemption, resistance, hybridity

