

Culture as a Tool for Peace, Political and Economy Sustainability in Nigeria

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Abstract

The growing global security challenges, political and economic downturn, have reawakened humanity to the imperative of culture in the society. Culture in all its ramifications is essentially man made. It is socially acquired phenomenon which is intrinsically value laden, adaptive and highly sensitive to the environment within which it evolves. Peace, political and economy stability is what every society craved for, but in man's attempt to come to terms with realities of life in order to make ends meet, violence and struggle became inevitable. In addressing these tripartite of challenges, culture being a way of life of the people and their responses to their challenges became imperative in solving our avoidable challenges as a nation. In achieving this, the paper examined the role of culture as a tool for peace, political and economy sustainability in Nigeria. To this end, an exploration of the definitions and concept culture cum cultural administration in pre-literate Nigerian society were looked into in order to inspire the present and to embolden the future. The paper therefore, made an appeal to all and sundry to go back to our roots, to identify and uphold our cultural values, norms and tradition in face technology and globalization noting that the reason Nigeria economy, peace and political stability has not actually collapsed is simply because of the strength and resilience in our culture.

Keywords: *Culture, Peace, Political, Economy, Security, Society*

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Background to the Study

The growing global security challenges, political and economic downturn, have reawakened humanity to the imperative of culture in the society. Culture in all its ramifications is essentially man-made. It is a socially acquired phenomenon which is intrinsically value-laden, adaptive and highly sensitive to the environment within which it evolves. Culture is the fundamental of human existence and the human civilization, embodying in its dynamism, the totality of a people's response to the challenges of life and living in a (any) given environment (Obafemi:2008). Culture offers meaning, purpose and value to the social-economic, political and aesthetic ethos of society. Culture is a loosely used term as there are various definitions of culture used in the social sciences, humanities, biology, and some aspects of the medical sciences. In the non-academic context, the term culture may have some emotive connotation whereby people are described as cultured or uncultured. Such descriptions generally refer to whether or not an individual is socially integrated or misfit or a cultural deviant within a given social setting or social organization (Oyeneye & Shoremi, 1985). Peace, political and economic stability is what every society craved for, but in man's attempt to come to terms with realities of life and challenges in order to make ends meet, violence and struggle became inevitable. In addressing these tripartite challenges, culture being a way of life of the people and their responses to their challenges became imperative.

Objective of the Study

The paper takes a cursory look at the definitions and concept of culture cum cultural administration in pre-literate Nigerian society in order to inspire the present and embolden the future.

The Concept Culture

Culture according to Tylor cited in Oyeneye & Shoremi (1985) is defined as the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs, and all other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. To the social anthropologists and sociologists, culture is a very important aspect of social structure. Culture distinguishes man from non-man. It also distinguishes one social organization from another. Culture therefore, not only refers to artifacts, but also ideas, technical knowledge as well as habits, values, modes of behaviour and socialization. Mitchell (1979) refers to culture as "that part of the total repertoire of human action (and its products), which is socially as opposed to genetically transmitted. Culture, from this perspective is transmitted from one generation to other through the numerous agencies of socialization. Clyde Kluckhohn and William Kelly cited in Oyeneye & Shoremi viewed culture as a historically derived system of explicit and implicit designs for living, which tends to be shared by all or specially designated members of a group. Here, culture is not only historically derived but it is also shared by members of a given society. Andah (1982) observed that "culture embraces all material and non-material expressions of a people as well as the processes with the expressions are communicated. It has to do with all the social, ethical, intellectual, scientific, artistic, and technological expression and processes of a people usually ethnically and or nationally or supra-nationally related, and usually

living in a geographically contiguous area; what they pass on to their successors and how these are passed on". Looking at these definitions, and several others in the literature, certain features of culture emerged.

Culture is shared by members of a society (both young and old). Culture is not genetically transmitted. That is, culture is not in-born, it is acquired through the process of socialization. Culture, is historically derived and, therefore, transmitted from one generation to another. Culture is created by man through the process of adjustment to the social setting. Culture is universal-found in every human society. It is, however, difficult to find traits that is common to all cultures. Culture is dynamic.

In sum, culture gives meaning to human life. It does not only shape the personality of the members of a society, it also controls their behaviour and directs their relationship within the group. According to Clifford Geertz (1973) undirected by culture patterns-organized systems of significant symbols- man's behaviour would be virtually ungovernable, a more chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions, his experience virtually shapeless.

There are two ways of looking at culture within any given society. The first way or approach is called the materialistic approach. This approach focuses attention on the material culture of the society, thereby emphasizing material things such as tools, craft, arts, artifacts, etc. Material culture, therefore, refers to the products of man's ingenuity and industry for his survival. The second approach is the idealist or the non-materialist approach. In this approach, emphasis is placed on such aspects as values, ideas and philosophy, ceremonies, music and dance, drama, festivals and religion, folklore, literature, etc. Essentially, non-material culture consists of what cannot be seen but learnt through the process of socialization.

Obafemi (2011) in Ayakoroma (edts) submitted that our cultural history and consciousness need to be re-learnt that we need to examine the artistic remains of Ife, Nok, Igbo-Ukwu, and Benin. According to him, Colonials scholars like Frobenius and Willet tried to educate us on our cultural wealth and artistry just as they tried to ferret our unquantifiable artifacts out of the country. With regard to national development Obafemi viewed that we need to go history to re-enlighten ourselves of the role of culture in social reconstruction in pre-literate times in order to inspire the present and embolden the future. It is no gain saying in Nigeria today, that we need peace for political and economy stability. This is what culture offers in any given society. Cultural materials and cultural industries remains a good alternative for government to diversify the economy of the nation from the mono-product economy dependent on oil. Culture is the surest way to achieving that effective administration. Culture and politics, with regard to nation-formation, are inseparable as culture is fundamental to human existence and civilization.

The Concept of Culture in Pre-Literate Colonia Era

Culture has always existed in all human societies. During pre-colonial period, several activities relating to culture were inextricably interwoven with the socio-economic and

political administration of societies when the guardianship of arts and culture were in the hands of the Kings, Obas and Emirs who then delegated powers to their sub-ordinates. There were no written policies on the administration of arts and culture then but they were preserved, presented and promoted through oral means, traditional festivals, carvings and artifacts. In the pre-colonial period, cultural activities existed and flourished within tribal kingdoms or empires Fasuyi (1973).

The culture which includes, dances, songs, regattas, traditional wedding, storytelling, inventions, carvings and other artifacts were preserved and exhibited in form of traditional and religious festivals which served as a means of displaying society's potentials for promoting its status, reassuring the citizens of their collective capabilities and responsibilities, as well as advertising them for the well-being of the society. Cultural events were most popularly expressed through festivals, exhibitions, playing music and dancing in the open. It was also marked by the traditional and religions habits of the people. From its inception, culture is used to mirror the society as they tried to depict and influence the socio-economic and political realities.

The Concept Culture Colonial Era

The colonial era refers to the period between 1900 and 1960 when Nigeria was under British rule and influence. The period witnessed the cultural activities that were formerly appreciated and encouraged by traditional rulers gradually deteriorating. This was as a result of a shift in power and authority from the traditional system of government to the British colonial system of administration. The colonial administrators were more concerned with trade and commerce than promoting culture in Nigeria (Fasuyi, 1974).

During the period, the colonial administrators were deliberately or otherwise sought to impose western culture upon the people and as such, they imposed English language in schools rather than indigenous traditional languages. The children now learnt things that were foreign to them instead of the traditional socio-cultural expressions they were born with. This in effect greatly reduced the importance of social status and function of our indigenous culture which include, dance, folklore, painting, craft, music etc. For example, the oral traditional poetry which introduces the children to traditional intelligence was de-emphasized or totally neglected. Many of the old crafts such as hand-made cloth, wood carving and brass casting were in danger of extinction for lack of encouragement and support from the colonial administration. Emphasis was now on the new cultural forms such as European music and dance, films, photography and other graphic arts, were developed at the expense of our culture (Nwabuoku, 2002).

Furthering his argument, Nwabuoku (2002) asserts that the lack of emphasis on the Nigerian culture by the colonialist was as a result of the fact that they misinterpreted our culture as primitive and classified them as fetish and idol worship. In spite of the colonial administration's attitude in de-emphasizing Nigeria's traditional cultural matters, some aspects of the culture were later encouraged. One of such was the appointment of Kenneth Murray, an Englishman to teach Art Education in Government College, Lagos

and the appointment of Ben Enwonwu in 1947 as the first indigenous art supervisor. His duties then included the promotion of Nigerian arts, locally and abroad through exhibitions and lectures. Also the establishment of the Nigeria Magazine, a publication by the government on educational and cultural matters is noteworthy.

To capitalize on their achievement, in 1948, the government established the Yaba Technical Institute (now Yaba College of Technology) in Lagos, with the aim of providing in-service training for graphic artists in different government departments, for the development of art-education. In 1949, the British Council – an arm of the government instituted a Nigerian arts and festival programme to showcase the various Nigerian Arts forms such as drama, dances, music, painting, carving and so on. This initiation however, materialized into the first Nigeria Festival of the Arts on the 23rd of April, 1950 with Sir John Macpherson as the chairman.

The Concept of Culture Post-Colonial Era

The major landmark during this period recorded was the establishment of the Ministry of Information in 1966 with Ben Enwonwu as the Head of Cultural Division. The division was vested with the responsibility of planning and handling government cultural programs such as national festivals and international cultural exchange. In 1970, the cultural division was mandated by the Government to organize the first post-independence National Arts festival. The aim of the festival was to commemorate the country's Independence anniversary and to mark the termination of a protracted civil war in Nigeria from July 6th 1967 to 15th January 1970 to promote national unity and integration after the civil war. In 1975, a decree establishing the National Council for the Arts and Culture (Decree No. 3 of 1975) was promulgated and formerly inaugurated with Aigmoukhuede as Secretary. This however marked the beginning of a new direction on the part of Federal Government towards the provision of professional guidance to an effective cultural administration (Fasuyi, 1973).

The objectives of the council as promulgated by the decree Decree No. 3 of 1975 are as follows:

1. To promote and foster the appreciation, revival and development of Nigeria Arts and culture
2. To plan and co-ordinate cultural activities in Nigeria and foster development of the literary, visual and performing arts in Nigeria and
3. To assist the antiquities commission in the creation, acquisition and preservation of works of arts.

In line with the above, in 1976, the government declared open the first Ultra-modern indigenous National Arts Theatre complex at Iganmu-Surulere, Lagos in anticipation of its desire to host the Second world Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) beginning from the 15th January – 12th February, 1977. The hosting of FESTAC '77 by the government was however to promote and foster the growth and development of indigenous Nigeria arts such as the literary, visual and performing arts for a more

concrete administration which later resulted to the formation of the National Policy on Culture. This development however led to the emergence of more cultural institutions such as the Center for Black and African Arts and Civilization (CBAAC), National Institute of Cultural Orientation (NICO) and many states Arts Councils (Adedokun, 2001).

Culture to summarily put, is transmitted by learning; and learning requires social interaction. Culture is contingent on any society or any group of people sharing common views involved in any interaction in order to achieve particular goals. It is clear from the foregoing that culture includes virtually everything a does, or does not; arts, language, dressing, culinary disposition, building patterns, and so forth. It is however with dismay that government over the years still yet to grapple with the role of culture in the society. These include wrong perception of culture (as being fetish) even by policy-makers and top government official's consequent upon these, Nigeria is suffering from degeneration in our value system, growing decline in human relationship, violence among the youths, political intolerance, and dwindling economy structure.

The Nigerian Society in Review

Peace is defined as a harmony between different social groups that is characterized by lack of violence or conflict tendencies and the freedom from fear of violence. It is commonly understood as the absence of hostility and retribution (Wikipedia Encyclopedia). Peace suggest sincere attempts at reconciliation, the existence of healthy or newly healed interpersonal or international relationship, prosperity in matters of social or economic welfare, the establishment of equality and a working political orders that serves the true interest of all. Peace is what every society and nation craved for but in man's attempt to come to terms and grips with nature and his environment to understand it and survive in it, violence becomes inevitable. Peace, strives in a society where culture is celebrated while violence and other anti-social behaviours triumph in society where culture and cultural matters are thrown into the history of waste bin, a situation we are experiencing in Nigeria with government apathy to culture and cultural matters.

There is no doubt that Nigeria is in a serious dilemma of character deficit in all facets of life and this calls for all and sundry to go back to the root. The "root" according to Haverkort, Hooft and Hiemstra cited in Addetoro (2018) calls for endogenous development which does not emphasize confrontation between the knowledge and value system of the west and the rest of the world, but recognizes the need for diversities in values, scientific concepts, technologies, development approaches, farming styles, biological system, cultural expressions and lifestyles. The reckless abandonment of dignity and integrity of yester years for current craziness for ill-gotten wealth and criminalities calls for everyone to go back to our roots he emphasized. Today, Nigerian youths are living with value conflicts in a confused social world. In the bid to survive and live good in the society, many of youths takes to crime and violence, drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, computer scam, getting-rich syndrome, laziness, disrespect for sanctity of life, lack of purpose and vision and other social vices. The negative moral values are no doubt leading to family

dysfunctionality, cultural erosion, corrupt mentality, stealing by tricks, ethnic and religious jingoism, youth restiveness, democratic deficit, strangers in politics and educational disorder. Charity begins at home, so says a popular Yoruba adage. Unfortunately, the saying has gone into oblivion today. The family system is in disarray in Nigeria due to uncaring attitude, poverty and lack of fear of God. Undoubtedly, many families in Nigeria are no longer serving as agent of socialization but an institution of neglect and diminished integrity. Cultural education, norms and traditional values to be transmitted to youths has been jettisoned for acquisition of wealth and materialism. To this end, most of the youths were forced to dropout from schools systems to become criminals and militants hence disturbing the peace and tranquility of the nation. Today, most of Nigerian youths have turn out to be political thugs and economic sabotages as a result of frequent oil-pipeline vandals and incessant bombing and kidnappings across the nation hence bringing untold hardship on the economy of the nation.

Militancy in Nigeria unarguably, is a factor of youth restiveness. The issue of Niger-Delta militancy dated back to the 1950s during the era of minority questions why the Boko Haram insurgency had its root in Maitatsine riots of the 1980s through the Jihad of Usman Dan Fodio of 1804. Later developments, however, suggested that both Niger-Delta and Boko Haram restiveness were compounded by poverty, political struggle and international conspiracies. The political dimension of it was the use of the militants against oppositions during the 2007 and 2011 general elections (Adetoro, 2015). In alternative for economic survival in Niger-Delta, the youths in the region continues to engage in hostages-taking and kidnapping for ransom as well as oil-pipeline canalization while the Boko-Haran in the North thrived on similar practice and act. The Fulani-Hausa herdsmen attacks on innocent citizens are resultant effects of youthful restiveness. Beyond incessant poverty, killings, kidnappings among other social vices that characterized the state of the nation today, corruption is another strong factor that undermine the peace, political and economy development of the nation. Culture, being the totality of the way of life of a people in their daily attempt to control their environment, Nigeria as a nation, possessed "Culture" to address these tripartite challenges of peace, political and economy sustainability confronting the nation today.

The Imperative of Culture for Peace, Political and Economy Sustainability in Nigeria

The imperative of culture for peace, political and economy sustainability requires the efforts government, policy-makers, traditional leaders, community leaders and individuals to recognize the primacy of culture in the society. To succinctly put, it is a call for all and sundry to go back to our roots identify and uphold our cultural values, norms and tradition in face technology and globalization. To this end, the traditional leaders, government, parents and individuals has a role to play. The traditional leaders are close to the people and can, therefore mobilized the different organizational forums for the purpose of revival of culture for peace, political and economy sustainability. Beyond the role of traditional rulers, the mass media also have a role to play in the regards. The mass media remains an important organ of the society that must be encouraged to project Nigeria's cultural heritage. An historical survey of development of mass media in Nigeria

shows that the first newspaper (Iwe-Irohin) established by Reverend Henry Townsend in 1850 at Abeokuta, devoted some pages to an examination of cultural degeneration in Nigeria. The paper condemned the attitude of some Nigerians who wore European dresses that were not conducive to the prevailing climatic conditions in Nigeria. This simple example shows what the mass media can do in the present day Nigeria. The mass media illuminate the social fabric of a nation. They are people's watchdog. They represent useful tools for persuasion and mobilization.

The film industry popularly known as Nollywood is cultural industry with multi-billion naira which employs thousands of actors, set designers, costumier, story writers, script writers, cameramen, photographers, soundmen, light designers, directors, editors, and producers. The industry in no small measure added enormously to the Nigerian economy, thus, reducing the unemployment rate in Nigeria. Thorough their films issues on peace, political and economy sustainability were captured to the teeming viewers both at home and abroad. For an instance the effort of Tunde Kelania renown film producer and cinematographer is appreciated in this regard. His works like "Olekun", "Kosegbe", "AgogoEwo", Saworo-Ede, "TiOluwa Ni Le" among others extensively dwells on national issues.

Drama as non-material aspect of culture deals with man and his immediate society. Great drama in any society serves an alternative sociological tool in the understanding of a society. For instance, Wole Soyinka is one writer who has consistently demonstrated his aversion for the failure of post-independence African government to offer good governance years after the successful break with colonial rule. Some of his protest plays in this regards include "Kongi's Harvest", "The Road", "A Play of Giants", "Opera Wonyosi" among others. Notable, Nigerian playwrights in this category include, Femi Osofisan with plays like "Once Upon Four Robbers", "Moruntodun", "Twingle-Twangle" etc.

Festivals in Nigeria are part of cultural industries in the sense that the full focus of what we call the dialectic of culture is imbued in festivals. The Festivals, as a people culture is a manifestation of their creative synergy as well their political and economy disposition. Music, dance, drama, costumes, masquerading, and masks are some the aspect of festivals. Traditional festival in every society till day remains an effective to tool which people use to forestall peace and harmony. In every society, traditional festival serves as a way correcting the follies and foibles of the society. Most often than not, traditional festivals are used to cleanse the land of evils and welcome a new season.

For instance, masquerade as a festival is an art that has its roots in ancestral worship because of its ancestral manifestations. It uses mask that aids disguise and mimetic impulse. It is perceived as an entity that embodies the spirit of the ancestors. The Yoruba, for instance considers the ancestors as 'departed spirit of their forebears. The ancestors were the all-important link between the material and spiritual worlds. Okoye observes that:

All African traditions recommend that masquerades be perceived as supernatural beings that are guests of the living from the extra-mundane universe. They discourage the perception of them as representations by actors wearing costumes and masks; rather, the costumed actors are regulated as the spirits themselves, respected by the community appropriately as befits their spiritual characters (qtd in Ododo 285).

Thus, the annual ancestral visit, in masquerade form, to the land of the living is revered and respected with many functional values and socio-political controls. For Instance, “Eku” performance art enjoys so much importance amongst Ebira people because of its linkage to ancestral celebration. For the Ebira, Eku is an ancestral spirit; the 'masked' performer is not perceived to represent the ancestor but seen as the ancestor himself because the human agency in the 'masked' performance is wilfully denied. Eku is part of Ebira cultural cosmos; it is not a religion but a significant part of a way of life because it is an organizing force of the social system of the people. Every Ebira person, irrespective of contemporary religious persuasion, is inextricably woven into the Eku concept, because its ritual and performative essence are directed at improving the entire society.

As a popular festival, Ekuechi is celebrated and accompanied by poetry, chants, mimicry, mime, dance, 'mask' and significant cultural symbols. It is very colourful, vibrant, vigorous, invigorating, and has great capacity to induce audience participation. Songs, music, dance, interpretative drumming and colourful and weird costumes with makeup are its mainstay. It is an arena for assessing the creative ingenuity of the Ebira because of the rich presence of cultural artefacts used to enhance the artistry of the performance. The ritual essence of Ekuechi is firmly rooted in the fact that it is not an enactment but a celebration of a living experience with virtual existence for grounded in the chthonic. As a coordination of the temporal and spiritual essences, Ekuechi breathes a life of its own and maintains organic structure. A typical Ekuechi performance runs for one night and ends in the early hours of the succeeding morning.

In Nigeria today, Osun-Osogbo Grove has been designated as UNESCO's World Heritage Site and its annual festival has become a force to reckon with. It is common knowledge that, the festival attracts people from all walks of life, over the world. This people, in turn, contribute to the economy by buying souvenirs, staying hotels, eating, drinking, using cabs/buses, and buying indigenous arts and crafts. Also, the Eyo festival, otherwise known as, the Adamu Orisa play in Lagos, is a festival, which dates back to 1854 and qualifies as an aspect of cultural industry. Quoting Oba Gbenga Sonuga in Kalejaiye (2015) “the reason that the Nigeria economy has not actually collapsed is simply because of the strength and resilience of its cultural industries”

Conclusion

The word “peace” is relative to political and economy development of any nation. In search for economy development, politics, identity, definition and meaning culture became relative. Thus, a nation that has lost touch with her past definitely will make her

future irrelevant. In sum, culture gives meaning to human life. It does not only shape the personality of the members of a society but controls their behaviour and directs their relationship within the group. The paper identified two ways of looking at culture within any given society. The first way or approach is called the materialistic approach. This approach focuses attention on the material culture of the society, thereby emphasizing material things such as tools, craft, arts, artifacts, etc. Material culture, therefore, refers to the products of man's ingenuity and industry for his survival while the second approach is the idealist or the non-materialist approach. In this approach, emphasis is placed on such aspects as values, ideas and philosophy, ceremonies, music and dance, drama, festivals and religion, folklore, literature, etc. Essentially, non-material culture consists of what cannot be seen but learnt through the process of socialization. The paper concluded that, for Nigeria to enjoy peaceful co-existence and to come out stronger from our political and economy challenges we need to embrace our culture and potentials therein.

Recommendations

The study identified that lack of cultural awareness and proper cultural education among citizens and incessant government are factors responsible for peace, political and economy instability in Nigeria. To promote peace, politics and economy sustainability in Nigeria, the paper recommends that government at all levels should recognized the primacy of culture in their developmental plans. To forestall peace, political and economic growth and development in the country the paper recommends that Community leaders, the Obas, Emirs, Chiefs etc, of respective communities should help in preventing culture in going into extinction. Also, the State Council for Arts and Culture and other Cultural Institutions in Nigeria are advised to be committed to the preservation, promotion and propagation of culture in order to fulfill the purpose of their creation. Apart from oil in Nigeria today, cultural industries remain a great source of revenue for government. To this end, government and private bodies are encouraged to partner with the professionals in cultural industry for economic growth and development. It is important here, to emphasize the relevance of research in cultural documentation. Hence, scholars, historians, cultural officers and archeologists are advised to redefine their research priorities in such a way that the result will enhance peoples understanding of the dynamics of the surviving cultural forms, how they have developed through historical time and their relevance in contemporary Nigeria. In the past, in our traditional culture, the society was policed and controlled through folklore. Thus, cultural components such wise sayings, cultural games, riddles and jokes, etiological folktales, communal living and others methods of cognition, need to be included in schools curricular to enhance peaceful existence.

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