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The Interface between Indigenous Culture and Societal Development in Nigeria

Osawaru, Osamede Christopher

Abstract

Paradoxically, beside corruption and other related vices, no other factor has done more damage to Nigeria than the trivialization or outright bastardization of her rich cultural heritage. Development does not take place in a vacuum but in a society of people with cultural practices. Culture is an all-embracing entity, a vehicle to total development. The basis of development is culture and any nation that aims at progress without its culture is only deceiving itself by engaging in self-immolation. Culture, when promoted and enhanced becomes the spring board for progress. This paper argues that there are still some cultural traditions in Africa which are unaffected by colonisation and globalisation. It is against this background that this paper considers the interface between indigenous culture and societal development in Nigeria. We shall adequately analyse our conceptual schemes in the direction of the challenges of our needs and interest through critical analysis and we are able to subject our beliefs and social practices to the searching light of criticism and thus likely able to promote the kind of self-understanding that would provide some basis for determining the kind of socio-cultural reconstructions that would be required to attune Nigeria to changes in the environment and their existential demand. The primary concern of this paper is to appraise and reconstruct that there is an interface between indigenous culture and societal development using theoretical skill to elicit changes both in the physical and mental outlook of Nigerians.

Keywords: African culture, culture, development, society

Introduction

Nigeria cultural diversity remains a treasure largely unexplored in her continued quest for national development and ceaseless drive towards nation-building; yet from independence to date, it has been one story of hate and denigration of the nation's cultural heritage. Worst hit are the Nigeria's traditional languages which are increasingly going into extinction. On all fronts we appear to be losing our traditional sense of moderation; discarding our lifestyle for foreign ones. In place of our fading traditional institutions are alien socio-economic and political structures, whose organization, disposition, values and orientation are often tailored to suit other peoples' values and idiosyncrasies. Our economic, political and social systems are largely a poor mimicry of those of the Western societies. We think nothing of adapting them to suit our peculiar situation.

We have had to contend with a dying sense of communal life, a chaotic socio-political order, institutional fragility, systemic decay, economic disequilibrium, and violence. Specifically, the dilemma of the Nigerian politics borders on how to resolve the recurrent bickering, the menace of urban violence, political intolerance, desperation, rascality and assassinations, among other vices. According to Ayandele, "Nigeria lacks a viable culture compass and an ideology rooted in culture". It is therefore imperative that we re-create a worthy livelihood based on the culture and traditions of her people specifically tailored to her peculiarities, "in rational interaction with the dynamics of globalization" and on the underlying principles of the twenty-first century technologies.

Since culture is a way of life, there is an urgent need to reconcile its substance with the prevailing struggle and unhealthy contest for power and attendant disorder that has become the nature and character of our co-existence. Can we use culture to entrench a stabilising agent and effective tool for arresting the tide of poverty, unemployment and misery? Can we use culture to entrench progressive human development, enhance creativity and increase productivity for the common good which is the essence of what development is all about? This paper seeks to examine the core concept of culture, society and development with a view to discussing their inter-relatedness within the context of Nigeria.

Conceptual Clarification and Related Literatures

Attempts shall be made to clarify the following concepts:

Culture

There are as many interpretations of this phenomenon as there are scholars and students. Although Ayandele E.A was apt in his conception of culture as "what man interposes between himself and his environment in order to ensure his security and survival." Udu Yakubu's exposition on the substance of culture is broader. He suggests that; for human beings to build houses, cultivate farms, construct bridges, dams or electricity, -generating plants, provide qualitative formal education, manage successful businesses, or organisations control population growth, prevent or cure sicknesses and diseases, ensure social trust, good governance, law and order etc. they need albeit critically receptive body of ideas and beliefs, designs, techniques and methodologies, rules and regulations; i.e., a culture.

Again, an age-long but relevant definition of culture as a concept in contemporary discourse was espoused in 1897 by the English anthropologist E.B Taylor. He defines culture as that complex whole, which includes shared

ideas, knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. He reasoned that though culture is something that cannot be seen, heard, smelled, touched or tasted; it has been in continuous existence for years. Implicitly, culture is very real, and so important that without it, human societies, human existence, would be quite impossible.

Alan P. Bates and Joseph Julian rightly observed that, it would result in a catastrophe if, by any means the prevailing culture of mankind was wiped out –yet leaving the human species biologically intact. But for culture-with globalization, information and communication technology-men would have lost all knowledge of even the basic means of survival such that, within a short time, the entire species would disappear forever. They therefore contend that it is only through a secure understanding of this concept of culture that we can have a good insight into its significance and appreciate its essence.

Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generation through individual and group strivings. It is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from one another. It is also the position that the ideas, meanings, beliefs and values people learn as member of society determines human nature. People are what they learn, therefore culture ultimately determine the quality of a person or society that arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellent in arts, letters, manners and scholarly pursuits and many more. It is a particular stage or form of civilization.

Suffice to stress that culture cannot be transmitted biologically; hence it can only be preserved from the past and transmitted into the future by learning. Characteristically therefore, culture entails all that people have learned and preserved from past collective experience. Quite remarkably, individuals in all culture –conscious societies spend years learning necessary minimum cultural heritage. It is generally agreed of course that the value, volume and complexity of culture grow with time, even when some parts of it are lost or discarded in the process.

Culture encompasses the tangible and intangible as it also incorporates the “subtotal of the material and immaterial tools, art work and work of art of a people and knowledge accumulated by the people.” The peculiarity of a given culture is a function of its distinctiveness as it relates to its impact

on the attitudes, aspirations, motivations, representations, skills, and behaviour of the people celebrating some and discarding others.⁷

Suggestive of shared ideas, culture is meaningful only to that set of individuals who make it manifest in their relation with one other. Culture offers a 'summation and distillation' of the past that provides sound basis for living in the present and marching into the future. Therefore, viewing man comparatively in relation to other forms of life, culture becomes his primary 'means of survival and adaptation.' This perhaps distinguishes man from other species. Culture is self-regulatory as it largely controls and guides social behaviour. It can be sustained and kept alive only by social behaviour. As behaviour often alters culture, culture always changes out of the inevitable departure of actual behaviour from what culture prescribes. It thus precedes and becomes attendant upon social behaviour. The centrality of the concept informs the development of a number of sub-concepts and vocabulary of terms chief among these are: values, norms, and role. These are three variables that are instrumental to meaningful understanding of the relationship between culture and social behaviour as noted earlier.

Outside this but equally popular in literature is the culture of working, thinking and human relationships that appears to have been used to distinguish a certain category of people from the other. Simply put, the culture of a group of people is everything they do which is not strictly biological.

Kilmann, Saxton, and Serpa (1985) state culture can be defined as the shared philosophies, ideologies, values, assumptions, beliefs, expectations, attitudes, and norms that knit a community together.¹⁴ They further define culture as occurring at different levels of depth. Just below the surface are the norms and these are the unwritten rules of the game. Norms describe the attitudes of employees and the behaviours that are generally accepted within the organization as right. Culture is composed of experiences, beliefs, and actions. These three components work together in somewhat of a continuous circle. The idea behind this theory is that experiences will foster beliefs, which in turn drive actions. Actions produce results, and those results become new experiences. Then the cycle repeats itself. According to this theory, culture creates and builds on itself.

While it may be academically expedient to acknowledge these classifications (as in exhaustive as they are), it is practically necessary to add that any conceptualization of culture thus restricted in form or practice, as identified above cannot rise to the challenges of development. The reason for this is that it may be practically impossible to pursue development in any sphere of human experience without thinking and acting culture. This may have therefore been partly responsible for the disconnection between culture and

developments in our national life. Culture relates to life in the same way that life relates to existence, for there can be no life unless existential issues are attended to and there can be no development without culture. Culture shapes the experience of people in any society. Since culture defines social and developmental situations, values and goals, attitudes, behaviour patterns and mould personalities, it means culture is the determinant of social life and development.

The broad sense of culture explicated above enables us to appreciate the intrinsic link between culture and society and the place of culture in the development process. Culture does not only provide a framework for thought and action in a society. It is also a veritable source of identity and a vehicle for an all-embracing development. Culture when promoted and enhanced becomes the springboard for progress drive.

Society

Society is generally defined as a self-perpetuating group of humans broadly distinguished from other groups by mutual interest, participation in characteristic relationships, shared values and a common culture. It is an association of human beings, and suggests the whole complex of the relations of man to his fellows. It consists of the complicated networks of groups and institutions, expressing human association. It is said to comprise a culture, as manifest in its art, philosophy, law, morality, religion, fashion, etc. In every society is a group of people with shared values, beliefs, symbols, patterns of behaviour and territory. In order to appropriately indicate the value a good society is built upon, it would be necessary to identify what the particular society holds dear. Values are what the society care about as a group. They are what motivate people from within. Life forces us to make choices, to rate things as better or worse and to formulate a scale of value. We praise and blame, call actions right or wrong and declare the scene before us beautiful or ugly. Each person has some sense of values and no society has been found to be devoid of some value system.

According to Kaplan (1976), a society is composed of people interacting on the basis of shared beliefs, customs, values and activities and common patterns which govern their interaction that make up the culture of the society. This implies that a society must have a shared belief as well as customs and values alongside culture to ensure development. Worthy of note is the fact that a society could be small, large and sometimes very large and there could be smaller societies under the canopy of a larger one. Arguably, societies which experience incessant cases of crises are mainly those that do not share common ways of life. For instance, the Nigerian society has, over the

years, been bedevilled by crises of different magnitudes and these are not unconnected with its cultural heterogeneity. The problem of social order and national integration have remained endemic social problems since the time the colonialists brought us together hitherto autonomous groups of people to define new geographic boundaries. Also, our perception and assessment of the significance of events in our lives have been conditioned, in many cases, by “cultural concepts” borrowed mostly from our erstwhile imperial mentors or the radical critics indigenous there.

Hence, the prevailing situation of indiscriminate cultural syncretism, which has led to the erosion of our core values of brotherhood, justice and compassion, for instance that could have provided the basis of human-friendly development in our society.

Development

The concept “development” has its root from the French word “veloper” meaning “to wrap.” To develop therefore means to “un-wrap” or to change and become larger, stronger or more impressive, successful or advanced. Many liberal theorists see development as economic development, which could be determined in the terms of the growth of gross national product (GNP). Thus Meier defines development as “the maximization of the growth of GNP through capital accumulation and industrialization”. In this view point, development means change which “often follows a well ordered sequence and exhibits common characteristics” It underscores the fact that development is not an abstraction, rather it is the integrity that could be measured in quantitative terms, such as the rate of growth in GDP per capita. Therefore, for many liberal theorists, development means “the capacity of a national economy, whose initial economic condition has been more or less static to generate and sustain an annual increase in its GNP at rates of perhaps 5 to 7 percent or more.”

The notion of development in terms of gross national product is a one-sided and faulty assessment of development. Development entails more than the economic aspect of people lives. A significant development in a country like Nigeria must take into account man as a whole and not just an aspect of him. This supports the notion of subjecting development to multidisciplinary interpretation and usage, these various perceptions only contribute to showing the richness as well as the problems associated with the concept of development.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) distinguishes between two sides of development. One is the formation of human capabilities and the others is the use people make of their acquired capabilities. This im-

plies that development could be at the level of individual and also at the level of the society. "At the level of the individual, development could be psychological, affective, intellectual, moral and spiritual. It could be also be physical material or economic. At the level of the society, development could be scientific and infrastructural technological and economic, social and political".

Development is therefore a multilayered phenomenon with a complex web of inter related associations. It is a process of social transformation which involves the replacement of those factors that inhibit the capacity of the individual for self-direction and the promotion of social cooperation with those which promote these ideals. In short, it is a process whose essence concerns the quality of life (including the quality of social relations) of the people.

Thus people are the objects of development. It should be noted, however, that there is more to development than the acknowledgement of this fact. It is the thinking that of this that led to the development of the paternal state and its associated development paradigm which emphasized top-down processes. Also crucial to development is the acceptance of the insight that development of the people can only be effected by the people as initiators of plans and programmes for their own well-being. Thus an important precondition of making development a reality is the enhancement of the capacity of the people for self-expression and self-action.

On Culture and Society

Culture is a complex phenomenon. It is an influential parameter in the development of a people and the nation at large. Culture goes beyond its symbolic aspects such as music, dance and art, to include the beliefs, values and attitudes which shape a people's thought and actions. According to Professor Kwasi Wiredu, the meaning of culture goes beyond art, song and dance to include everything that is connected with a people's way of life. It is seen in their worship and courtship; in their way of investigating nature and utilising its possibilities; and in their way of viewing themselves and interpreting their place in nature. It is also seen in the manner in which they house and cloth themselves; their method of conducting war and peace; their system of statecraft, of education, of reward and punishment; the way they regulate personal relations generally and the ideas underlying these institutions and practices.

Thus when we talk of the culture of a people, we are talking of a broad network of references which indicate the entirety of a people's material, intellectual and metaphysical patterns of living. This encapsulates the corpus of art and crafts which many people essentially want to refer to as the material aspects of cultures. This broad definition enables us to appreciate the intrin-

sic link between culture and society. According to C'S. Momoh, "a genuine individual is a child of his experiences, times and culture and all philosophy take place using these influential parameters. An individual can write, react, and reflect positively, negatively or critically towards his experiences, times and culture." Culture transcends mere physical manifestations to dwell on the essence of a people's existence. Kroeber and Kluckhohn have described the definitions of culture as capable of six different forms; descriptive, historical, narrative, psychological, genetic and structural. These approaches indicate that the explanation of culture cannot be limited to any one single academic discipline. Thus it is a crossdisciplinary phenomenon which necessarily impacts upon all aspects of our lives

Soyinka (2016) asks the question, "Is culture static?" He went on to answer that culture is dynamic, and thus, no one proposes a permanent state of cultural beliefs or practices. He reiterated that culture itself is an amalgam of social practices including ethical abstraction. what this means in essence is that culture is a means of creating order in society. The point here is that, not every aspect of social life is controllable by social interventions, so, to have a social order, some aspect of social order that are beyond state control require moderation if not regulation. "Human society is people interacting; culture is the patterning of behaviour" therefore when the people interacting in a society have their behaviour patterned by same culture, there is bound to be social order that leads to development in the society. Culture is the cement binding together into a society its component individuals. Culture shapes the experience of people in any society.

Culture is conceived of as experience limited to a choice range of creative activities in society. Here culture is likened to dance, music, drama, painting sculpture and literary works, indigenous films, storytelling and sometimes culture sites, as they relate to their economic and tourism significance. There are certain characteristics of the human species which cut across all societies; these are the human person itself and its physiology, rites of passage, plants and animal life, kinship, communal, religious, and political systems and various features of existence and experience common to the human race. Within this category a person is regarded as cultured only to the extent that he comports himself or herself in a manner that meets certain minimum universal standard.

The items, ingredients, constituents, or components of culture are so many as to be almost innumerable. This is why it is also regarded as a set of distinctive, spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features which characterize a society or a social group. Other than arts and humanities, it covers modes of life, fundamental human rights, value systems, traditions

and beliefs. Suggestive of shared ideas, culture is meaningful only to that set of individuals who make it manifest in their relation with one other. Culture offers a 'summation and distillation' of the past that provides sound basis for living in the present and marching into the future. Therefore, viewing man comparatively in relation to other forms of life, culture becomes his primary 'means of survival and adaptation.' This, perhaps, distinguishes man from other species.

Culture is self-regulatory as it largely controls and guides social behaviour. It can be sustained and kept alive only by social behaviour. As behaviour often alters culture, culture always changes out of the inevitable departure of actual behaviour from what culture prescribes. It thus precedes and becomes attendant upon social behaviour. The centrality of the concept informs the development of a number of sub-concepts and vocabulary of terms, Chief among these are: values, norms, and role. These are three variables that are instrumental to meaningful understanding of the relationship between culture and social behaviour as noted earlier.

Indeed, given the peculiarity of a people, culture can serve as a vanguard of change through the value system. In any case, since our interest in the past is in the present and this present is shaped not only by on-going tasks, but also by future aspirations, our intellectual engagements with our culture and value system would be rewarding if it helps in clarifying for us yesterday's experience, today's task and tomorrow's possibilities. The definition of culture as "what man interposes between himself and his environment" helps in creating a tradition of developing ideas on issues affecting the interests and aspirations of the people. Any society that neglects this role of culture does so at his own peril because culture in its critical and rational role, serves to challenge a people's established views of themselves and their condition as a precondition for redefining who they are and what they can be. The reappraisal of our culture and value system is to identify its strengths and weaknesses. This reappraisal is philosophical and imperative; in essence have the potential of promoting self-understanding that would provide some basis for determining the kind of socio-cultural reconstruction in our society.

Exploring the Link between Culture and Societal Development in Nigeria

We now come to the issue of the kind of contribution culture can make to societal development. Let us note that there is a link between culture and development. This is so because culture plays a very important role in the development, synthezation and spreading of ideas and values that direct the thoughts and life of a people. This definition of the role of culture is in

alliance with one of the definitions of culture as a search for the guide of life. "Development is a cultural phenomenon; this is because developmental thought is grounded in a cultural experience. The underlying cultural unity and the identification of the various needs in the society justifies the references to varieties of thought as wholes". It should be noted that no development exists in a vacuum. It encompasses other aspects of human endeavours.

Development as a social phenomenon derives its being from the experience generated through the continuous interaction between human beings and their environment and amongst themselves. But just as the society is a product of cultural experience, culture shapes the society by providing the conceptual tools for comprehending human existential realities as they manifest themselves within a given socio-historical space. In other words, the relationship between human cultural experience and society is dialectical.

Culture encompasses the tangible and intangible as it also incorporates the subtotal of the material and immaterial tools, art work and work of art of a people and knowledge accumulated by the people. The peculiarity of a given culture is a function of its distinctiveness as it relates to its impact on the attitudes, aspirations, motivations, representations, skills, and behaviour of the people celebrating some and discarding others.

Nigeria has been a perennial victim of the devious manipulation of ethnicity, regionalism and religion. Colonialism and its multi-dimensional impacts remain one major factor of socio-cultural economic and political significance in Nigeria history that accounts partly for this twist of fate. Going by this, Otonti (1964) stated that, the centrality of this epoch was informed more by the supposed artificiality of the Nigerian federal system which has the heritage of 'ethnocentricity and divisiveness' as against the desirable spirit of the operation and cohesion as precondition for development in the federal context.

Colonialism affected the social structures of Nigerian society so much that the aspect our cultural lives such as our moral and communal development which are peculiar to Nigerians are no more useful in our contemporary lives which eventually have led to loss of sense of pride and confidence in our own culture. Since the social structure that created and sustained communalism has been dislocated by colonialism and other international trends like capitalism and globalization, the system of collective values that served as the basis of communalism has been replaced by extreme individualism and cut-throat competition. Consequently, "the technical inferiority of the traditional culture vis-a-vis 'the technical superiority of the Europeans'" largely amount for the accounts of high esteem in which the dominant Europeans were held. This imperialist ideology accounts for why Nigerians strive

to copy anything and everything European, from religious practices, styles and tastes of education and assumption of European identities. These have tremendously led to neglect of, and destructive prejudice against, everything traditional. It has also resulted in the hybridization of the Nigerian elite who have been neither fully Western nor African in their tastes, preferences and values. Culture, being what it is, is always shifting its horizon, because it is only by so doing that a society is able to satisfy its changing needs within the context of its physical and human environment. We must emphasise at this point that the possibility of cultural diffusion is not an “anything goes” affair. On the contrary; there are certain peculiarities which must survive in spite of cultural variations.

Similarly, colonialism left in its wake the perpetual division of Nigeria along ethnic lines against the spirit of communalism that pervaded our traditional societies. This in itself is anti-development in addition to constituting a veritable obstacle to the nation’s quest for national integration. A distinguishing feature of post-colonial Nigerian politics is the preoccupation of the country and its leaders with achieving both unity and stability anchored on peaceful co-existence of the country’s disparate nationalities.

Scholars are of the opinion that we may have failed in exploring the traditional inter-tribal communal relations, which thrived on the recognition of our differences and respect for our visible distinctiveness. Gupta, (1968) cited by Obafemi Olu in “Cultural Diversity and National Development” argues that the linguistic situation in Nigeria is not entirely different from what obtains in other new independent nations. As he observed, most new nations are based on plurality of segmental groups. The national tie of the people to their segmental group is often valued more highly than their civic ties with the nation. This point was buttressed by Peter Ekeh’s theory of the two publics, ‘the primordial’ and the ‘civic’, which reflects the deep-seated dislocation between culture and traditional values on the one hand and the Nigerian nation state and politics on the other hand.

Contextually, the primordial public is perceived as a ‘sacred moral universe of sacrifice and duties’ typical of traditional communal life. Conversely, the civic public is ‘conceived of as a profane amoral world characterised by instrumental relationships premised on the accumulation of rights rather than duties. Similarly, Joseph (1996) also postulated about ‘prebendalism and clientelism’. Both point in the direction of appropriation of the state to service sectional enclaves. Integration of culture into the body politic and our ideologies has therefore become necessary to harmonise loyalty and centralise commitment. We agree with Armstrong when he said that there is hardly any developed or emerging nation in the world that is not artificial in

the sense in which modern Nigeria that resulted from the British colonial experience is being classified.

Arguments abound in literature to suggest that there are many multi-ethnic nations in the world whose development appeared to have been informed more by commitment to traditional values, celebration and patronage of cultural heritage, credible vision, defined mission and greater sense of belonging and above all, responsible statehood, being the most potent panacea for ethnic consciousness and loyalty. Okwudiba was of the opinion that "...ethnic groups are not necessarily homogenous entities even linguistically or culturally." Thus, we must strive to explore what is common to us all, to champion the course of our development. What is common to us all is the sharing of a social life and having a sense of common good which is an important ethical guide that directs the form of attitude and behaviour of traditional African societies. The values involved here are reciprocal obligation, mutual aid, caring for others, mutual trust, etc. These values help in the cultivation and development of peace co-existence. As Ikime rightly noted, "...whenever the issue of Nigerian unity comes up for discussion, there is a tendency for many a Nigerian to be apologetic, to find excuses which are deftly paraded as reasons why we have, almost necessarily, to remain disunited.

On his part, Biodun Adediran reasoned that constant references to the negative aspects of our plural character were among the machinations of early European writers. Among many fallouts of their writings was a ready negative impression on our cultural heritage upon which subsequent historians based their writings. For example, they are quick to amplify the impossibility of forming an enduring nation state from the ashes of what, in their own thinking, was a mere collection of disparate groups of people. To them, achieving integration was a mirage but to us, here lies an issue that calls for a renewed interest in our own history if national development is of utmost importance to us as a people within the context of the present federal structure.

As opposed to our traditional economic system with its enviable features of healthy competition, fair exchange and so on, Nigeria's pseudo-capitalism brought about by the West only succeeded in entrenching polarization deepened further by liberal democracy. As noted by many scholars, the class nature of our contemporary society brought about by this pseudo-capitalist leaning also constitutes a major impediment to societal development.

We must add that our traditional sentiment abhors appropriation of collective patrimony, much in the same way it frowns at dictatorial tendencies in whatever guises and the lack of accountability on the part of trustees of our collective communal interest. "Power was shared vertically as everyone had a say in how society was governed. Abuse of power was curtailed

by the various structure put in place to effectively check on the powers of the ruler” Without mincing words, we need a kind of cultural renaissance to enable us face the challenges of governance in the twenty-first century Nigeria. By this, I mean the patronage of culture, which should concern itself with the entire way of life of the Nigerian people; their creative, artistic, scientific and technological capabilities, benefiting them economically, morally and politically.

We must not fail to re-echo the fact that there had always been effective inter-personal and inter-group relationships amongst our people before the European incursion. This complex tradition of ethnic interaction cut across groups and societies, including the Yoruba, Jukun, Nupe, Binis, Idoma, and Igala to mention but a few. Characteristic of traditional institution were the prevalence of kinship, dynasty, and emirate system amidst notable intra and inter-societal migration of people as against isolated settlement as western scholars would tend to suggest. Without being too historical, the point must be made that the extensive interaction also meant years of admixture of populations. Indeed, it provided a context within which diffusion of culture traits as well as cultural affinities and heritage of common sojourning thrived.

One significant aspect of the collective history of Nigeria’s ethnic nationalities is that they were linked at several points and over time by the myth of common ancestry, cross-border commercial transactions, among other exchanges and ideas that seem to weld them into a unified entity. All of these naturally favour possible conception of a federal system that could have thrived on mutual understanding and cooperation were it not for the colonial interlude. Justification for a revisit of our cultural heritage is premised on the conviction that the substance of our cultural heritage can still be harnessed and explored for our development.

However, the challenge before us borders on raising the level of consciousness of the citizenry on the positive aspects of Nigerian culture, playing down the negative and retrogressive aspects of our culture and appreciating what can be borrowed from our past to sustain the present and guarantee our future as a people through accelerated education. This calls for commensurate understanding of the issues involved in order to generate an enduring solution.

Development in East Asia remains one of the global economy’s most significant post-war developments. Taking over from Japan, from the 1990s and beyond, China and the “little Tigers” of Singapore, Taiwan, and most recently the south-east Asian economies, including Indonesia and Malaysia, have filled the top ranks of the world’s economies in terms of not only their overall growth rates, but also of their human capital development, industrial

and export growth rates. Literature on Chinese success story reveals that the rudiments of an industrial base were built on culture and traditional practices that are still being exploited even now that the country has opened up to capitalist influences. Some observers are of the view that China's current economic success story would not have happened so soon but for this meaningful synergy between traditional values and modernity. Today, regardless of her population, size and diversity, an appreciable percentage of Chinese population is still largely agrarian living on basic Chinese culture and even pursuing aggressive export of part thereof. From drugs to wears, foodstuffs and consumables, *every Chinese is a proud culture ambassador for China*.

Chinese sense of moderation is indeed exemplary. Proud as they are of their culture, style taste and values, they have been making substantial gains from their creativity, exploring their environment and producing and packaging just anything from bamboo through pants, herbs, fish and fish products, to mention but a few. We can talk of at least of a convergence of tastes and preferences (between foreign and conventional) in China for example.

Making success of diversity, Malaysia was reported to have among its population ten times more ethnic Indians than Singapore does; it has thrice the number of ethnic Chinese than Singapore has. It has comparable inks with Indonesia because communication between the two countries is relatively easy in the Malay language. Malaysia has recorded balanced success despite being a multi-racial society. It has garnered substantial goodwill from her culture potential so much that her hospitality industry smells and tastes Malay traditional values.

Singapore is yet another good success story. Small as it is, the country has a diverse population of 2.5million people comprising seventy per cent Chinese, twenty per cent Malay and The per cent Indian, and virtually no resources, but responds meaningfully to the dynamics of globalization, information and telecommunication technology. With political economy deeply rooted in Singaporean tradition, productivity of her nationals reflects greatly in her annual earnings as distinct from and far beyond what is prevalent in countries like Nigeria, and many other reservoirs of global energy resources.

While we fold our arms and watch every national take advantage of our economy for relatively marginal returns and at no value to our cultural possession, Chinese language, among other values, is fast becoming an international language as it is now being incorporated into university curricula, especially in the United States. In the same manner, one is not likely to achieve much in Germany without a fair knowledge of the German language, same goes for French in France and Malay in Malaysia and probably applicable as well to India and Indonesia. The truth is that all of these countries

pace an enviable premium on their culture. The pride they hold is manifesting in all spheres of their countries development, from politics and economy through technology to human relations

Indeed, given the peculiarity of a people, our culture can serve as a vanguard of change through the value system. In any case, since our interest in the past is in the present and this present is shaped not only by on-going tasks, but also by future aspirations, our intellectual engagements with our culture and value system would be rewarding if it helps in clarifying for us yesterday's experience, today's task and tomorrow's possibilities. The definition of philosophy as a rational and critical activity helps in creating a tradition of thinking and discourse whose main focus will be on issues affecting the interests and aspirations of the people. Any society that neglects this role does so at his own peril; because philosophy in its critical and rational role, serves to challenge a people's established views of themselves and their condition as a precondition for redefining who they are and what they can be. The reappraisal of the culture and value system is to identify its strengths and weaknesses. This reappraisal is philosophically imperative and has the potential of promoting self-understanding that would provide some basis for determining the kind of socio-cultural reconstruction in our society.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have tried to establish what is impeding growth and development which is the total neglect of indigenous culture in our national life. The challenge before us is to make use of our cultural institutions to facilitate the reorientation of our youths and children to imbibe the spirit of brotherhood and serve, cultivate a sense of commitment, among other virtues of societal significance. This will go a long way in stemming the tide of intolerance, character assassination, violence, rascality and other forms of social vices. Apart from periodic interaction with the youths through programmes, agencies of government should actually begin to organise refresher course for key stakeholders in the communities who are presumed agents of change.

We need to embark on massive public enlightenment programmes that would encourage the people to take their citizenship responsibilities more seriously; they must invest their time and energy in the choice of the right men and women that would make policies. There is a total breakdown of discipline and lack of focus in many of the citizens'. Indeed, we can say that many of the citizens lack the essential attributes of patriotism; they neither articulate the interest of the nation nor even possess the wherewithal to contribute to the development of the nation.

To move forward as a nation, we need a new breed of leaders that are

sensitive, patriotic, accountable and imbued with demonstrable vision. We must admit that, a way out of our socio-economic and political crisis is the adoption of what Adebayo Adedeji describes as “a social economy paradigm of development which assumes the launching of a development process that is socially just, economically productive, ecologically sustainable, politically stable and participatory, and culturally vibrant” Return to culture must not be seen as a return to the past but, rather, an appreciation of the resources of the past and its contributions to the present as well as our imaginative response to such contributions in the light of our present problems and as a strategy towards our development in the future.

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