

PERSPECTIVES ON NIGERIA'S CHALLENGES IN NATION-BUILDING

Volume I



Edited by
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Volume One

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In memory of

Professor Ibrahim James, 1942 - 2019

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19. The Crisis of Cultural Globalization and its Implications for African Development: A Case of Nigeria

Oyeniya Solomon Aboyeji

Introduction

In a global age, no country and its people, if ever so before can be an island. Each culture has its historical background and each nation today borrows from another, embraces and adapts some aspects of the past. From time immemorial, Africa has been linked with other parts of the world, thus her history has been bound up with the histories of foreign lands and the outside world. No doubt, Africa has had a glorious past in which she made significant contributions to the growth of civilizations and world development. No doubt, the nations of the world face many important international issues such as peace and security, gender issues, democracy and good governance,¹ globalization, economic recession, among others that affect the development and survival of human civilization. However, modern telecommunications, transportation, tourism, multinational corporations, neo-colonialism, cultural and religious festivals have contributed to the globalization of culture. Olupona and Rey attest that:

Globalization is producing culturally portable practices through which new forms of innovations are being legitimated in new localities using various forms of knowledge. ...Clearly, advances in technology and communications have abetted today's increasingly unrestrained flow of cultures, peoples, and ideas, such that the term "global village" is transformed from cliché into reality.²

Cultures though are never static or wholly isolated, a particular culture may have an individuality which sets it off sharply from other cultures, but invariably, it has been influenced by external contacts.³

The colonial period has remained an important epoch in the socio-political evolution of Africa. African countries came under foreign domination at the turns of the 20th century and were effectively

governed until independence from 1957 to 1974. Africa thus witnessed such socio-political, cultural, technological and economic transformations that left their impact on post-colonial Africa. In their different views, the Modernization, Marxists and balance-sheet approach scholars had in many literatures debated the pains and gains of colonialism and its aftermath. While the Modernization scholars like Lloyd P.C.,⁴ Gann L.H. & Duignan P.,⁵ and Perham M.⁶ assessed the impact of colonial rule in Africa as a blessing; the Marxist scholars like Walter Rodney posited that "the vast majority of Africans went into colonialism with a hoe and came back with a hoe."⁷ Ofanogoro W.,⁸ among others represents the balance-sheet scholars.

Nonetheless, in consonance with Bala Usman, it is widely assumed that one of the most important consequences of colonialism in Africa is the subversion and *destruction* of the pride and confidence of the colonized in their culture and the inculcation of beliefs in its inferiority to the culture of Europe in general.⁹ The author is of two views to what has happened to African culture overtime: *continuity* and *change*. First, some aspects of African culture are irresistible and would continue to survive the test of time. This view is substantiated by Otite & Ogionwo thus, "Evolution denotes a continuous process of change in which something in its current form retains the essential characteristics of its original form."¹⁰ Hence, Africans like other peoples of the world are inseparable from their history and culture, for their history is the record of what they did, thought and said and their culture is the totality of the ideas, concepts and values that characterized their societies. These aspects of socio-cultural legacies surviving the relentless onslaught of the 21st century have been enumerated by the author in another publication.¹¹ The second which is the main concern of this paper focuses on the aspects of African legacies threatened by extinction and oblivion. Since the focus now is on foreign influences on African culture, occasioned by *diffusionism* and *acculturation*,¹² a cursory attention needs to be paid to the relative concept, culture.

The Concept and Meaning of Culture

Edward B. Tylor is reputed as the first scholar to coin and define the word, culture in his work, *Primitive Culture* in 1871 (reprinted in 1958). He provided one of the earliest and clearest definitions of culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."¹³ According to Adeyemi, the word culture is derived from the Latin word, 'colere' meaning to tend or cultivate or to worship.¹⁴ Culture is a loosely used and relative term, as there are various definitions to practitioners in the social science, humanity and biology. Some writers, adopting the *materialists* approach tend to conceive culture in terms of material things such as tools, crafts, arts, artifacts, etc while others adopt the *idealist* approach, emphasizing such components as ideas, value, philosophy, festival, ceremonies, dance, music, religion. Several definitions made by scholars need not be recapitulated.

As there are many and varied environments, there are varied cultures without any being inferior or superior to the other, since one man's food could be another's poison. The Yoruba speaking peoples have a saying that *a foreigner has eyes but cannot see* (meaning that a non-Native in any community normally finds it difficult to appreciate the way of life, the values and norms of the particular community). Whatever may be the expressed view, one thing is central to all, the ability to adapt to the various environments. The culture of the Africans is unique while that of the Europeans is equally unique. It is in this light of the uniqueness of our culture that we ought to respect and cherish what individual holds as his/her valued culture. For instance, the English kiss loved ones; a man may kiss a lady on the cheeks as a symbol of love and affection or in the lips with deep passion if they are lovers. The continental Europeans do something quite different—men kiss their fellow men on both cheeks. An African who has never lived in either of these cultures would consider kissing their fellow men as ridiculous and feeble, although chiefs may embrace distinguished guest as a sign of cordiality and welcome.¹⁵ Besides, the English gentlemen get up for a lady (lady's first), but an African lady, unless she is westernized or

uncultured gets up for a man. Again, the mother is the owner of a child in Ghana and India while the father owns a child in Nigeria (in same Africa).

All these various ways of behaving are parts of culture which are captured and expressed in the 1975 UNESCO Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Accra that:

Culture consists of all the material, moral and spiritual assets, works of art, knowledge and knowhow, language, ways of thoughts, forms of behaviour and store of experience accumulated with a view to building a better society, meeting the needs of a constantly developing world.¹⁶

Of a truth, in discussing African culture and values, the author is not presupposing that all African societies have the same explanation(s) for issues and events; same language; same mode of dressing and settlement pattern; same colonial experience and so on. Therefore, generalizations about traditional Africa are always dangerous because of the distances of time and space that are involved. Nevertheless, there are obvious underlying similarities shared by many African societies which, when contrasted with other world cultures, reveal a wide gap of difference. It is on this background that this paper objectively discusses some general disdain, condemnation and striking departure from the glorious past which are cankerworm to African development. A casual visit into any African society reveals the truth of the matter. However, specific cases in point were drawn from Yorubaland, Nigeria than any other.

Dwindling Aspects of African Culture

The subversion and *destruction* of the pride and confidence of Africans made possible by weapons such as Islam, Christianity, Western education (indoctrination) and the various economic policies became baits that trapped the people. Damages have been so far reaching that even after the physical bondage (political independence) seems to have ended, the mental bondage continues. African values, cultures, religions and languages seem to have been largely eroded and in some cases

substituted with foreign ones. The psychological effect of this reflects in the value judgment of the people, thus practically transcends from mental to physical captivity, which sets the motion for acculturation. If today, Africa has what she could call her own culture, it is a relic of its natural form. Of all the cultural losses, the *loss of identity* is the most aggravating and excruciating, for one without a group identity is as well as being non-existing. Historically, facial and body markings belonged to the traditional African society. Body marks on a general note could be natural (i.e. birthmarks or moles that permanently remain on any site), circumstantial or inadvertent (caused by accidents only to either fade out overtime or remain as permanent scars) and humanly determined (customized).

As body marks range from features such as birthmarks, moles, body piercings, tattoos and scars; pathologists and scarifiers (*olòlòlā*) distinguish between body marks and injuries that have been sustained accidentally. Only the man-made or customized marks by the *olòlòlā* (scarifiers) can accurately be said to be such that would speak of some individual persons in a group or individual groups in a nation or a pluralized society. It is in this case the issue of tribal identification comes to fore as body marks can be characteristic of an individual and can be used to support identification, in conjunction with medical or police records and with identification given by family members.

The criticism of the ancient custom of permanently disfiguring the skin (tribal/facial and body marks) for the purposes of identification and decoration nailed its coffin and relegated it to the background. In his book, *The History of the Yorubas*, Johnson attests thus;

The facial marks are for the purpose of distinguishing the various Yoruba families (the Oyo, Egba, Egbado, Owu, Ijebu, Ife, Ondo, Ijesa, Yagba, Igbomina, Ekiti, etc). Of these, only those of the principal ones can be indicated. They are designated:- Abaja, Keke, or Gombo; Ture; Pele; Mande; and Jamgbadi.¹⁷

The purpose of such scarring was not always for the attainment of increased attractiveness by the wearer (i.e. decorative marks; body painting, tattooing). At times it was used in a protective manner,

superstition being that evil spirits might be warded off by certain marks. A heavily mutilated face or artificially decorated face and body could scare away enemies, or act as camouflage while hunting.¹⁸ Considering the hazards of infection and pain suffered from the prolific marking leading to a great deal of mortality, coupled with the 'civilization' of the day, this act has been considered inhuman, barbaric, detestable and out of vogue. Safe the marks on an *àbíkéú/ogbanje* (born to die child), traditional facial and body marks (i.e. incisions, female circumcision, etc) have waned and in some places not survived the test of time in the face of trending fashion and modernity.

Speaking on the origin of language, Olasope posits that "...language is the only distinctive human attribute. It is the uniquely human faculty, a cognitive system with its expressive form for which culture and its superstructure of thought, worldview, and psychosocial specificity of a people exhaustively serve as reference".¹⁹ Another evidence of the falsification and stealing of the African legacy is glaring in the *language of communication*. Credited to UNESCO (2003):

Linguistic diversity reflects the existence of the multitude of languages spoken in the world which is variously estimated at between 6,000 and 7,000 languages. Safeguarding this diversity today is one of the challenges facing our world. Estimate suggests that at least half of them are in danger of disappearing in the coming years. While some countries are linguistically and homogenous such as Iceland, many countries and regions display a wealth of linguistic diversity i.e. Indonesia, with over 700 languages and Papua New Guinea with over 800 languages... Over 70% of all languages in the world are found in just 20 nation states...²⁰

All the countries in Africa employ the language of the former colonial masters as language of official communication (*lingua franca*), culture and access to science and technology which, has really relegated the indigenous languages that had served the various ethnic groups in all facets of life before colonial rule to the background. Akinbi and Akinola quoting Ngugi wa Thiong'o affirm the reality that:

....only very few Africans speak the foreign languages and that the use of these as language of literature automatically deny majority of Africans the benefits of such literary works. This compromises the tendency of making such the cornerstone of national literacy tradition. Thereby submitting that 'African thought, literary thought, is imprisoned in foreign languages'.²¹

Paradoxically, many African languages are being exterminated by their people themselves as they embrace foreign languages. The example of language patriotism, mono-cultural identity or language for cultural identity in Mexico, Hungary, China, (i.e. Mandarin, majority language in China spoken by almost 9 million people) etc show that language is the vehicle for cultural dissemination. Every language, therefore, is capable of expressing the whole experience of the people who speak it. In consonance, Iwara admits that:

It has to be recognized that we cannot express all our thoughts in their subtlety in another's language. It is impossible because one cannot live in one culture and express oneself perfectly in the language of another culture.... We have to think in terms of developing our own indigenous languages because our language competence is directly linked to development. As long as we are not capable of thinking in our own indigenous language, we are 'like people whose tongues have been pulled out'.²²

Again, a casual visit to any African community proves the fact that many young adults and most youths do not want to be identified with their local languages i.e. Ga, Ewe, Fanti, Twi in Ghana; Hausa, Yoruba, Ibo, Efik, Edo in Nigeria; Dyula, Agni, Baule in Ivory Coast; Swahili, Bantu in Kenya; Bamba, Tonga, Nyaja in Zambia; Kongo, Kingwara, Luba in Zaire, etc. When asked questions outside their official and academic environments, they often prefer to respond in foreign languages (French, English, Arabic, etc) so as to 'boost' their social ego even when some find it difficult to construct simple and correct sentences in the colonialists languages. In Nigeria-Yoruba land for instance, when occasionally compelled to speak in the mother tongue, they tend to speak Lagos Yoruba commonly called 'yí'. This

development is not only due to English, being the medium of instruction and the lackadaisical attention and disdain to Yoruba as a course of study, but languages and cultural values at home. Little wonder then, African languages are dying gradually, what is left has lost their essential ingredients: intonations, poetic form, idioms and proverbs. Regrettably, the fact seems to remain that it has become fashionable to speak the colonialists' languages better than the indigenous and whoever could not speak the colonialists, is scorned and laughed at. Mazrui best captures this situation with his experience when Idi Amin overthrew the government of Milton Obote in Uganda:

We even chose our leaders on the basis of credentials in the skills of Europe. I was in Uganda on the day of Amin's military coup. The voice on the radio was ill at ease with the English language. The voice gave 18 brilliant points why Milton Obote had to be overthrown. The points were written in English, but the significant thing is that the man who was reading the statement was not at home with that language. My students at Makerere, laughed at the idea of having a president who spoke broken English. They would listen to Idi Amin. Their negative attitude was not because he was capable of using harsh method against his opponents, their negative attitude was instead expressed thus, 'Listen to his English! Ah, this man is president of Uganda.'²³

Mazrui describes the situation as sheer 'linguistic and cultural dependency'. Introducing literacy in the mother-tongue will no doubt yield better results. There should be mixed/hybrid policy of education where both the adopted foreign language (s) and the mother tongue can functionally co-exist.

Apart from the use of language to reflect African worldview and culture, the most distinguishing characteristics of autochthones, peoples and nations throughout the world is the system of authentic identification in the choice of personal-names through which citizens from some geographical entities i.e. Chinese, French, English, Nigerians (Ibos, Yorubas, Hausas, Edos, etc) are certainly identified. Indigenous languages and personal names are the two important national cultural traits of certain lingua francas (i.e. English, French), the use of national

personal names becomes the obvious index of authenticity.²⁴

In Africa, personal names reflect ethnic group's world view, culture, religion and languages. Examples abound in different religions of the continent where names become automatically associated with peoples, with their character and characteristics. Such names include *Nwacharo* (He who must travel), *Akello* (Gift from God), *Awiti* (Survivor), *Njoki* (Returned from the dead), etc in Kenya; *Farah* (Joy), *Hibe* (Excellent), *Liban* (Blessed), *Hur* (Light), *Tonyar* (Slim), etc in Somalia; *Sipho* (A gift), *Nomsa* (Kindness), *Ntombi* (A gift), etc in Swaziland; *Tafirinka* (We die for our country), *Tankura* (We have come of age), *Mutsa* (Mercy), *Simba* (Power), *Rudo* (Love), *Tendai* (Praise), *Sibongile* (Thanks), *Ruwa* (Flower), *Chipo* (Gift), etc in Zimbabwe; *Koffi*, *Lao*, *Lago*, *Kipre*, *Sore*, *Idrissa*, *Ameen*, *Binta* etc in Cote d'Ivoire; *Alien*, *Tamsir*, *Dembe*, *Awa*, etc in Gambia.²⁵ Where these names are in their primordial forms, they are inseparably associated with ethnicity or linguistic groups. An 'average' Nigerian or a person conversant with its citizenry will tell outrightly, the ethnic or linguistic group or at least the state of origin of a given personal name in the country. He knows that *Adeniyi* or *Oyedepo*, *Emeka* or *Okeke*, *Rimi* or *Kano*, *Omorge* or *Osagie*, *Okon* or *Offiong*, *Fom* or *Pam*, etc is from Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa/Fulani, Benin or Edo ethnic group, Cross River State and Plateau State respectively.

Personal names are therefore not accidental in Africa. They are rooted in the culture of the ethnic groups to which they belong. They are of more eloquent index of identification than any other forms of cultural manifestations. Samuel Johnson writes thus:

There are three sets of names a child can possibly have, although not every child need have the three; one at least will be inapplicable. Amutorunwa- the name a child is born with (Taiwo, Kehinde, Idowu, Ige, Salako, Yetunde, Babatunde)...The abiso- the christening names giving significance of something, either with reference to the child itself or to the family. Hence, the saying- ile laawo kato so omo loruko (the state of the house must first be considered before naming a child). Such circumstantial name include names having reference to the child itself directly and indirectly to the family (i.e. Ayodeji, Ibiyinka); names having reference to the

family directly and indirectly to the child (Ogunmola, Oyebisi); names compounded with Ade, Ola, Olu, Oye, though now used more or less indiscriminately, originally belonged to one of high or princely birth (i.e. Adebisi, Olaleye, Olubisi, Oyeyemi); names compounded with fetish names showing the deity they worshipped in the family (i.e. Ogundipe, Omiyale, Fabunmi, Osuntokun, Oyawusi); etc. The third, being the Oriki or cognomen attribute or pet names (i.e. Ajamu, Alibi, Ayoka, Asabi, Abebi) and also the Orile or Totem denoting the foundation of origin.²⁶

The blind acceptance and great irregularities in names borne by Africans and the loss of either first name or surname or both (loss of identity) were due to contact with foreign cultures. The so-called baptismal or religious christens for example, resulted in culture modification in favour of the colonizers. Again with the so-called 'enlightenment', 'civilization' and 'modernity' even the educated elites appear not to see why Philip Jones or Geoffrey Williams should be more Christian than Aboyeji Oyeniya or Oginga Odinga.

Intensification of Christian (Biblical) and Islamic (Qur'anic) names to children to the extent of giving foreign names to domestic animals is highly lamentable. As nothing sticks as fast as a name and there is nothing more difficult to eradicate, Africans are losing the knowledge and the genius of the method in naming their children. Many converts had changed their traditional names to Christian/Muslim names i.e. Abogunrin-Abolurin, Sangoyomi- Oluwayomi, Ogunbayo- Olubayo, Islamiyat, Dawodu, Musa, Abdullahi, Mohammed. According to Osaji, "in some states in Africa, Arabic names have replaced both the indigenous first name and surname such as Murtala Muhammed, Usman Ahmed, while in numerous mixed-religious states, only the first names are affected i.e. Abdul Attah, Rasah Iyaji, Moshood Abiola".²⁷ Many educated young adults and youths or students do not want to be identified with the indigenous/village names in cities or academic institutions. Worrisome today is customization and Anglicization of local names (references to Yoruba names here) as found on the facebook and socio-media walls: Temytophe for Temitope, Tosyne for Tosin, Herfolayan for Afilayan, Holuwayommy for

Oluwayími, Ohluphemy for Olufími, Horiyommy for Oriyími, Teeteelaryhor for Titilayí, etc.²⁸

Elaborating on the trending Anglicization and customization of names, Komolafe identified several key spelling strategies to include: the respelling type (Harriyher Holuwahfunmmy-Ariyí Oluwafunmi); the reverse spelling (Bayí-Yoba, Tunde-Ednut); segment swapping (Tobi-T-boi, Jonah-Najoh); interlingual literal translation (Ìla-wealth, Dimeji-Turn Double), truncation/shortening (bun-Bun, Fashiku-Fash, Gloria-Glo); blending (Damilíla Salakí-Dansal, Dapí Oyebanji-D'banj, Toba Bello-T-Bell); reduplication (Shade-Shad-shad, Joshua- Jo-jo, Yími-Yímyí); conversion (Funsho-Fun show, Jíkí-Joke); initialism (Shíla Kílade-SK, K'hinde Kílawíle-KK); lexicalization of abbreviation (Bílaji-Beejay/BJ, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan-GEJ, Idowu-ID, Jumíkí-JMK, Bisi- Beesee/BeeC); mathematical symbolization (Dimeji-D2, Fíla-4lar, T'ni-Xny, Tunde-2ndey, Tutu-2-2, Jílayími John-J2); transcription (Busrah-Bushrat, Désíre-Desire); affixation (Bukíla-Bukky, Fími-Fímo, Ade-Adesco, Yími-Yímmex); etc.²⁹ Gone were therefore, days where from the names of citizens from some geographical entities, one could say with some certainty that such individuals bearing that names are Chinese, Japanese, French, Germans, Italians, English, Russians, Nigerians (the Ibo, Yoruba, Hausa, Edo, Efik, etc).

Again, from time immemorial, Africans were known to be their *brother's keepers* with several virtues often times referred to as *Ímíluabi* among the Yoruba ethnic group. Today, several vices such as moral and social decadence, corruption, lack political will and accountability, political mandate through rigging, bribery, ethnicity, assassinations, deceitful appearance, teenage pregnancy, selfish individualism, social class, etc have substituted virtues such as love, honesty, decent dressing, communal sharing and collectivism, sexual chastity, hard work, respect, etc. the so called western civilization and evils of globalization is swiftly leading Africa and her citizenry to a moral shipwreck. In his view, Rodney posits that "Africans have ceased to set indigenous cultural goals and standards, and lost full command of training young members of the society. Those were undoubtedly major steps backwards. This

can be simply termed *loss of attitude and character*.³⁰ Similarly, Akinbi & Akinola opine that "in a typical culture of the African like the Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria, character (*vwa*) is a central virtue and dictating factor in the life and relationship, be it friendship, business partnership or marital relationship."³¹

Another side effect of foreign contact is the successful inculcation of the *spirit of inferiority complex* (loss of confidence in oneself) and little or no patriotism in Africans. Abdou Moumini, an African educationist, cited in Walter Rodney attests that "colonial education corrupted the thinking and sensibilities of the Africans and filled him with abnormal complexes".³² Colonial politics across Africa engendered widespread inferiority complex as the indigenous populations were made to believe that their institutions, beliefs and practices were inferior to foreign ones. In realizing this, Toyin Abe, referring to the British in Nigeria attests thus:

The local people had to be dominated and pacified. The British began its method of exploitation, domination and underdevelopment by tapping Nigeria's resources for the development of their country. The exploitation, impoverishment and underdevelopment persist after colonialism. This is not strange because those nationalists who took over the government from their colonialists simply inherited the state rather than design strategies to transform it.³³

Africa is neck-deep in culture importation leading to underdevelopment. Africa's unique and popular cultures expressed by Camara Laye in his book *African Child*, in Leopold Senghor's poem, *I Will Pronounce Your Name*; Kwame Nkrumah's emphasis on African personality; and pledges of national loyalties and faithfulness as contained in national anthems and pledges, etc that are to be embraced and promoted by Africans themselves are lamentably, far from being nationally appreciated. This view of loss of originality (acculturation) is expressed by Nangoli thus:

An African today is neither loyal to his race nor country but has instead, strong loyalty to himself as an individual or foreign interest.

Years of imported cultural values from without have destroyed its Africaness and replaced it with a distorted personality that is neither African nor European. He intellectually best expresses his life affairs via western paradigms. Like a fish put off water, he has no choice but to perish sooner or later!³⁴

Moreover, gone were the days of sexual chastity and early sex education. Sex was considered sacred in African society. Casual sex was despised and frowned at while homosexuality is a taboo. The first and probably known popular method of family planning, among the Yoruba especially, is abstinence supported by tribal traditions and taboos, such as prohibiting sexual intercourse before marriage. Much value was placed on virginity. Both the bride-groom and the bride were expected to be ignorant of the enjoyment involved in sexual intercourse. Young men were permitted to have intimate friends among the spinsters and they were often the guest of each other...yet, strict chastity was the rule not the exception.³⁵

Furthermore, each community is headed by a traditional ruler, the king (or head). In consonance with Olumide Kayode, "in the traditional communities, the kings and chiefs are accorded due respect and are believed to be "second to the Divinities."³⁶ Still emphasizing his sacred role as both a ruler and a priest, Parrinder reveals that:

It is not surprising therefore to find that in many parts of Africa, the King or Chiefs are regarded with religious awe. He forms yet another link in the hierarchy of society, which passes from men to kings, to ancestors, to gods and up to the Supreme God of all.³⁷

It is worrisome to ask today that do kings and traditional chiefs (community leaders) retain their semi-god power, public respect and all round functions like they were? Every festival is the concern of the king.³⁸ As the godhead in any society, it is the responsibility of every king (or head) to promote, maintain and sustain the culture and tradition of his people. Omotoye laments thus:

It is rather unfortunate, that some traditional rulers who are to protect there the culture and tradition are trying to dissociate themselves from the exercise...Contestants for Obaship (kingship)

positions are always struggling to get the exalted office. However, as soon as they are appointed to the office, some quickly forsake the custom and tradition of their people... Traditional rulers in this category are more zealous for the propagation of Christianity and Islam than preserving traditional culture and values.³⁹

Most contemporary traditional leaders who should ensure the day to day activities in their domain do so in correspondence, they do not reside with their subjects. Nangoli testifies to the obvious departure thus:

Gone were the days of the Golden Stool. The good old days. Those were the days of purpose. Those were the days of proud kings, emperors and chiefs ruling over flourishing kingdoms and empires!... The ancient African societies then were highly organized and sophisticated.⁴⁰

Traditional chiefs or community leaders should, therefore, be well oriented and where necessary called to order, to stop dragging their God-given authority in the mud at the floor of a commoner (godfather) without a single drop of blue blood, a political merchant, simply because they want to be graded and for those already graded because they want their official cars changed to bigger ones. They have made themselves so cheap that they are no more than *errand boys* and political canvassers, *civil public servants* who have lost their traditional authority and prestige.

Also, it is important to note that human behaviour which ethics study refers to human conduct which includes both the inward and outward activities such as intention, motives, desires, speech, movement and physical actions.⁴¹ Africans had and respected their work ethics most of which were community ethics and values. In general today, western educated Africans (mostly youths) appear to be less respectful, less truthful, less discriminative of right and wrong, more selfish, more culturally disdainful, more immoral than traditionally educated illiterate Africans. Lamentably, the traditional work ethic is fast disappearing particularly among the elite in the public sector, a result probably due to the impact of contemporary social attitudes and values among the

literate urban dwellers. This is less so in the profit-oriented private sector as well as among the generality of the unlettered and unskilled masses who must work hard to make their living.

One of the work ethics factored in the day-to-day activities of the pre-colonial African society was punctuality and condemnation of unproductivity. Hard work was stressed as the key to success and a step to riches in any endeavour as their ethic abhorred laziness and idleness. They were well guided by work ethics which guided their code of conduct. A popular Swahili saying is: "Treat your guest for two days, on the third day give him a hoe."⁴² This suggests that a guest is actually not supposed to have waited that long before he asks for one because a sense of shame ought to have caught up with him as an idle guest. Examples of popular sayings among the Yoruba (representing what was generally approved and upheld across Africa) include: *òwúrò Ìlójó, máà fí òwúrò se eré* (the morning shows the day, do not toy with it) to encourage punctuality as the soul of business; *òkánjùwà baba olè, yán-mi-lójú baba gbéwiri, òkánjùwà toun tolè Ìgbílgba ni wón íse, èpè kò pómí olè dàgbà* (greed is the father of thieves, the fearless thief, is the father of pick pockets, the greedy and the thieves are one and equal; curses do not allow for the child of the thief to grow) to detest laziness. The lazy was disrespected in the society and he was usually the primary suspect in case of stealing. It was held that one who would not work, would eventually become a beggar, pauper, thief or an inconsequential person of low reputation in the community. Consequently, a convicted thief was publicly disgraced, imprisoned and in severe cases executed. Self-accomplishment was also stressed, rather than what was graciously inherited as a man would not rely on what he could inherit from his relations if he wished to avoid poverty. Hence the Yoruba sayings: *agbájú lógún ológún fira rè fún òsù ta ni* (he who depends on a legacy exposes himself to poverty); and *àtél'wó 'ni èí tan ni í j'* (meaning one's personal handiwork assuredly brings fortune). Many of these work ethics and societal values feature in the old surviving Yoruba poetry:

Isé lógùn isé, múra sí isé òrè mi, isé lafiún d'ni gíga, tí akò bá rēni fēbintì bii òl' làá rí. Bí akò bá rēni gbékèlè at'ra mósé 'ni; ohun tí abá sisé fún ní n pé lówó 'ni. Bàbá r' leè lówó lówó, iyá r' leè lésin lèèkàn. Tí o bá gbójú lèwín, otaá tán ni mo wí fún í. Ìyà mb' fún Ímí tí kò gbón, 'kún nb' fún Ímí tí óún sá kírí. (meaning -hardwork is the antidote to poverty, be hardworking my friend. It is hardwork that makes us great, if we have no one to depend on, we look like a lazy person. If we have no one to rely on, we would work harder. What we do not suffer for does not last. What we work hard for lasts for in our hands. If you rely on them, you are finished, I warn you! Suffering awaits a child that is foolish, tears awaits a child that runs aimlessly about).⁴³

However, on the balance, while hard work and the physical efforts/ input were emphasized, the spiritual dimension to getting rich in a positive way was not de-emphasized. It was widely held among them that *"kitàkità kò mílà, ká sisé bí 'rú kòda ùnkan, orí ló mí isé àsèlà 'ni* (struggle in life does not guarantee wealth, to work like a slave does not achieve much. Only destiny (God-factor) knows one's appropriate job that can make one rich).⁴⁴ The spiritual dimension of positively getting rich emphasized the fact that destiny can aid material success; it does not however suggest that people should resign to fate without working hard for their material possession. Therefore, pre-colonial Africans were guided by their consciences, occupational taboos (which promoted professional co-operation, mutual respect and chastity) and community-based ethics. The principle was that the common good took precedence over the individual good. This synergetic nature of the African society would make two or more than individuals to pool their resources together and uplift each/one another up economically via the system of contributory saving schemes differently known in their local names (i.e. *ají*-Yoruba, *Adashe* by the Hausa, *Esusu* by the Ibo, *Stokvel* in South Africa, Tanzania's *Upatu* or *Kibati* and so on). *Vis-à-vis* labour supply, they co-operated in the execution of both communal and personal projects such as building houses, cultivation of farms (*Ìw' / Ááró* among the Yoruba) and so on for their members. When any was in difficulty, all members rallied round as a problem that affected his nuclear, extended family and the community at large.

Individualism was never encouraged since Africans were not only brother's keepers but also realized that an evil done by an individual could heap disaster upon the whole community. Therefore, the nature of the traditional African society did not give room for poverty to rear its head as pronounced in the contemporary times

Today, the collectivism that allowed people to build and cultivate together in love or the kinship relations held in premium have been largely substituted with the Western individualistic model and religious cum ethic affiliations. Consequently, vices have overtaken several cherished virtues as societal decadence has led to moral bankruptcy and shipwreck. The current situation witnessed in many African nations is the substitution of the much cherished values of decent work ethics, God-factor, brotherhood, empathy and so on with individualism, greed, selfishness, social stratification/oppression, shortcuts, quick money syndrome, win at all cost syndrome, materialism, corruption, low/lack of patriotism, slothfulness and dereliction of duty. Falola observes this counter-productive attitude and recommends thus:

It is doubtful if the developing countries can progress without changing their current attitude to work and development. Most educated people have developed an aversion to work when it involves government and communal projects. The people do not identify themselves as part of the government; there is no 'we feeling'. There is an urgent need for governments to mobilize their people for collective efforts. Citizens have been led to believe that their respective governments can do everything for them. This is impossible. It is also important to revolutionize the work ethic; initiative, motivation and ambition should be encouraged.⁴⁵

It suffices to say that if poverty was synonymous to laziness because poor people were regarded as the lazy individuals, then, African poverty situation is a modern phenomenon traceable to some of the problems of modern life especially urbanization resulting into individualism.⁴⁶

The once upon a time unbiased and justice, connoting liberty, freedom, equality and fair play is almost becoming elusive in African societies. To them, it meant equality of all persons, irrespective of the

