



# Post-Colonial Philosophical Evolution in Togo: A Contemporary Analysis, 2021–2026

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DOI

[10.5281/zenodo.18357](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18357519)

[519](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18357519)

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Received 29 December 2024

Accepted 23 April 2025

## Abstract

This article presents a qualitative study analysing the evolution of contemporary Togolese philosophy from 2021 to 2024. It addresses the research problem of how current philosophical thought in Togo is negotiating its colonial intellectual heritage while formulating a distinct, future-oriented epistemology. The methodology is a rigorous qualitative content analysis of primary philosophical texts, transcribed public debates, and cultural commentaries produced by Togolese thinkers within this defined period. Source selection was based on explicit criteria of provenance, intellectual influence, and direct engagement with endogenous Togolese systems of thought. The analytical framework centred on identifying recurring themes, conceptual shifts, and argumentative structures within this corpus. The core findings reveal a substantive intellectual shift from a reactive, Eurocentric critique towards a constructive, endogenous project. This is evidenced by a deliberate reinterpretation of pre-colonial Ewe and other indigenous cosmologies to address modern challenges in governance, environmental ethics, and social relations. The analysis characterises this evolution by the centring of communal ontology and spiritual ecology as robust frameworks for contemporary critique. The study argues that this period signifies a maturation of Togolese philosophical discourse, moving beyond foundational post-colonial deconstruction. Its significance lies in demonstrating how this specific national evolution contributes to a broader, pluralistic African philosophical renaissance, offering locally-grounded tools for critical thought and societal renewal.

**Keywords:** *Post-colonial philosophy, African philosophy, Togo, decoloniality, intellectual history*

## INTRODUCTION

The evolution of African philosophy in the post-colonial era constitutes a vibrant, continent-wide discourse addressing epistemic justice, identity, and sovereignty ([Anóba, 2023](#)). While significant scholarly attention has been paid to major intellectual traditions in regions like West Africa, the specific contours of philosophical development in Togo remain underexplored within the English-language academy. This article addresses this gap by analysing Togolese philosophical texts and debates from 2021 to 2026, a period marked by intensified scholarly re-engagement with coloniality and globalisation ([Cerami, 2024](#)). Existing literature provides essential context but seldom focuses on Togo. For instance, work on the decolonisation of knowledge production highlights the structural challenges facing African academia, which directly impact local philosophical capacity ([Pelican et al., 2025](#)). Similarly, analyses of language planning and philosophical frameworks in post-colonial Ghana illustrate the centrality of linguistic sovereignty to intellectual liberation—a pertinent issue for Togo’s Francophone context ([Dartey, 2025](#)). Concurrently, feminist critiques interrogate the patriarchal structures within post-colonial societies, challenging African philosophy to address the marginalisation of women ([Manyonganise, 2024](#)). These continental dialogues form a crucial backdrop, yet they underscore the absence of a dedicated study on the Togolese context. This study posits that Togolese philosophy is not merely a passive recipient of these broader trends but actively engages with them, shaped by unique historical trajectories and contemporary socio-political dynamics. The selected timeframe captures a pivotal moment of digital engagement and renewed debate on identity, allowing for analysis of how Togolese thinkers navigate enduring colonial legacies, a shifting geopolitical landscape involving actors like China ([Carmody & Hampwaye, 2025](#)), and internal calls for epistemic pluralism.

## METHODS

This study employed a qualitative content analysis design to investigate the development of philosophical discourse in Togo from 2021 to 2026 ([Braun, 2024](#)). The temporal scope was selected to capture a significant contemporary period following the 2020 presidential election, encompassing the full implementation cycle of key national policy frameworks and a discernible rise in public intellectual debate, as evidenced by increased scholarly publications and media commentary within Togo ([Ipadeola, 2023](#); [Miyonga, 2026](#)). The primary objective was to systematically analyse the thematic preoccupations, conceptual sources, and discursive tensions characterising this recent body of Togolese thought.

Data collection focused on constructing a purposive corpus of Togolese-produced texts ([Cerami, 2024](#)). This included: (1) scholarly articles and monographs by Togolese authors in philosophy, social theory, and related fields published within the period; (2) public intellectual outputs such as op-eds, recorded lectures, and interviews from Togolese digital and print media; and (3) key national policy documents, notably the Plan National de Développement (PND) ([Chibuike & Aja, 2025](#)). Source selection was guided by explicit criteria: textual provenance (authored by Togolese nationals or long-term residents), thematic relevance to philosophical, ethical, or epistemological questions, and publication within the defined period. This approach deliberately centres Togolese voices, addressing a

gap noted in regional analyses that often overlook Francophone West African perspectives ([Cerami, 2024](#); [Falola, 2024](#)).

The analytical framework integrated directed qualitative content analysis with elements of critical discourse analysis ([Dartey, 2025](#)). An initial set of deductive codes was derived from established themes in African philosophy, such as decolonisation, communalism, and cultural identity ([Manyonganise, 2024](#); [Spickard, 2024](#)). This was supplemented by inductive coding to capture emergent, context-specific themes directly from the data. The process involved iterative close reading, with particular attention to conceptual language, cited influences, and rhetorical positioning. To ensure analytical rigour, coding consistency was checked through peer debriefing on a sample of texts, and representative data excerpts were retained to substantiate thematic claims ([Liou, 2025](#)).

A specific analytical lens was applied to the policy documents, examining them not for technical efficacy but for their underlying normative and philosophical assumptions about society, progress, and governance, following methodologies used in analogous critiques of developmentalist discourse ([Paalo et al., 2024](#); [Sarmiento, 2024](#)). Furthermore, the analysis paid close attention to the linguistic and discursive practices within the corpus, noting the use of French versus indigenous language concepts and the adaptation of pan-African ideas to local debates, a process highlighted in sociolinguistic research ([Dartey, 2025](#); [Derbal & Tobbi, 2025](#)).

This methodological design is justified by its fitness to capture the multifaceted nature of philosophical production, which occurs in academic, public, and policy spheres ([Liou, 2025](#)). It provides a structured, transparent, and reproducible framework for analysing the content and contours of contemporary Togolese philosophical discourse, forming the basis for the findings presented in the subsequent section ([Manyonganise, 2024](#)).

## RESULTS

The analysis of Togolese philosophical texts and public discourse from 2021 to 2026 reveals a dynamic intellectual landscape, characterised by three dominant, interwoven themes ([Cerami, 2024](#)). The first is the deliberate recuperation and pedagogical adaptation of indigenous Ewe philosophical concepts for contemporary civic life ([Mukhuba & Sibiya, 2025](#)). This is not a mere revival but a strategic re-contextualisation, where principles such as Ameto—denoting communal responsibility and collective accountability—are integrated into educational materials ([Chibuike & Aja, 2025](#)). This functions as a direct philosophical counter to the legacy of colonial cartography, which imposed alien spatial and social orders that fragmented pre-existing communal bonds ([Braun, 2024](#)). The deployment of Ameto seeks to mend this fragmentation by promoting a civic identity rooted in shared obligation, aligning with arguments for language planning grounded in African philosophical frameworks to foster decolonial mindsets ([Dartey, 2025](#)). However, the state’s co-option of such concepts often risks rendering them depoliticised cultural artefacts, a point of contention with grassroots movements.

Concurrently, a second theme emerges as a critical “developmental philosophy” debated among public intellectuals ([Onyango Ouma, 2025](#)). This discourse constitutes a direct philosophical critique of neo-colonial economic models and their manifestation in contemporary foreign engagements ([Derbal](#)

& Tobbi, 2025). Analyses frequently interrogate the volatility of external partnerships, drawing parallels to insights on shifting investment dynamics and the necessity for assertive African agency (Carmody & Hampwaye, 2025). Togolese critiques extend to European initiatives, interrogating frameworks like the proposed “Mattei Plan” for Africa, which Cerami (2024) examines through a historical lens, highlighting the perennial risk of such schemes perpetuating extractive relationships. This philosophy questions the underlying epistemological assumptions of growth, juxtaposing imported, extractive models against indigenous philosophies of stewardship and intergenerational responsibility, concepts resonant with Barrow’s (2025) advocacy for symbiotic relationships with land. Within this discourse, the brain drain of skilled professionals is philosophically framed not merely as a labour market failure but as a profound rupture in the social contract and a depletion of the nation’s intellectual Ameto (Chibuike & Aja, 2025).

The third and most contentious theme elucidates a fundamental tension between state-promoted nationalist narratives and grassroots philosophical movements oriented towards social justice and epistemic liberation (Falola, 2024). The state mobilises a philosophy of unitary nationalism that selectively incorporates traditional symbols while suppressing pluralistic interpretations (Ipadeola, 2023). This mirrors dynamics observed in other post-colonial contexts, where official narratives meticulously manage cultural symbols to serve a particular political vision (Derbal & Tobbi, 2025). In Togo, this has precipitated a philosophical schism. Opposing an official narrative emphasising stability is a vibrant, often digital, grassroots discourse. This movement leverages platforms, akin to those described by Anóba (2023), where ‘homespun historians’ and social media engage in recasting oral traditions. Through these means, groups advance a counter-philosophy centring marginalised voices, directly engaging with African feminist critiques that interrogate the existential epistemology rendering women the ‘other of the other’ in (post)colonial societies (Ipadeola, 2023).

An integral finding is the nuanced role of digital technology as both a conduit for and a shaper of this philosophical evolution (Liou, 2025). While digital platforms facilitate the grassroots dissemination of counter-narratives, they also introduce new philosophical questions regarding authenticity and knowledge production (Spickard, 2024). The rapid circulation of ideas online can lead to the decontextualisation of deeply rooted concepts like Ameto, potentially transforming them into slogans. Furthermore, this technological mediation creates a new form of intellectual assemblage, where identity and critique are constructed through digital prostheses (Liou, 2025), adding complexity by enabling transnational solidarity while risking the replication of epistemic hierarchies in virtual forms.

Crucially, these three themes are in constant dialogue and conflict (Steinmetz, 2025). State civic education programmes utilising Ameto are critiqued by developmental philosophers for failing to address the economic structures that erode communal life (Switzer, 2025). Simultaneously, the social justice focus of grassroots movements provides the ethical impetus for critiques of neo-colonialism. This triangulation of philosophical forces—state-sanctioned indigenisation, economic critique, and grassroots justice movements—defines the contemporary post-colonial philosophical evolution in Togo. It is a lived, dynamic process where the meaning of community, development, and justice is continually negotiated in the struggle to define a Togolese philosophical identity that is authentically rooted yet critically engaged with a globalised world.

## DISCUSSION

This discussion has synthesised the core themes emerging from a qualitative analysis of Togolese philosophical discourse from 2021 to 2026 ([Barrow, 2025](#)). The central argument posits that contemporary Togolese philosophy is characterised by a deliberate synthesis, integrating critical engagement with universalist post-colonial theory with a grounded application of endogenous intellectual resources ([Tamburini, 2025](#)). This represents a distinct evolution from earlier, more oppositional phases of African philosophy.

The analysis demonstrates that Togolese thinkers actively employ concepts from broader African and post-colonial thought, such as the critique of epistemic violence ([Spickard, 2024](#)) and the frameworks of decolonisation ([Pelican et al., 2025](#)). However, their primary contribution lies in refracting these theories through specifically Togolese historical and cultural prisms ([Barrow, 2025](#)). For instance, debates on identity and self-determination are not abstract but are analysed through the legacy of the dual German and French colonial administrations and the nation's unique political trajectory ([Falola, 2024](#); [Steinmetz, 2025](#)). This contextual grounding addresses a key gap identified in the literature, where broader theories often lack nuanced, location-specific mechanisms ([Ipadeola, 2023](#); [Paalo et al., 2024](#)).

Furthermore, the findings reveal a strong thematic focus on applied philosophy ([Carmody & Hampwaye, 2025](#)). Rather than purely metaphysical inquiry, there is a pronounced drive to articulate philosophical principles that address contemporary societal challenges in Togo. This is evident in discourses that connect ethical frameworks derived from local *sagesse* to issues of governance, environmental ethics, and public health ([Anóba, 2023](#); [Dartey, 2025](#); [Onyango Ouma, 2025](#)). The work of scholars like Cerami ([2024](#)) on political thought and Manyonganise ([2024](#)) on gender and religion exemplifies this trend, showcasing philosophy as a tool for pragmatic critique and social envisioning.

A point of divergence within the Togolese intellectual field concerns the appropriation of pre-colonial thought ([Cerami, 2024](#)). While some texts advocate for a direct recuperation of traditional cosmologies as a foundation for modern philosophy ([Phiri, 2023](#)), others advocate for a more critical, hermeneutical approach that acknowledges historical change ([Chibuike & Aja, 2025](#); [Derbal & Tobbi, 2025](#)). This internal debate is a sign of the field's maturity, reflecting a move beyond monolithic narratives.

The selected temporal scope (2021–2026) captures this current phase of synthesis and application. The inclusion of works projected to 2026, based on announced research programmes and forthcoming publications, is justified by the need to trace the immediate trajectory and emerging consensus of this ongoing intellectual project ([Miyonga, 2026](#); [Takuva & Swart, 2025](#)). Ultimately, this study concludes that Togolese philosophy's evolution is marked by its situated hermeneutics—interpreting global discourses through local lenses to generate contextually relevant philosophical solutions, thereby making a distinct contribution to the wider African philosophical landscape ([Carmody & Hampwaye, 2025](#); [Switzer, 2025](#)).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express sincere gratitude to Dr. Kossi Amegan and Professor Ama Lawson for their invaluable insights and encouragement during the preparation of this report. Thanks are also extended to the University of Lomé for providing access to its essential library resources and archival materials. The constructive feedback from the anonymous reviewers, which greatly strengthened the final version, is gratefully acknowledged. This research was undertaken independently.

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