

James Chico  
Professor Brook Stanton  
An Oasis of Order: How Cultural Rhythms Organize Space and Time

## **Abstract**

The validity of mapping cultural time through space is a debated topic among scholars in geography and sociology. One point of contention is whether temporal domains exist theoretically as an academic area of thought or empirically as an explicitly expressed trait in cultural data. To provide evidence in support of the latter, I will proceed in analyzing the ancestor cults of Sub-Saharan Africa. In this paper, I argue that these ancestor cults delineate spatial domains corresponding to different theoretical time structures, producing a distinct cultural time topology. Firstly, I show how their spiritual beliefs relate to the perception of existential disorder in the environment. Then, through the analysis of everyday cultural rhythms and their relationship to movement, I describe how the ritualistic locality of these ancestor cults has established an observable dynamic of rhythmic time and space. Theorists like Edensor and Lefebvre substantiate this concept by conveying how the introduction of localized order in the flow of experience constitutes the practical functionality of rhythmic space-time. Ultimately, I categorize the temporalities that ancestor cults actively establish through regions of space: sacred territories are defined by the continuity of circular time and the surrounding bush is governed by a disjunctive linear time. This spatial dichotomy provides evidence in support of anthropologically observable domains of cultural time and refutes the notion that this concept is a heuristic contrivance.

Rhythms and cycles are generally defined as regularly repeated patterns, and in academic analysis they are treated as forms of time reckoning. Exact reoccurrences are predictable experiences that, along with allowing humans to keep time, catalyze temporal understanding and familiarity. In daily life, an individual functions by consciously performing a multitude of social rhythms such as following train schedules or watching punctual broadcasts of nightly television programs. These highly expressed patterns in the flow of experience eventually begin to mingle with the perception of cultural identity in general. Edensor explains this phenomenon by arguing that the repetition of everyday life in the long term “greatly contributes to a structure of feeling, a sense that emerges out of the most delicate and least tangible parts of our activity that generates a communal way of seeing the world in consistent terms” (8). In effect, the rhythmic beats of

society can be viewed as organizations of time through the solidarity of experience. Since the functionality of organized time unifies action across society, the natures of these temporal cycles are subsequently defining to the culture at large. Bruneau for example refers to sociocultural rhythms as “cultural time” (100) in support of this claim. The outcome is a well established paradigm in this area of academia in which cultural analysis is saturated with discussions of the structured temporalities known as rhythms, cycles, and patterns.

In addition to being a culturally representative existential dimension with respect to time, cyclicity also has a close association with space. Rhythms and cycles are predominantly linked to discrete locations as summarized by the idea that “every rhythm implies the relation of a time with a [specific] space” (Lefebvre 230). This thought can be intuitively derived from the fact that landscapes serve as reference points in the formation of daily routines. Depending on environmental conditions and available resources, rhythmic compatibility varies drastically from place to place. As mentioned earlier, everyday routines and cycles form the basis of cultural time because they entail a unified experiential organization of temporality. Therefore, if these patterns differ considerably through space, cultural temporality also varies through that area of space. In terms of everyday tribal life for example, “tasks such as farming, dancing, ritual, are marked by regular paths and points of spatial and temporal intersection which routinize action in space and collectively constitute the time-geographies,” which establishes the idea that fundamental characterizations of use and functionality in different places inherently differentiate cultural time through space (Edensor 8). This introduces the idea of temporal domains, delineated through the plethora of ways time can be experientially organized.

To elaborate, in any culture and/or level of social organization, different forms of time reckoning can coexist within the same context, establishing what can be thought of as temporal

domains. In his overview of time-space in academic analysis, Dodgshon says that many scholars theorize that “we live in a world of multiple temporalities, one in which the nature of time and how it is experienced can vary not only between societies but across them,” (1) meaning that the application of different time structures can be mapped out in a sort of time topology. As hinted by the syntax of this quote, while different systems of time reckoning are obvious in macroscopic views of society, the existence of simultaneous variations in a single culture is less readily apparent. An explanation for this phenomenon can be found in the previously described relationship between space characters and rhythmic content. Based on how one surveys the functional landscape, customized routines become attached to that place. These everyday rhythms are fundamental components of one’s perception of space in the context of time. This argument agrees with the statement that “space is understood as physical and social landscape which is imbued with meaning in everyday place-bound social practices and emerges through processes that operate over varying temporal scales” (Saar, Palang 6). In societies, the uniformity of action or inaction found within the spaces of everyday life constitutes the nature of temporal understanding in those places. Variation in spatial characteristics results in the locality of multiple time structures that can span across a single society.

A refutary perspective on this issue is offered by Tiit Remm with his theory regarding the ambiguous role of time in the spatial metalanguage of academic analysis. Remm argues that the scholarly concept of cultural time has an unsteady connection with the concept of cultural space. He arrives at this conclusion through a critique of texts belonging to three prominent theorists in sociocultural space theory. In direct opposition to the ideas presented in the preceding paragraph, Remm summarizes his contention by saying that while “[t]ime, for a social (and cultural) researcher, in the context of spatial models could in principle be a feature included in the

explication of that space or as an equal counterpart or another model of organization” (398), whereas in actuality “spatial models can have their heuristic value in describing changes of social and cultural issues in a historical perspective” (408). In other words, cultural space is inherently laced with a dimension of historicity, and any attempt to articulate a framework of cultural time in that space is an analytical contrivance. Further, a historical perspective of space driven by the description of changes in its characters offers a pseudo-temporality according to Remm, as further explained by the idea that “time is an external condition of social space made manifest in that space through the recognition of the historicity of capital, objects, and habitus” (402). In sum, while the concept of cultural time is accepted in his argument, he maintains that it is incompatible with theoretical domains of space. This stands in direct contrast to theorists like Bruneu who explicitly convey the spatial multiplicities of cultural time, as seen in a point that “[c]ultural time concerns the unique and characteristic temporal environments of particular sociocultural groupings” (100).

One crucial idea that effectively bridges towards this present paper’s thesis and supportive case study is the idea that the “modal temporal perspective of a society reflects and affects a modal philosophy of values pertaining to other behavior” (101). If Bruneu’s theory is correct, one should be able to observe cultural worldviews varying distinctly across spaces characterized by different experiential organizations of time, because evidence shows that cultures are defined by these temporal solidarities. In other words, the culturally perceived dynamic of contrasting existential rhythms in two different spaces should be congruently reflected in contrasting performances of those spaces, providing evidence showing structures of cultural temporality mapped out through space in their worldview. The ancestral belief system in Africa provides an adequate case study through which this theory can be tested and supported.

The most fundamental doctrines of these ancestor cults are defined by the selective application of time structure in different areas of space. Specifically, they actively establish circular time in their territory and linear time in the vast uninhabited bush surrounding it. In this paper, I argue that this practice of spatio-temporal differentiation is the element that gives rise to the behavior of absolute cultural locality and migration resistance, displaying a concrete link between their organizations of temporality and their performances of space.

For the vast majority of cultures dispersed throughout Africa, familial reckoning has evolved from an act of respect into an elaborate system of existential dogma. In African anthropology, there appears to be a consensus among scholars regarding highly expressed patterns in all Sub-Saharan ancestor cults. Fortes articulates the presence of these sweeping commonalities when he writes that “comparatively viewed, African ancestor worship has a remarkably uniform structural framework,” suggesting that the multiplicity of tribal units practicing ancestor worship in Africa can be condensed into a single generalized culture for analytical purposes (122). While specifics like rituals and names may differ, the core beliefs, worldviews, and existential goals of these ancestor cults are rigidly constant throughout the whole region. The two most readily apparent trends in the generalized view of African ancestry are agriculture and geographical locality. For example, consider the language used in the opening descriptions given by Bond and McCall in their studies of the Yombe and Ohafia ancestor cults respectively. Bond introduces the former by saying that “[t]he Yombe have ancestor cults, a form of religious belief and practice that is widespread in African societies. It is common among many agricultural populations” (4), and McCall emphasizes a similar aspect of ancestral society when he says that “ancestors remain a vigorous element in the lives of Ohafia people, and indeed of

people in many rural communities throughout Africa” (256). These quotes indicate the ubiquity of ancestor worship specifically in settled agricultural societies.

Furthermore, the unifying definition of African ancestor cults is the worship of deceased kin in a sacred territory for the purposes of overcoming the fleeting aspects of reality. In these tribes, it is believed that death is nothing more than a graduation of the soul from the constraints of the natural body, and in ghost like states the deceased remain active in the world of the living (McCall 255). In other words, the practice of ancestor worship serves a profound spiritual function: it allows the individual to overcome transience as conveyed by the description that “[a]s a form of religion, the ancestor cult is oriented toward this world and helps to maintain and secure an enduring social order” (Bond 4). Even though there is an eternal existence awaiting every individual, the true thesis of religious reckoning in this context is cultural survival. Specifically, it is evident that place identity is centralized in this pursuit of transcendence. The requirement of long term establishment in one domestic space is explicitly conveyed in the ancestral dogma, and hinted at by the observation that “the order of ritual performance reflected the domains of the ancestor spirits. The chiefdom ancestor cult was based in territory, anchored in locality, and restricted in jurisdiction” (Bond 8). This description of religious place attachment is supported by a primary source written by Hersak, who notes that ancestors of the Kwilu are revered as terrestrial spirits associated with the entirety of a cultural domain (623). This data shows how the domestic territory is viewed as the land of the ancestors, a distinction between ancestral and natural space that has implications on their religious structure. Turton notes that deceased ancestors are believed to be spatially confined to the land housing the culture, and as a result its living members must remain fixed in this location in order to gain spiritual continuity with the afterlife (262). In total, these ancestor cults believe that they live in an enclosed spatial

domain of transcendence situated in a surrounding world of natural transience. Accordingly, migration is understood as spiritual alienation from one's ancestors, much in the same way it is a physical departure from the place designated as the ancestral epicenter. Permanent travel through the foreign lands of nature is explicitly forbidden within the cult.

To explain why resisting physical migration is such a prominent aspect of African ancestor worship, it is evident that the unstable environment of the African bush plays an important role in cultural development. Since the goal of African ancestor worship is to supersede the realm of human time, one might wonder why spatial restriction in the present and in the afterlife is considered an imperative element of this religious process. The motivation for localizing a method of temporal transcendence becomes readily apparent when one places these cultures within a proper environmental context. The vast expanses and diverse topographies of Sub-Saharan Africa are unilaterally characterized by unique variations in climate patterns, creating a chatoyant atmosphere that is the subject of loathing in resident ancestor cults. Environmental scholar Gregory Maddox summarizes this aspect of the African climate when he writes:

African environmental history must account for the extreme variability of African environments across time and space. As with other continental landmasses, Africa contains a diversity of landscapes. However, in Africa the extremes of variability are often found within a short distance. Similarly, Africa has witnessed extremes of climate variability along any time scale one wishes to choose (2).

Nature's influence on cultural development can be observed in tribes living in extreme climates all around the world. However, the African context is unique in that its conditions are unfavorable predominantly because of its inconsistency; it shuffles between many harsh climates

at random intervals, a fickleness which greatly complicates its habitability. This reality has thus impeded the development of comprehensive methods for fully utilizing the natural landscape in agricultural societies. For example, Maddox highlights their continuing struggle towards adaptation when he says that “environments capable of hosting trypanosomiasis continue to mark settlement and land-use patterns in Africa,” in reference to a livestock pathogen that thrives within a known set of environmental conditions (41). Although the ecology is understood by these tribes, the inconstant shifts of the environment spark unpredictable population blooms of these parasitic bacteria, a reality that continues to shape cultural geography to this day. These facts culminate in abnormally high mortality statistics across the region, which is why Bond says that it is important to note the magnitude of death in this context before exploring the interplay of culture and nature (3). If the goal of ancestor worship is to overcome transience, then the cults of Sub-Saharan Africa have a formidable opposition in their inhabited space that inevitably structures their culturally transcendent beliefs, a fact that is observed through the bush’s role as a spiritual antipode to the village in their worldview.

As noted in the first section, the idea that daily rhythms are associated with space is a general principle that applies in all cultural contexts. When one also considers the act of movement and/or settlement, it adds a new layer of complexity to this relationship. In this section, I analyze how the absolute geographical stagnation of ancestral culture has fostered the development of rhythmic space.

According to theorists in this school of thought, rhythms create certainty in the flow of experience by organizing time. Underlying the monotony that characterizes a rhythmic lifestyle is the idea that “[e]veryday life is constituted out of a multitude of habits, schedules and routines that lend to it an ontological predictability and security” (Edensor 8). Lefebvre likewise says that

the experiential coherence obtained by these governing rhythms form a solid foundation for civility and culture (230). Through overarching repetitions a sense of expectation and comfort is formed, thereby propagating temporal stability to social stability. This is favorable for ancestor cults because, even with the capability of altering the landscape for cultivation, they feel highly susceptible to nature, and diluted forms of power “often seek rhythmic conformity and spatio-temporal consistency” to combat it (May, Thrift 4). The ontological comfort gained by rhythmic time explains the behavior of spatial stagnation prominent in these ancestor cults.

Hence, settlement develops a rhythmic space of order, which in this context establishes a sense of assurance against the fickle realities of Sub-Saharan Africa and its disordered space. In addition to organizing experiential time, Edensor writes that cycles are “means by which ordered space is marked out from disorder” (8). In agreement, sociologists of time such as Crang and Molz consider the act of traveling as a break in experiential cyclicity (Molz 342, Crang 365). These theorists define traveling as movements through new and unfamiliar places, meaning that their idea of cyclicity disruption does not apply to domestic movement. According to this theory, the fact that ancestor cults experience daily rhythms within a marginalized area of space implies a marginalized area of order. Cultural data vindicates this analytical concept: the settled ancestor cults of this region explicitly antagonize uncultivated nature because of its perceived instability. This can be observed in evidence provided by Bond in which ancestor cults refer to entities living outside their domesticated land as *bacimbwe*, a word that encompasses creatures like blood thirsty hyenas, grave destroyers, and witches (12). Since their sacred territories are spatially continuous with the hellish landscapes they loathe, the origins of these superstitions must be closely tied to the lack of order and familiarity with the space and time of the encircling environment. Bond reaffirms this idea, noting that outside the confines of the village, nature is

strongly tied to sentiments of insanity and chaos (11). Villagers often worry for the emotionally troublesome, fearing in particular that they might run away from the village and disappear into the chaotic abyss of the bush during the nighttime (11). Data compiled from many tribes displaying similar beliefs reveals a distinct connection between instability and the bush that is made in this culture. Thus, by emphasizing the spiritual importance of cultural locality, ancestor cults are attempting to remove themselves from the disarray of the African bush. In contrast, according to Crang and Molz, they are simultaneously integrating their territory into a dynamic of temporal rhythms by having a spatially narrow experience of everyday life. With this, space itself becomes a physical embodiment of order. In reference to a child's recitation of lines from a song or poem in order to relieve his/her anxiety in the dark, Deleuze and Guattari construct an analogous description of this scenario in their discussion of refrains when they say that "[a] refrain here is a rhythmic series that creates, by its very repetition, a sense of the familiar, a sense of place. Refrains circulate around this uncertain and fragile centre, creating a limited packet of organization" (May, Thrift 32). The similarity between localization in African ancestry and songs of comfort lies in the implantation of experiential consistency through time against threatening prospects. Moreover, this temporal consistency occupies a limited space under a blanket or in a territory as a localized stance against a surrounding realm of incertitude.

Building on this theme, the major form of familial reverence in these spatial domains of transcendence and certainty is the recognition of cultural causality through terrestrial toponymy and domestic burial. *Ezi ra ali* is the Ohafian word for home. McCall explains that it means far more than a collection of buildings or a place of legal jurisdiction like the English word "town." To the tribe, "it is the physical manifestation of the paternal group in space and time, a history of occupation in which a place comes to represent the people, past and present, who have occupied

it,” a spatial view catalyzed by the landscape of names and graves (239). They bury their dead ancestors under their houses, a proximity that fosters the passion behind ancestor worship. This practice doesn’t serve a mystical purpose, suggesting that it may have been the result of some perceived practicality. Over time, however, it is the seed of an emerging symbolism, a space time lineage connotation that heavily contributes to the livelihood of ancestor worship. In stagnation and cultural locality across prolonged periods of time, their intimate burial sites become increasingly rich temporal chronologies of their culture. It conveys a message of cyclical time by emphasizing that their fate is collective and familial, portraying the biological life cycle as a cycle of social growth and ancestral transition. Ultimately, the cycles of social reproduction become strongly attached to living space with this practice. Furthermore, the most highly expressed form of ancestor reverence in daily life is through place naming. A primary source from McCall, an African anthropologist in the field, describes the inescapable nature of temporal non-locality with the tribal naming of places. Making a reference to the exposure of young children to their past he writes:

Though this participation in quotidian existence they gain an emerging sense of cultural environment. They discover the *names of places* and in doing so learn that residential compounds are known by reference to the men who originally cleared the bush and established the site as cultural space. They learn that access to the constantly shifting mosaic of agricultural plots which demand their labor and yield their food is reckoned by reference to the names of ancestral mothers who farmed these plots ages ago (258).

Here McCall stresses that ancestry is not an abstraction, but a component of everyday life in the tribal landscape of names. It is impossible to identify a particular place in the village without making reference to these names. They are simultaneously its history and topography.

This stark contrast in the dogmatic perceptions of adjacent areas in local space represents the selective application of different structures of time. To explain, the defining aspects of the human condition throughout daily life are often assigned a representative form of time reckoning. Scholars make these assumptions based on philosophical interpretations of what time structures entail on a practical level. For example, prominent theorists like Adam have described the hegemony of linear time as a trademark of western civilization and the rise of industrialism (12). In a similar manner, other social lifestyles have been fitted into other temporal frameworks. In this section I categorize the temporality of African ancestor cults as well as nature in general, applying the contrast between order and disorder through space outlined in the preceding section.

Firstly, unadulterated nature such as the bush in Sub-Saharan Africa has been predominantly discussed in academia as a linearity of time due to its role in human transience and meaning impermanence. Death is a universal biological reality in which our organic selves cease to be, followed by our essences in the world (with the exception of historical figures). We are confronted by this reality throughout growth and development, in which physical and mental progress mark a slow descent towards an imminent end. Theorists say that “progress and decline mark time on a linear axis,” a structure of time which can be visualized as an infinitely long, ever expanding horizontal line in which human experience is laid out in a historical chronology (Johnson 92). The connection between linearity and the primal nature of the African bush is made through the meaning of linear time progression. This stems from the idea that “[c]ontrasted with the continuous flow of time is the view that its flow can be disrupted by broken, disconnected or disjunctive moments,” and according to theorists like Jameson, Dickenson, and Fontana this disjunction is caused when the flow of meaning from past to present is severed

(Dodgshon 10). One can intuitively establish a metaphorical link between linear time and meaning impermanence. In the linear structure described above, the arrow of time marking the present continually moves further way from established points in the past. The constant addition of theoretical distance between the current and the historical symbolizes the fleeting significance of those past events. Analogous to death in humans, the arrow of time becomes less occupied with specific histories until they fully decline out of memory and importance. As a result, although linearity is visually continuous, the transient nature of past events renders it temporally discontinuous according to the previously mentioned theorists. Linear time defines the variable environment encircling ancestral territories because, as was described in the previous section, both are viewed in terms of fickleness, transience, and death, all of which rupture the temporal preservation of meaning.

To apply this description of linear time to data, the uncultivated/primeval space of the surrounding bush is the manifestation of discontinuity in ancestor cults. As mentioned earlier, cultural movement is dogmatically equated to spiritual alienation and cultural disjunction. McCall says that despite this emphasis there have been isolated cases of cultural migration in the past (265). In the present, ancestor cults seem to preserve the memories of these spatial blasphemies as seen in his observation that, “[a]s bearers of truth *arunsi* act as historical markers which place ancestors in an historical landscape. These shrines, masks, stones and streams are loci of power which resolve discontinuity and difference even as they celebrate it” (266). This combination of power, ancestry, and discontinuity embedded within the messages of these objects illuminate the ideas of local transcendence and society versus nature in space, which is further supported by their arrangements in the landscape as McCall explains: “*arunsi* are found near the boundaries of paternal compounds, at the edge of the bush and at points where spring water emerges from the earth” (263). Note that that the specific placement of *arunsi* at the edges

of ancestrally designated lands symbolically conveys a resistance to discontinuity in multiple dimensions of thought, such as time and culture, through the preservation of spatially localized rhythms. According to the theories presented in the last paragraph, naturalistic settings like the bush are characterized by disjunctive linearity. Thus, linear/disjunctive temporality characterizes the space that African ancestor cults actively avoid in order to maintain existential continuity and rhythm. With this idea, one can see a standard model of space and time beginning to emerge across anthropological data and secondary theory.

In contrast to the linear characterization of natural time, ancestor cults have largely been associated with circular time because of their strong convictions in eternal collectives and temporal non-locality. An area of space marked by transitory forms of meaning and existence is temporally linear, and these defining characters are culturally dismantled within sacred ancestor territories. Geana explains that because they refuse to acknowledge death as a symbol of permanent discontinuity, “the ancestor cult is structured according to cyclical time,” and other scholars have articulated the fundamental features of this time structure in a way that implicitly vindicates Geana’s analysis (353). According to Bond, “[a]ncestors are a moral, temporal force, a projection of the past into the present and future,” referring to the championing of ancestral beliefs as a moral guidepost in present times (4). Bond’s quote alludes to the fact that, in settled African ancestor cults, the biologically deceased are perceived as living entities that continue to exert a tangible influence in daily tribal life (2). This core belief is accommodated by circular time, which can be visualized as an arrow continuously traversing the circumference of a two dimensional circle. In this time structure, the present arrow is limited to a finite set of locations, showing that there are no unique points in temporal existence and congruently symbolizing the integration of past, present and future. To support this subjective analysis, Barbara Adam suggests that circular time is a temporal singularity in which the moving arrow does not identify

different points in time but rather “an *active creation* of eternity in the present,” which also conveys the presence of temporal non-locality in this structure (121). Furthermore, in agreement with Adam’s idea of creation, cultural anthropologist Kopytoff describes the rituals of ancestor worship in these tribes as “techniques for experientially engaging with the socially constituted past, thus providing cultural mechanisms with which people can make and remake their social world,” displaying the African ancestor cult’s continuous production/renewal of society while maintaining a strong sense of historical significance (8). As explained by Adam and the anthropological analysis just given, temporality in this context is defined by creation. Circular time is a temporal structure in which social meaning is the method of progression, as opposed to a linear time in which progression is constituted by the fabric of nature itself. Intuitive links between circularity and the African ancestral dogma make it an excellent explanatory time model in contrast to the polar inadequacy of linearity.

Once again applying the idea of time structure to data, cyclicity associated with agriculture is the most expressed spatial manifestation of circular time in settled societies depending heavily on cultivated land. Preferring to live a naturalistic lifestyle, ancestor cults do not track time in minutes or seconds; they instead interpret the language of their crops to initiate seasonal ritualistic calendars (Fortes 71). As the principal mode of time reckoning, agriculture holds an important function of reference. However, symbolism supersedes this as a more fundamental constituent of ancestor worship. Food is an established link between locality and kinship in these cults (Arua 4). According to Goody, a farming field is viewed in the context of its history serving the clan, and with this mentality food becomes a mirror of temporal expanse; the landscape becomes immersed in pastime while providing sustenance in the present (29). The Chagga of Northern Tanzania and the Mende of Sierra Leone are two specific ancestor cults that

focus heavily on the importance of their food groves. In the former, all of the ancestor worshippers are referred to as “people of the banana garden. The notion refers to a temporal connection between the past, present, and future generations, and that the locality’s importance is with the staple food, bananas” (Hasu 195). Practically and spiritually, the banana is an ideal choice for a sacred crop because it is grown throughout the entire year. It is a fundamental symbol of continuity that can supersede the natural effects of time. As a result, Hasu explains that this food-based locale is the primary site of social reproduction, being a place of passage rites like marriage (203). This metaphorically aligns with Barbara Adam’s description of active creation in circular time, centralizing a point of social growth in space to add to the ancestral community. Territorialism in combination with a strong awareness of cultural causality in their belief system provides evidence that they live in a circular cultural space.

In effect, because circular time dominates the ancestral landscape in contrast to the perceived linear time of the surrounding bush, it is evident that African ancestor cults resist cultural migration because the overarching objective is to temporalize their home space, integrating their territory into a circular framework. In this cultural context, reckoning kin time is designed in the pursuit of overcoming transience born out of instability in the Sub-Saharan environment. According to theorists like Edensor, Lefebvre, Deleuze and Guattari, circularity/cyclicity is a prescription of certainty that can cure the pathology of this unforgiving habitat, which explains why ancestor worship functions according to circular time. Moreover, these ancestor cults want to propagate the sense of existential security gained by their circular time structure into their sense of space, since the fickle conditions of the climate is the source behind their suffering. Since rhythmic experience organizes cultural space, as explained in the preceding section, everyday life experienced within limited geographical boundaries creates an

ordered view of their territory. Additionally, Crang and Molz say that migration impedes experiential rhythm/continuity in space. Therefore, the functional ambition of ancestral territorialism is to create an amalgamated perception of circular time and space, as noted in the statement that the “ongoing mapping of space through repetitive, collective choreographies of congregation, interaction, rest and relaxation produce situated rhythms through which time and space are stitched together,” showing how a spatially limited understanding of cyclicity can elicit the time-space worldview (Edensor 8). This mixing of existential perceptions of space and time caters to their goals of transcendence by producing a view of circular space corresponding to their circular time structure. Thus, the ongoing spatial stillness of these tribes has fused their identities of place and ancestral transcendence. Their paradigm of time, with its visceral rootedness in past and lineage, has merged with their attachment to place because settlement has created a rhythmic space through rhythmic time. This is why John McCall describes the tribal process of steadily exposing young children to the richness of their ancestral history as “a rite of *placement*, positioning each new child within a terrain, social, spatial and temporal” (1).

In response to Remm’s argument regarding spatial models of culture in which “[c]ompared to other characteristics such as the role of agents, objects, and materiality, time, being multiple and over-emphasized, tends to remain an incoherent category, not a *part* of the model, but rather an *addition* to the model” (408), the rituals of these tribes are fairly explicit in their differentiation of space. In its most simplistic form, their territory is the sole domain of ancestor worship. In that description alone, one can see that space harbors two types of temporal fates: transience and transcendence. These concepts are also associated with cultural performances that represent different forms of time structure. My research offers substantial evidence concerning a strong practical connection between cultural time and cultural space.

Temporal topologies are highly expressed in the dogma of these ancestor cults. Settlement leads to a temporal transcendence via topographical symbolism summing and conveying a timeless causality in their cultural worldview. This is the spatial reckoning of a circular time structure that achieves the goal of establishing an oasis of existential certainty in an especially fickle reality. Linear time in contrast is characterized by sentiments of inconsistency, being unaffected by cultural progress and directionality and leading to a disjunction in the flow of meaning from past to present. This contradicts the existential objective of African ancestor cults who want preserve informational and temporal continuity. Consequently, physical migration is perceived as exiting a circular ancestral domain and entering an explicitly antagonized linearity of time. This is evidence for the validity of mapping cultural time domains through cultural space as an intrinsic delineation made by the analyzed culture itself and not through a merely academic spatial metalanguage. Ancestry in Sub-Saharan Africa offers a heavily studied anthropological theatre in which time topology can be displayed, and future research can seek to apply these concepts in the analysis of many different cultural contexts.

## Works Cited

- Adam, Barbara. "Time." *Theory, Culture & Society* 23.2 (2006): 119-26. Print.
- Arua, Emea O. "Yam Ceremonies and the Values of Ohafia Culture." *Africa (Edinburgh University Press)* 51.2 (1981): 694. Print.
- Bruneau, Thomas J. "Time, Change, and Sociocultural Communication: A Chronemic Perspective." *Sign Systems Studies* 35.1 (2007): 89-117. Print.
- Bond, George C. "Living with Spirits: Death and Afterlife in African Religions." *Death and Afterlife: Perspectives of World Religions*. Ed. Hiroshi Obayashi. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1992. 3-18. Print.
- Crang, M. "Picturing Practices: Research through the Tourist Gaze." *Progress in Human Geography* 21.3 (1997): 359-73. Print.
- Dodgshon, Robert A. "Geography's Place in Time." *Geografiska Annaler Series B: Human Geography* 90.1 (2008): 1-15. Print.
- Edensor, Tim, ed. *Geographies of Rhythm: Nature, Place, Mobilities and Bodies*. Farnham, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010. Print.
- Geană, Gheorghiiță. *Remembering Ancestors: Commemorative Rituals and the Foundation of Historicity*. 16 Vol. UK: Routledge, 2005. Print.
- Hasu, Pă. "For Ancestors and God: Rituals of Sacrifice among the Chagga of Tanzania." *Ethnology* 48.3 (2009): 195-213. Print.

Hersak, Dunja. "There are Many Kongo Worlds: Particularities of Magico-Religious Beliefs among the Vili and Yombe of Congo-Brazzaville." *Africa (Edinburgh University Press)* 71.4 (2001): 614. Print.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991. Print.

Maddox, Gregory H. *Sub-Saharan Africa: An Environmental History*. California: ABC CLIO, 2006. Print. Nature and Human Societies.

May, John, and Nigel Thrift. *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality*. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.

McCall, John C. "Rethinking Ancestors in Africa." *Africa (Edinburgh University Press)* 65.2 (1995): 256. Print.

Molz, Jennie Germann. "Performing Global Geographies: Time, Space, Place and Pace in Narratives of Round-the-World Travel." *Tourism Geographies* 12.3 (2010): 329-48. Print.

Remm, Tiit. "Time in Spatial Metalanguage: The Ambiguous Position of Time in Concepts of Sociocultural, Social and Cultural Space." *TRAMES: A Journal of the Humanities & Social Sciences* 14.4 (2010): 394-410. Print.

Saar, Maarja, and Hannes Palang. "The Dimensions of Place Meanings." *Living Reviews in Landscape Research* 3 (2009): 1-24. Print.