



CULTURE AND SOCIETY IN POST-COLONIAL NIGERIA

Papers in Honour of Ulli Beier

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Editors

**Ohionna I. Pogson
Ayo Adeduntan**

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Guest Editors

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Contents

Editorial Comments	viii
Foreword	ix
Contributors	x
I. IDEOLOGY, WORLDVIEWS AND PRAXIS	
1. He Lived Among the <i>Orisha</i> : Ulli Beier and Yoruba Cultural Revival	3
– <i>Wole Ogundele</i>	
2. An Introduction to the Cosmology and Beliefs of the Yoruba-speaking Peoples of Nigeria	17
– <i>Doig Simmonds</i>	
3. Transnational Religions, Colonialism and Cultural Effacement in Africa: A Study of Some Selected Ethno-Cultural Groups in Kebbi State, North-West Nigeria	38
– <i>Nathaniel D. Danjibo</i>	
II. ECOLOGY, SPIRITUALITY, MEDICINE AND HUMAN HEALTH	
4. Cultural and Ecological Information Dissemination in Post-Colonial Nigeria	59
– <i>R.R. Aduradola and M.O.O. Oyatogun</i>	
5. Medicine, Spirituality, and Health: Connecting the Nexus for Heuristic Research in Nigeria	76
– <i>Alex E. Asakitikpi</i>	
6. Socio-Cultural Beliefs and Ecological Development: A Critical Look at the Yoruba Ecological Zone of South-Western Nigeria	91
– <i>Olubayo Oladimeji Adekola</i>	

III. POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

7. Quest for the Preservation of Preventive Measures
Against Conflict in Post-Colonial Yoruba Society 99
– *O.B. Olaoba*
8. Culture, Democracy and Governance in Nigeria 112
– *Ighodalo Akhakpe and Justine C. Igbokwe-Ibeto*
9. Governance and Violent Conflicts in Nigeria:
Interrogating the Linkage 127
– *Osumah Oarhe and Efe Oyibo*
10. Culture and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria 145
– *Tony Onwumah*
11. Cultural Transformation of the Yoruba Under the
Nigerian Democratic Dispensation 162
– *T. Kehinde Adekunle*

IV. GENDER ROLES AND (WO)MEN'S RIGHTS

12. Gender, Culture and Power: Understanding the
Nigerian Context 175
– *A.I. Pogoson*
13. The *Aṣigbo* Sash: A Symbol of Power and Authority
Among the Owo Women of Ondo State, Nigeria 191
– *Aretha Oluwakemi Asakitikpi*
14. Widowhood Rites: An Overview of Inter-Gender Conflict 204
– *Ebenezer Tegbe*

V. MATERIAL CULTURE, MEDIA AND PERFORMANCE

15. Adaptation of Traditional Art Forms to Develop New
Ideas in Modern Nigerian Art 225
– *Ayo Elebute*
16. Performance and Orality as Cultural and Pragmatic
Strategies in the Musical Performance of 9ice 240
– *Adewale Ajayi*

17. Social Media and the Question of Cultural Identity in Nigeria	256
– <i>James Okolie-Osemene</i>	
18. Re-Africanising ‘Motherfucker’: Nigerian Hip-Hop and the Translocation of <i>Dissing</i>	270
– <i>Ayo Adeduntan</i>	
Index	285

CHAPTER TEN

Culture and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

Tony Onwumah

Introduction

Nigeria is in its 51st year of political independence. Interestingly, the period has witnessed more of military than civilian or democratic governance. Indeed, but for the decade between 1999 and 2009, when civil or supposedly democratic rule prevailed, Nigeria's post-independence political history could have been one of military dominance with occasional civilian intervention.

In the last fifty-one years, the country organised several elections. All the elections but for the ones of 1993 and, to a large extent, that of 2011 had varying degrees of flaws. These include outright election rigging, where the votes counted at polling centres out-numbered the figures of registered voters. There were also rampant reports of the snatching of ballot boxes and the "buying" of votes. Other activities which subverted the electoral process included intimidation of voters and connivance of the security agents, especially the police, mainly with the political party in power to rig elections. Unfortunately, the media of mass communication, the fourth estate of the realm, and an organ which should perform its duties with transparent objectivity, failed abysmally. For instance, some radio and television stations, announced unauthorised election results so long as such results favoured the political party with interest in the media house.

Even the print media, in reportage and editorials, brazenly reflected and projected partisan views and interests to the detriment of the sacred tenets of journalism on fairness, truth and objectivity. During the Second Republic, the *Tribune*, *National Concord* and the *New Nigerian* were the worst offenders. The consequence has been that more often than not the

Nigerian polity is over heated and, as a result, open debates and frank discussions, which are the hallmarks of democracy, are curtailed. Thus, in such a precarious and chaotic environment, mass participation in governance also becomes difficult and nearly impossible. Put otherwise, the volatile and intolerant Nigerian political environment not only makes democratic practice seemingly difficult and unattractive, it equally makes the derivation of its benefits a forlorn and far-fetched dream.

Ironically, while democracy has proved beneficial to the western world, Nigeria and indeed other African countries are yet to come to terms with the gains of democracy. It follows that something must be wrong. Since democracy has succeeded in many parts of the world, it is not plausible to argue that something is wrong with either the concept or phenomenon of democratic governance. Instead, it only stands to reason that the searchlight should be beamed on Nigeria in the effort to unravel the cause(s) of the failure of democracy. All of the above point to one fact. That is, democracy has not taken a firm root in Nigeria.

This paper therefore, addresses some key issues. First, what is democracy and what is democratic consolidation? Second, to what extent has our values, traditions, heritage and institutions, that is our culture, been made the bedrock of our democratic experimentation. Third, what can we as a people do to entrench democracy, get the peoples to understand and appreciate it and ultimately maximise the gains which are derivable.

Conceptual Analysis of Democracy

There are as many definitions of democracy as there are scholars. The simple definition, merely conceptualises it as government of the people, by the people and for the people. But, because of the complexity of modern societies, in terms of governance, the concept of democracy now seems to defy precise definition. Its main emphasis is mass participation, its ultimate goal is good governance that would ensure the greatest good for the greatest number. Its driving force is, while the majority rules, the views and interests of the minority must be safeguarded. In different societies, it grew and blossomed in response to the peculiar cultural and historical experiences of the people involved. That is why, for example, we have the British parliamentary democracy and the American presidential democracy as products of the unique historical experiences of these societies. For example, Britain does not have a written constitution, yet the society is functioning well. This is in

contradistinction to America where the constitution is written. Regardless of this difference, democracy is functioning well and serving the best interests of these countries. Diverse and varied as the practice and definitions of democracy are, yet there is a consensus that it conforms to some minimum conditions. In this regard, Obasanjo and Mabogunje (1992:30) capture it succinctly as follows:

They define democracy as a way and system of governance whether in an organised setting or otherwise, based on the following essential elements:

- (1) Right of choice;
- (2) Freedom from ignorance and want;
- (3) Empowerment and capability;
- (4) Respect for the rule of law and equality before the law;
- (5) Promotion and defense of human rights;
- (6) Creation of appropriate political machinery;
- (7) Sustained political communication to create trust and confidence amongst leaders and the populace;
- (8) Accountability of the leadership to the followership;
- (9) Decentralisation of political power and authority;
- (10) Periodic and orderly succession through secret ballot.

Comprehensive and convincing as the above definition may be, we could criticise it on two main grounds. The first, it made the issue of majority rule more implicit than explicit. Majority rule is so vital to democracy that it should be explicitly stated in any definition.

The second is the use of secret ballot. Good as this may sound, it is not until an election is based on secret ballot before it could be adjudged as free and fair. If an open ballot system could constitute a safeguard against election rigging, then there is nothing wrong in its adoption. After all, the 1993 elections based on Option A4, a system by which voters queued behind the candidates of their choice, was an open system yet it was seen as the freest and fairest election in Nigeria's electoral history. These objections notwithstanding, we shall adopt their definition as a point of departure for this paper.

The challenge of electioneering is that votes hardly count in Nigerian elections. As a matter of fact, election monitoring groups from within and outside the country attest to this. It is true that election materials, where available, may arrive late at polling stations and it is also true that

election results have been announced for places where voting never held.

So much has been said and written about electoral inadequacies in Nigeria, yet very little attention has been paid to the costs and consequences of the deficiencies so easily noticeable in our elections. These costs and consequences range from the political to the social and the economic.

- (1) Politically, fraudulent elections make it possible for the wrong people to be at the helm of affairs. Instead of the majority, it is the minority that governs. The examples of Anambra State under Chris Ngige, Ondo State under Olusegun Agagu and Edo State under Professor Osunbor are good cases in point. This breeds political violence and intolerance thereby heating up the polity.
- (2) It portrays the country in very bad light as a place of politically immature and intolerant people who cannot conduct free and fair elections.
- (3) Socially, it leads to apathy and cynicism. The number of people on voters' register shows that only a few people are interested in the electoral process.

Nigerians have actually grown cynical about elections on the premise that their votes may not count. According to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Nigeria is a country of 150 million, yet only a small percentage of the population register as voters. INEC's report has it that only 67,764,327 million Nigerians registered to vote during the last voter registration exercise. The number of those who actually voted also gives cause for worry. During the elections, the presidential election recorded the highest voter turnout of only 38,209,978. For other elections, such as the senatorial gubernatorial elections, the figures were dismally low. On the economic front, the cost of conducting elections has become so high. To ensure vigilance, a lot of personnel are involved in overseeing elections which are eventually criticised and ultimately condemned as falling short of international standards. It therefore portrays Nigeria negatively in the international scene and scares away foreign investors and the much needed foreign exchange. As a result of political violence, the brightest minds are too scared to participate in politics. This leaves room for mediocrity to thrive in Nigerian politics.

Democratic Consolidation

Logically, a keen observer of Nigeria's political history, especially with regard to the practice of democracy, will not have to look too far to conclude that Nigeria is still far from democratic consolidation. But first of all, what is democratic consolidation?

By democratic consolidation we refer to a system and a process by which democracy has come to be accepted and entrenched as a way of life in a society. It refers to a society which has practised democracy for a reasonably long period of time with minimal or without disruption at all. For instance, India, which gained independence in 1947, is a good example of a country where democracy has consolidated. Others include Britain and the United States of America. But for the long period of apartheid, the Republic of South Africa could easily pass for another country where it could be stated that democracy has consolidated. Countries which have consolidated democracy share some common attributes. In these countries, democracy has become a way of life, or, in another sense, the people's way of life include democracy as an essential ingredient.

Nigeria, in spite of all the mistakes of the past, is gradually graduating into the group of countries where democracy has consolidated. However, the plethora of election petitions and election dispute cases in court casts a shadow of doubt on its willingness to accept democracy as a way of life.

In the countries listed above as places where democracy has taken firm roots, there exists remarkable political tolerance. In these places, politics is not a do-or-die affair. Because there is tolerance and adherence to the rule of the game, politicians know that the loser today may be the winner tomorrow. These are societies where plurality is well managed and does not constitute a clog in the wheel of progress. For example, contrary to the common notion, a country like Britain is far from being homogenous. It has some small nationalities like the Irish, Welsh and the Scottish. Yet the smaller nationalities, while pressing for self-determination, have always ensured that they act in a manner that will not hinder democracy.

Though we are all conversant with the resistance and struggle of the Irish for greater self-determination, yet it is noteworthy to state that such separatist tendencies have not been allowed to assume uncontrollable dimensions. This claim is, however, not unmindful of the occasional

armed conflicts between the Irish Republican Army and other British forces. The fact that a polity has a consolidated democracy does not necessarily mean that it is completely devoid of differences and disagreements. But such differences are made to recede into lesser focus in the overall interest of the larger society. For instance, in India, we have heard of political differences which sometimes culminated in assassination (e.g. the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984), but the country has managed to remain united.

Additionally, in such countries, the military has learnt to remain subordinated to civil authority. India has been independent for more than sixty years, yet there has not been one instance of military takeover of the affairs of state. In Nigeria, and some other African countries, the military is the greatest threat to democracy. Because the military sees itself as the government in waiting, they don't allow the politicians to make and learn from their mistakes before taking over the reins of government. It is heart-warming that in the West African sub-region, Ghana is also emerging as a consolidated democratic polity, because she has had uninterrupted civil rule for over a decade.

It needs be stressed also that, a vital platform on which enduring democracy has been established is the existence of strong institutions such as the legislature, the judiciary and to a large extent the police and the electoral body. In these places where democracy has been consolidated, the legislature cannot fail in the discharge of its oversight functions. While one checkmates the other, the legislature and executive are essentially partners in progress. This could be contrasted with the situation in Nigeria where the legislature is a self-seeking and self-serving arm of government. Nigerians are too conversant with the bribe for budget scandal that it may not be necessary to dissipate time and space on it here. Under the current dispensation, apart from being generally unproductive in failing in their oversight functions by passing only a few bills and motions, the legislature at both the federal and state levels have actually turned out to be one of the burdens of democracy. In a country where the majority of the masses are under suffocating and excruciating poverty, it is appalling that legislators earn obscene and worrysome outrageous salaries. For the avoidance of doubt, the National Association of Seadogs, in an article in *The Guardian* of Monday, 13 September, 2010 captures this situation as follows:

It is quite troubling that despite being fully aware of the increasing desperate financial situation of average Nigerians on the heels of ongoing worldwide financial meltdown, the lawmakers could display such insensitivity by proceeding to vote for the following increases in their salaries and sundry allowance for themselves and their presiding officers. The Senate President is to receive in addition to his salary and other entitlements the sum of 1.6 billion annual "Constituency Allowance". The Deputy Senate President will in addition to other benefits earn a constituency allowance of ₦600 million, senators each will make monthly salary of ₦2.48 million plus allowances and annual constituency allowance of ₦380 million while, the Speaker of the House of Representatives in addition to his salaries and other benefits earns ₦350 million annual constituency allowance. Other members of the House of Representatives shall earn ₦1.98 million monthly salaries plus ₦45 million quarterly constituency allowances which translate to ₦182 million annual constituency allowance.

The statement continues:

It is curious and indeed worrisome to note that these increases were not provided for by the "Revenue and Mobilization Allocation and Fiscal Commission" (RMAFC).

It concludes:

The increases were not only arbitrary but fly in the face of the financial realities facing average Nigerians. This is nothing short of treasury looting by legislative fiat.

For more details, please see tables one and two below

Table One: Newly approved Salaries and Allowances for National Assembly Members

Federal Law-Makers	Monthly Salary	Annual Salary	Annual Constituency
Senate President	₦278,477.28	₦3.4 Million	₦1.6 Billion
Deputy Senate President	₦259,781.28	₦3.2 Million	₦600 Million
Senators	₦2.5 Million	₦30.00 Million	₦380 Million
Speaker House of Reps	₦175,461.92	₦2.105.00 Million	₦350 Million
House of Reps Members	₦1.985 Million	₦23.82 Million	₦182 Million

Source: The Guardian Newspaper Monday 13 September, 2010, p. 65.

Table 2: Additional Information on approved Allowances for National Assembly Members

Approved Allowances	Senators	Representatives
Accommodation	150%	150%
Furniture	150%	150%
Car Loan	250%	250%
Personal Assistant	25%	25%
Duty Tour Allowance (per night)	N23,000	N21,000
Estacode (per night)	\$600	\$550
Domestic Staff	50%	50%
Entertainment	20%	—
Utilities	25%	10%
Recess	10%	10%
Newspaper/Periodicals	10%	10%
Responsibility	10-5%	—
Constituency	125%	75%
Severance Gratuity	300%	3,000%

Source: *The Guardian*, Monday 13 September, 2010 p. 65.

The legislature is not alone. The judiciary is another source of worry in relation to the successful entrenchment of democracy in Nigeria. The judiciary has to contend with structural problems which make cases to be unnecessarily delayed, and it is a well-known saying that justice delayed is justice denied. More problematic is the fact that cases which have to do with elections are also delayed, sometimes for years before judgment is delivered. For example, in Anambra, Edo and Ondo States, the wrong candidates occupied offices for upwards of two years before judgments were delivered against them. For the period, the people of such states were under the governance of those they did not vote for.

If the delay in the dispensation of justice may not always be the fault of judges and other ministers in the temple of justice, what can be said of corrupt judges? In a situation where corruption has crept into the rank and file of the judicial system, the law court is no longer the last hope of the common man and this is a big threat to democracy. The

example of Honourable Justice Salami and the Chief Justice of Nigeria is a case in point. It is however heart-warming that the new chief Justice of Nigeria has promised to fight corruption in the Judiciary. To this end, he has promised far-reaching judicial reforms.

Another factor which attests to weak institutions as contrasted with places where democracy is deep-rooted is the absence of a free and fair press. The practice of journalism is done in such a way as to promote and project the interest of media owners and their partisan affiliations. The subtle and unwritten policy is: he who pays the piper has a right to dictate the tune. While journalists may be free in editorials to air their views as they may deem fit, this must not be the case in news reporting, especially on political issues. In many instances, unauthorised announcement of wrong election results led to political violence with dire consequences in terms of the loss of lives and property.

A corollary to the above is the issue of the Nigerian police. In advanced societies with a strong democratic tradition, the police are not used as a weapon of the state for the harassment and intimidation of hapless citizens. Experience has shown that this is not the case in Nigeria. Examples abound where the police have been used by politicians for partisan purposes, and particularly for the settlement of scores with opponents. Recall, for example, that a one-time Governor of Anambra, Dr. Chris Ngige, was arrested for some hours by the Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG) in charge of his zone. The said AIG claimed that he was acting on instructions. In the same manner, during the Second Republic, the commissioner of police in Anambra State was alleged to have defied the instructions of the State Governor.

In the same vein, strong political parties and strong politicians who are ideologically committed are part of the feature of countries where there are strong democracies. For example, in Nigeria, there is frequent carper-crossing and change of camps for flimsy excuses. The most disturbing scenario was during the Abacha regime when the then five political parties were bent on the adoption of Abacha as presidential candidate in his self-succession plan. In a society where politicians are worth their names, such self-succession plan would have been unheard of. According to Babawale (2007), weak parties, where members are not loyal to the party leadership and parties in which there are no party programmes are some of the problems of democracy and development in Nigeria.

An Analysis of Culture

Culture is one of those concepts that are so commonly used but whose meanings are quite often taken for granted. Nonetheless, despite the variety of ways in which it is used, it could still be subjected to a definition. For instance, A.C. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn, as quoted by Okpo Ojah (2001:16), define "culture as consisting of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including artifacts ... ideas and especially their attached values". However, another universally accepted definition of culture was offered by a renowned British anthropologist, Edward Burnett Tylor (1871:20), who said that "culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits of man acquired by man as a member of society". In his definition, Hutchinson defines culture as "the class of all the behaviours exhibited by a group". From the above, a few things are easily deducible. Culture is a group thing and not an individual affair. To that extent therefore, it is neither biologically acquired nor biologically transferable. There are two sides to culture, the material and the non-material. The material part of culture refers to those things which are the creations of man in his quest to conquer, dominate and harness the resources of nature to the optimum. They include such things as houses, farming implements, clothing, utensils, etc. created or invented by man to enable him maximise the benefits of the resources of nature.

The non-material aspects of culture refer to the ideas and values created by members of a social group. While ideas refer to notions, views, and beliefs about things, values are things to which people attach importance. The nexus between the material and non-material aspects of culture is that material culture exists because of the values attached to them.

Based on the above, it follows that all societies have cultures. It is the mechanism for the regulation of human affairs in terms of man's relationship to his fellow man and to the larger society. It is through the lenses of culture that human conduct could be assessed as right or wrong. Though culture is universal, in its practice and manifestations it is specific and peculiar to each society. Another characteristic of culture is that it is dynamic. It keeps changing by the influx of new ideas and practices. Ideally, as it receives, it also donates cultural traits to other cultures. The phenomenon of globalisation has further aggravated the dynamism of

culture change and contact.

Unfortunately, under the influence of globalisation, it is Euro-American cultures that are globalising. As a matter of fact, democracy, as we know it today and as currently practised globally, is one such product of globalisation. It would be easily noticed that under the unipolar world, American emphasis on its brand of democracy is part of its grand design to foist its culture on the entire world. This statement makes a discussion of ethnocentrism appropriate at this juncture. Ethnocentrism is the evaluation of other people's culture by the standards of our own. Indeed, more often than not it is the view or impression that one culture is superior to another. Ironically, the pioneer anthropologists who discussed ethnocentrism and propagated the notion of the equality of all cultures are the ones who sought very desperately to demonstrate that African cultures were inferior to the cultures of other human species. It is for this reason that we have such usages as 'primitive', 'tribe' etc., which were pejoratively used to refer to aspects of African cultures. Indeed, the current African cultural disorientation is easily traceable to the orchestrated onslaught and negative campaign of the west against African culture. For instance, our religion is seen as primitive, same as our language and other aspects of life. The goal is to assert that Africa, before the advent of colonialism, had no cultural or epistemological achievements.

Refocusing the discussion on Nigeria, we ask, is there a Nigerian culture? In other words, are there set of practices on the basis of which one could talk of Nigerian culture. According to Onwuejeogwu, there are about 445 ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. Therefore, it may not be possible to speak of a Nigerian culture, yet there are some traits common to Nigerians.

There is the culture of respect for elders and for constituted authority, though different peoples put different emphasis on it. However, the fact that not much respect and support is given to constituted authority will be discussed in subsequent parts of this discussion. The question is: Constituted authority by whom? Deep religiosity is also another trait that is common to all Nigerian ethnic groups. Other common traits include the culture of honesty, transparency and hard work. The list also includes family continuity, communalism and creativity.

Culture and Democracy

In the earlier section of this paper it was submitted that democracy grew in different societies as a response to the historical challenges of such

societies. It is therefore a product of their culture. Therefore, to examine and understand the challenges of democracy in Nigeria, we need to understand the nature of the Nigerian state. In the first place, the Nigerian state is a colonial heritage. Before the white man came there was no country called Nigeria. The present ethnic sub-nationalities existed as autonomous groups and were independent of each other. It was in 1914, based on the ideas of Lord Lugard, that Nigeria came into being. That is why the country has been described as a geographical expression or the mistake of 1914. Till date Nigeria is still an aggregation of societies in search of nationhood.

During colonialism there was a disconnect between the state and society. Rather than the state serving the interest of the society, the reverse was the case. Thus, there was distrust and recriminations between state and society. The masses actually knew and felt that they had nothing at stake in the state. The relationship between the state and society under colonialism was based on the ideology of the superiority of European culture over our indigenous culture. On this, Oloruntimehin (2007) writes:

... every form of colonialism constitutes a veritable revolution in the life of societies which it subjects to alien rule. Colonialization as a process involves profound transformations of the world views and values of the colonized. It involves a deliberate cultivation of a *sense of inferiority* on the part of the dominated, and their reorientation towards the goals and value systems of the dominant people (Oloruntimehin, 2007:15).

Even in instances where the colonial overlords found traditional institutions acceptable, on the premise that it could serve their political and administrative purposes, such institutions were modified into new entities. For instance, the chieftaincy institution is a case in point. Because the colonial masters wanted to rule through Nigerian chiefs, the institution was modified in such a way that the traditional source of their legitimacy was no longer their societies but the colonialists. Since the colonial overlords had the power to appoint the chiefs they (the chiefs) had no choice but to give allegiance to the colonial masters. Normally it should be expected that the culture of the master is the culture of the servant. As a result of the distortion of indigenous cultures, the educated elites who took over governance at the demise of colonialism had no firm grasp of Nigerian cultures. They therefore attempted to govern the country on the basis of alien cultures. The net result has been a further aggravation of the disconnect and alienation between state and society.

The effect of all these is that Nigeria, culturally speaking, is in a state of flux. While the people have neglected their own cultures, the efforts to be westernised have proved tragically futile.

More tragic is the fact that existing political structures are borrowed. Therefore, their implementation has been less than successful. This has made military intervention in politics very easy. Unfortunately, the military did not fare better than the politicians they replaced. Military administrations in Nigeria occasioned so much callousness, insensitivity and treasury looting, that at the end of the day they left the country in a far worse state than they met it.

Where Do We Go From Here?

In Nigeria, though the last elections have been adjudged free, fair and internationally acceptable, by other indices, democracy is still a long journey ahead. The starting point of this journey is that there is need for our mode of governance or more appropriately our democracy to be made relevant to our culture. On this, Oloruntimehin, once again states:

... congruence between culture and mode of governance is an urgent necessity, the fulfilment of which would bring Africa and Africans into the mainstream of humanity and world civilization. We need to mobilize our cultural heritage to promote democratic forms of governance that would make us live our life as part of humanity and make contributions to human progress (Oloruntimehin 2007:19).

Nonetheless, so much of this has been stated in the past. The consensus is that the non-inclusion of our culture not only in our democratic experiments but also in our overall developmental agenda accounts for our current state of underdevelopment. The point is that we should now go beyond advocacy or statements of intentions to the enunciation of practical steps on how in real terms we can incorporate or make our culture relevant to our democratic practices.

This is what Kitgard puts forth in a paper titled "*From let's to How*". In this paper, Kitgard appears to have been fed up with the emphasis on 'let's incorporate culture into governance'. According to him, emphasis should shift from the acceptance of the desirability of our heritage and culture to be infused into our systems of governance to an explication of how this could be done in practical terms. In his paper, it is the belief that to fully incorporate our culture into democratic governance long

and short term approaches are required. In the short term, there is the need to overhaul our system of federalism. Under the new arrangement, there should be more decentralisation in such a way that the local government which is closer to the grassroots is enhanced and strengthened. This will entail that specific roles should be assigned to traditional chieftaincy institutions. We base our argument on the following premise:

- (a) They are the real representatives of the people, the custodian and embodiment of their cultures, traditions, values and heritage. Because of their closeness to their peoples they alone, more than any other authority, can preserve, project and represent their interests. The issue of whether their roles should be constitutionally spelt out has attracted arguments and counter-arguments. While Obasanjo and Mabogunje argued against constitutional assignment of roles to them, we think otherwise. The argument is that constitutionally defined functions may bring traditional rulers against or sometimes under the influence of politicians. This argument is weak because lack of constitutionally defined roles may easily lead to abuse and usurpation of functions. It has also been argued that the chieftaincy institution is anachronistic and its mode of ascendancy undemocratic. But the important questions are: Is it generally acceptable to the people? Does it serve their best interests, wishes and aspirations? If answers to these questions are in the affirmative, then it serves the best interest of democracy. Without prejudice to the above recommendations, efforts should be made to insulate them from partisan politics.
- (b) The strength in the incorporation of traditional institutions is that it makes for stability and continuity. This is because they derive their authority and legitimacy from the people. They are therefore accountable to them.

Other short-term measures could come in the form of sustained and aggressive cultural orientation and reorientation for the masses on the gains and benefits of democracy. The Nigerian peoples should understand that their vote is their power and that office holders are in power on behalf of the people. They should therefore learn to vote not on the

basis of sentiments or primordial considerations but on the consideration of popular programmes that will improve the living conditions of the peoples. In this respect, agencies like the National Institute for Cultural Orientation (NICO) and the National Orientation Agency have key roles to play. It is also possible to encourage and promote culture among the masses through the theatre. Associations like the National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners (NANTAP) and similar associations should be encouraged to produce plays and films that would project the essential ties and linkages between our culture and democracy.

The long-term measures would require that the totality of our educational system be overhauled. Our educational institutions at all levels, especially at the tertiary level, are places of intellectual consumerism, and this should not be. So much of our educational curricula are still products of colonialism. The issue is to encourage the use of the mother tongue, first from the primary schools then to the other tiers of the educational system. It is desirable that in some homogeneous states of the federation, businesses in the state assemblies should begin as a matter of urgency to be conducted in local languages. Otherwise, how expedient is it to be discussing the improvement of the lot of a people in a foreign language?

This naturally leads to another vexatious issue. That is, the exclusion of history from the school curriculum in Nigeria. It is disturbing that history has become a very unattractive subject that some universities now have to combine it with other programmes in order to attract students into their departments of history. It is for this reason that you have departments such as *History and Strategic Studies* or *History and international relations* etc. It should be noted that the discouragement of the teaching of history in some Nigerian schools is a plan that would make us forget our past, such that we do not fully understand the challenges of the present, so that we do not engage the future constructively.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have attempted to raise some key issues with respect to the failings of democratic governance in Nigeria. We found that, far from being consolidated, democracy as a form of governance is still in its infancy and a number of factors account for it. These include political intolerance, bad management of our pluralism, weak institutions such as the legislature, the judiciary, police and the press. These institutional

weaknesses are further compounded by the inordinate ambition of the military which regularly intervened in the nation's political administration on flimsy excuses.

The most profound of the causes of democratic failure is the disconnect between the state and society in Nigeria. It is a situation where the Nigerian people see the state, which is a colonial heritage, as an instrument of oppression. All of the above culminate in one thing – the failure to fully comprehend and incorporate our culture as the basis of our democracy. Disheartening as the situation may appear, it is not irredeemable. It is still possible, for Nigeria to begin to get it right in her bid to enthrone sustainable democracy. This is, however, subject to some preconditions. In the first instance, politicians must learn to see politics and elections not as a do-or-die affair but as opportunities to serve and contribute to national growth and development. In another sense, the impression that politics is business must stop in order to pave the way for a new national orientation and attitude that sees politics as service. For democracy to be fully entrenched, the electoral body, in this particular instance, the Independent National Electoral Commission, must be truly independent in two fundamental areas. The first is in the appointment of key officers of the commission. We are of the view that this should be the prerogative of the National Assembly or the National Judicial Council. This does not suggest that undue pressures and influences may not be exerted but the effect will be minimal. The second is in the area of funding. We recommend that this should be removed from the Executive arm of governance. Rather, the funding of the electoral commission should be constitutionally spelt out.

Furthermore, for Nigeria to have true democracy, the press has a strategically important role to play. As a body, the press is an agent of mass mobilisation. It is very possible for it to reach the masses in all the nooks and crannies of the country within a very short space of time. In addition and more importantly, the press, print and electronic, must uphold and adhere tenaciously to the tenets of the profession. The sanctity of the truth, the beauty of fairness and the gains of objectivity must guide the press at all times, especially in reporting and commenting on political issues.

Added to all these is that to bridge the gap between state and society, the government must fashion policies and operate in a people-oriented manner. By so doing, the people will also be seen as part and parcel of

governance. That the masses do not support the government of the day and the rules and regulations are not obeyed is not because Nigerians are naturally disobedient or difficult to govern. Rather, this problem will be solved once the alienation between the masses and the government is removed. In this whole process, the youths have an important role to play. Expectedly, they are young, dynamic, adventurous and possibly altruistic. As leaders of tomorrow, they should be properly guided on the dire consequences of election rigging and political violence. This is because a stable, democratic and progressive society is their only guarantee for a prosperous future. As a long-term measure the issue of has to be addressed. It is always easy for poor people to be bought over and manipulated. The gap between the rich and the poor is too wide and appear to be increasing by the day.

Finally, the imperative for the incorporation of culture into politics and democracy is long overdue. It is our submission that until this is done, our search for peace and progress in the context of a strong, stable and democratic country will remain a wild goose chase and Nigeria will continue to operate without purpose or direction.

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