

# African Culture and the African Personality (what makes an african person african)

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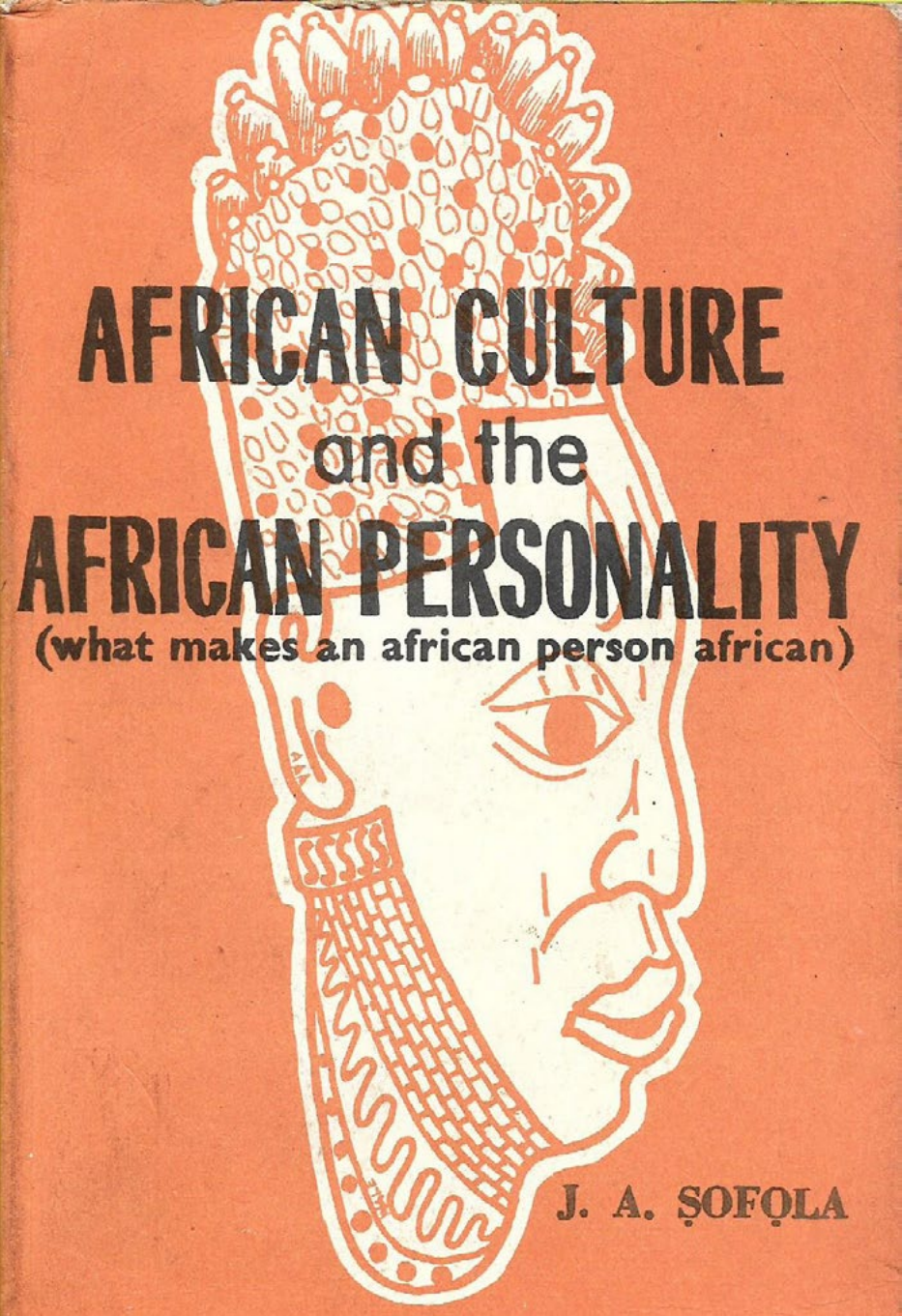
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# **AFRICAN CULTURE** and the **AFRICAN PERSONALITY** (what makes an african person african)

**J. A. SOFOLA**

There have been many books on Africa by European writers who have tried, with varying success, to 'explain' what and how Africans are thinking and who Africans are and what makes them tick. Africans themselves have written and made statements of ideology mostly political but not cultural. In **AFRICAN CULTURE AND THE AFRICAN PERSONALITY**, Dr. Sofola has brought Socio-logical/Anthropological and Social-psychological dimensions to the explanation of the African culture and personality. The author, unlike many writers before him who have over-emphasised the surface differences among the African peoples, has called attention in a most lucid form, to the basic unifying aspects, the common denominator of the African culture. To know the core cultures and proven values of Africa is to wish them preserved and maintain their integrity even in this twentieth century to which they are more relevant now than ever before.

The African Culture that is inside the personality of every African person, makes the Africans the type of persons they are known to be—they are altruists that are rich in humanity, morality, and sociality.

# AFRICAN CULTURE and the AFRICAN PERSONALITY

(What Makes an African Person African)

*by*

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## PREFACE

TO BE ROOTED IS PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT  
AND LEAST RECOGNISED NEED OF THE HUMAN  
SOUL.....*SIMON WEIL*

The dominant theme of this work is that those cultural characteristics constituting our African cultural heritage are those things that make us our distinguishingly respected African selves and they should be systematically documented, propagated, maintained and preserved. They are perhaps Africa's best contributions to world civilizations, and are more relevant to today's world even more relevant than ever before. Particularly more under reference here are those oft-forgotten or overlooked aspects of culture—the non-material aspects of it, the ideas, the beliefs and world-view of our people. Afterall, a full definition of culture should include these things. For culture is a learned pattern of behaviour, ideas, beliefs, and the artifacts, shared by a people and socially transmitted by them from one generation to another. The modern African's root is deepdown in Africa. In fact, these cultural characteristics which are moralistic and essentially humane are the ingredients; the contents, or the building-blocks of which his solid African personality is made. He, therefore, should not behave like a rootless being even in the face of impinging, aggressive cultures of the outside world like the western culture. For while in the expression of his foolishness at times the African appears to be culturally self-depreciating, the outside world looks at his African cultural heritage with admiration, respect and appreciation. Besides, to be seen and looked at from one's own image is better and more enchancing than to live in the shadow of another man. Thus, there should be conscious efforts made to revive the African culture

that has been pillaged and disturbed, maintaining and preserving the living aspect of it which is our way of life.

The Western culture and civilization which the uninformed seems to be ready easily to copy has developed a way of life, a complex array of essentially anti-humane attitudes, and a supporting system of education and educational philosophy that is incapable of serving the needs of mankind at large, or of even serving as an example to be followed hook, line and sinker, by the newly rising people of Africa without radical modifications and exceptions.

There are many non-material cultural values which are of African cultural heritage and which are Africa's contributions to the world cultures and civilizations. Yet there are many ironies in the actions of the missionary-educated, post-colonial African, that would belie this important fact. These ironies need urgently to be resolved once and for all in favour of true African honour. Take Nigeria as an example of what obtains in many parts of the post-colonial Africa today. In the geopolitical boundary known as Nigeria, there were at least three ancient civilizations of world renown: The Yoruba-Benin civilizations which had produced such artworks of intricate nature as the IFE and BENIN BRONZES and terra-cottas; and the Nok civilization of the North. And as far as material cultures are concerned, when one visits the IFE MUSEUM of antiquities at Ile-Ife, one sees many works of art. One would even see a replica of the fly-wheel made of stone which men of ancient times, the ancestors of the present Nigerian Yorubas had invented. We may observe that the invention of the wheel represented, as historians and anthropologists tell us, a great height in man's cultural ingenuity. It is the immediate antecedent of the technological and industrial revolutions of the modern times. Yet, some Nigerians, the missionary-educated Nigerians especially, have been and are exhibiting

a feeling of cultural inferiority complex in many ways among which the following could be immediately listed:- Whenever the African past is mentioned to some Nigerians, they are immediately prone to refer to those things that would appear primitive and derogatory and never see the good and equally virile ones. And even when presented with time-honoured and time-tested values of their heritage, these people would still underrate them in comparison to other foreign ones. For anything to be acceptable to some Nigerians and enjoy high prestige before them, such things must be London-made:- One must be a London trained-barber, hair dresser or a tailor; One's degree must be from London even if it is awarded in Ibadan; one's higher education should be received in London or overseas before one enjoys a prestige; the household appliances must be London-made or overseas made even if similar ones are made locally or in Nigerian factories. Infact, to be called developed or progressive, some Nigerians believed that Nigerian cities should be made New London, to bring London to Nigeria, so to say, with its temperate-climate-suited architectural design of houses and so forth even though snows never fall here in Nigeria and we never have the temperature reaching freezing point how much less ditching below the zero point. Universities celebrate Rag Day because the British do so even though the Nigerians traditionally have their OKEBADAN FESTIVAL. Nowadays, some Nigerians are extending this cultural suicide to the next generation. They would send their children of tender age to the Nursery Schools where they are taught values of an alien culture, told the folk tales of a foreign land and even play the games and sing the songs of foreign land. In fact, some Nigerians would rather send their children to the preferred nursery schools in London or elsewhere so that they could be brought up by those whom the parents call, the "civilized"



people. And yet the children are expected to come back and live in an 'alien' land of Nigeria.

But why these ironies? The answers will be found, in part, in the nature of the culture-contact between Nigeria and colonial Great Britain; in the work of the Christian Missionaries; the type and content of the education received by these Nigerians both at home and abroad. In a nutshell, some were either ignorant of the rich values of their African past or were made in their education to look down upon them or shun the values entirely. Thus they become external-model orientated people. There is, therefore, a need to appeal to Africans in general (because as we have said what obtains in Nigeria is a common African cancer that obtains everywhere in post-colonial Africa) to look inward into their society and rediscover those values which are their African cultural heritage. These values should form the solid basis for the progress and development of the modern African Societies. Some may need modifications here and there but definitely not uprooting as is presently done everywhere. These essentially moralistic, humane, and humanistic values (Humanism in the neo-humanism of the type led by Paul Elmer More which does not exclude God and religion) should influence the definition of development or progress, penetrate its planning and implementation in Africa. Some of these cultural values are documented and given sociological analysis in this medium for the knowledge and meaningful understanding and possible appreciation of all, and advice given as to what form of modifications could be made to suit them to the twentieth-century world to which these values are more relevant now than ever before. It was Aristotle the Philosopher who once gave the injunction: "Man, know thyself". We are now urging the African to know himself culturally, to understand and appreciate himself and express himself culturally. We are asking him

to let himself be inspired to greater heights by his self-knowledge. It is in the African peoples Africanness that they can win respect and make important contribution into the world now plagued by greed, aggression, man's inhumanity-to-man, and cultural intolerance. It is in their African philosophies of wholesome human relations and world-view, and such-like moralizing and essentially humanistic cultural characteristic which are ideational rather than technological that they would fulfill the hopes of mankind which is now helplessly groping for peace, togetherness and tolerance in God's glory on this our planet.

The task of the choice of a paradigm or model of African culture is by no means a difficult one. For apart from the colour of the people, there are many cultural characteristics which in their distinctiveness are peculiar and common to the Africans. The idea of the common denominator of cultures holds here. For these elements, ideas and philosophies of life are common to the Africans, be they the Akan of Ghana, the Yoruba of Nigeria, the Mende of Sierra-Leone, the Luo of Kenya or Zulus of South Africa or any other ethnic group. There is a certain common world-view to which can be related all other central concepts, including those of religion and theology, morality and social organization. Granted that in the matter of details there may be differing manifestations, nevertheless there are common denominators, the common core of African culture. So, if we choose one society as an example, a model or a paradigm of all others, we are justified not from the point of view of tribal ethnocentrism but from the point of view of the known facts. These cultural factors will become clear as they unfold themselves in our analysis that follows. The choice of the Yoruba of Nigeria as done in this work is just as valid as the choice of the Akan of Ghana as done by William Abrahams and K. Busia in their works. Those



Africans from every corner of the large continent who persistently nod their heads in agreement with the cultural points adduced herein are a living testimony to this idea of the common denominator of African culture. Let us now proceed with our reasoning and cultural exploration.

Before proceeding in this exploration, however, if we should take a psycho-analytic and psychologico-psychiatric view of the African personality, the personality we see functioning today and at all times—that predisposition or organised, personal, psychological tendencies to act, react and respond in certain peculiar way, the African way, to peoples and events—we may discover that some of the cultural traits enumerated and elaborated herein may be, and *ipso facto* because of the theory of personality development utilised in this analysis are, those inner propellants propelling the Africans from within themselves to be what they are known and seen to be in our observed daily lives—altruistic men rich in humanity, sociality and unpolluted morality. Definitely the moral philosophy of live-and-let-live; the moral respect for elders and the worth of man as against the worth of materials; the emphasis on African personalism or the wholesome human relations at all cost with other human species with whom man is committed by natural fate to live together as 'social animal' who all must glorify on earth their common Maker, the Supreme God; these and others as elements in the socialisation, upbringing and personality-development of the African child are the ingredients of the basic personality of the African child, the ingredients in the inner recesses and subconsciousness of the present African personality propelling it to exhibit the peculiar African characteristics and dispositions of which he is noted like for instance those natural goodness and humanity; that readiness towards instantaneous friendliness; that moral reservation towards the exploitation of

others as contrary to having himself been enslaved and colonized by others; his predisposition, even after this harsh experiences, to pay the offenders back not in their own coin but with humaneness and a spirit of the apologist who would say "Lord forgive them for they know not what they are doing", and "afterall, they are still my human brothers despite the wrongs they have done me"; his apparent disposition to pursue undauntedly the line of humanity even though with a head that is bloody but never bowed and such other moralising characteristics exhibited by an african person. Isn't it true that the childhood experience and what the individual is brought-up in are those things he exhibits in his adulthood? Isn't it true the biblical saying which goes thus: teach a child what you want him to become and when he grows up he will never depart from it? These, indeed, are the **part ingredients which, added to "emotion, participation through intuition" and other characteristics delineated by Senghor, form the totality of that prototype Negro-African personality, the Negritude or Negroness or Africanness that has been debated for sometime now. They are natural. They are no reaction to any felt estrangement of any poet or author of any foreign influence. Not to recognise the existence of these factors and the existence of the personality is, in the best, to possess an intellectual blindspot and, at the worst, to be possessed of racism, an accute one smack of racial superiority that consciously denies others what are obvious before one's eyes and experiences in conscious attempt to subordinate them and by so doing make oneself feel fine and psychologically gratified even though falsely so. Those Africans who because they want cheap recognition and acceptance by the whiteman. and those others who because of their unpleasant experiences in the hands of the white race-supremacists like, say, South Africa, to whom they nevertheless had to appeal**

for acceptance and who choose to deny these known and obvious facts of African's cultural characteristics are denying their own selves and personality existence. It had been better for them to be dead than to be alive living in the ghostlike way in which they roam the world pretending to be practising cheap universalism. One should ask such people, has there ever been or will there ever be any universalism without nationalism? These people are making themselves a laughing stock of the same white people who had intentionally orientated them towards this self-denial and self-cultural annihilation and effacement so that their own selfish racial supremacy may be achieved and enhanced.

My deep appreciation to Mr. Modupe Oduyoye, the literature Secretary of the Christian Council of Nigeria, for reading the draft and making useful comments. Responsibility for the contents of the book, including its faults—whatever these may be—is solely mine.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE AFRICAN PERSONALITY CONCEPT AND INTRODUCTION

Personality, as conceived in the social sciences and social psychology in particular, refers to the individual's organisation of attitudes and values. The emphasis here is on the prevalent patterned organisation of these groups of attitudes and values common in the personal life of the individual person. The fact is that this individual taken in his entire evolution may be approximately characterised by the prominence of these type of organisation of attitudes and values peculiar to him. And there is the basic personality which comprises the deeper, more unconscious aspect of the personality often referred to as the "character-structure" said to be more stable and more difficult to change. There is also the relatively more superficial structure built around specific value systems and, therefore, modifiable.

And how is personality developed? Interpersonal theory of personality development postulated by H. S. Sullivan, as contrasted to the Freudian thesis which emphasises stages and relationship with the super ego,<sup>1</sup> maintains that the individual develops his personality through interpersonal interaction with other human beings in social situation starting from infancy through childhood and so

- 1 The general Freudian thesis of personality development has been concisely stated by Benedek as follows: "The Integration of the sexual drive from its pregenital sources to the genital primacy and to functional maturity is the axis around which the organisation of the personality takes place. From the point of view of personality development, the process of interaction is the same in both sexes. Men and women alike reach their psycho-sexual maturity through the reconciliation of the sexual drive with the superego and through adjustment of sexuality to all other functions of the personality . . . . The sexual drive is organised differently in men and women, in order to serve specific functions in procreation."



on. What values, ideas, and even self-image the individual achieves or receives in a social situation are what he internalises in the formulation of his personality. Thus, according to this view, personality development may be defined as a gradual and balanced growth of all the many aspects of a human person including the physical, mental, and the social. What, therefore, emerges as a personality from the social situation (and simultaneously participates in the social situation) is a "looking glass self," a social self which, according to George Herbert Mead, constitutes the judgement one makes about oneself as seen reflected in the attitudes of others towards oneself. For instance, it is a common knowledge that when a beautiful child exhibits confidence and poise as attributes of his/her personality, he/she is more or less reflecting the attitudes and responses of others towards him/her, those who tell him/her that he/she is beautiful and who respond favourably to him/her. In like manner, the ugly child characterised by an insecure personality reflects his "looking glass self" as mirrored to him by the attitudes and responses of others towards him.

In the social science of anthropology, the interest in personality has concerned that part of the personality that men share with other men of their own culture but which they do not share with all other men. That is, the basic or modal personality. The basic ground for this is that certain ways of education and habituation as well as certain substantive aspects of habits and learning are easily and readily associated with certain features of personality. The idea here is that the kind of groups in which children are taught their culture leave indelible mark upon them; the basic values of the subject matter leave a lasting and permanent mark on them. When children learn certain techniques and ideas, these factors have a lasting effect on the sort of adults they later become so much so that it can be said that



if one knows how to look for it, the framework of a house can be seen in a finished building. In other words, a culture in which a person is brought up and taught the manners and technology of his elders or, to use the jargon of the field, socialised or enculturated, makes him to express some form of personality.

The sub-division of Anthropology known as culture-and-personality, or correctly called culture-in-personality, because of these facts holds the belief, correctly so, that culture mediates in the expression of man's self or his attitudes and values. And that therefore, it is possible to distinguish a personality type or a national character common among a people having common culture or a common denominator of culture. The fact is that the basic similarities among these people stem from the learned responses that they make to situations in their cultural environment, the situations that are different from those experienced by other peoples in other cultural environments. With these basic assumptions, it is possible to distinguish a personality type among the African people, "the African personality".

To fail to comprehend the existence of such common personality type is to engage in a low level type of abstraction or reasoning. This is because it is true as Kluckhohn and Murray have clearly put it once, "every man is in certain respects like all other men, like some other men, and like no other man". True it is also that some determinants of personality are universal. For instance, every person is born, learns to utilize his body for movements, later explores his environment and learns to protect himself. Indeed, every person experiences hunger and sexual tensions and learns to live in groups. But it is also true that other similarities are limited especially as culture comes to mediate between the biologic individual and his living from day to day. All of us are in some ways like some men who are

part of our social and cultural environment and are different from those in other environments living by means of different cultures.

Now, we are ready to say, in a higher level of abstraction, that "the African personality" is reflected in those cultural characteristics which are distinctively African, the African common denominator of culture, so to speak, be it the implicit idea which can be likened to an innate spirit, or the practical manifestations of these ideas as can be seen in the African social institutions of family, systems of economy and government, the African arts, the music, the works of art, the philosophy etc, and even the mode of dressing. These things have their peculiar character or distinctiveness as distinguished from those of other nations, say, Europe, America or India. At this juncture, it is important to point out the often-adduced fact that Africa has no single culture. Although the veracity of this statement is not to be doubted, yet it is also true that there are certain common characteristics that permeate the cultures, the common denominator of culture so to say. All commonly agreed that collectivity of life is the order in African societies. Other characteristics will be elaborated upon as we proceed; but one essential point which is commonly emphasized by the many African leaders is that the peculiar characteristics of the particular people of Africa should be preserved in the development of that area. The culture of that area should be the basis on which the new development rests.

We shall proceed by explaining what is meant by culture and substantiating our point with concrete African facts. Kroeber defines culture thus: "the mass (totality) of the *learned* and transmitted motor reactions, habits, techniques, ideas, and values and behaviour that they induce is what constitute culture". To Bascom, culture includes not only social institutions and their derivative forms of learned

behaviour but also those manifestations of man's creativity. For our part, we have defined it as the learned pattern of behaviour, ideas, beliefs, and the artifacts shared by a people and socially transmitted from one generation to another. All these are full and more inclusive definitions than merely the works of art, sculpture or dance which are parts of the whole.

Africa's geographical environments have produced, for ages, the background within which the African peoples have had to develop the series of every day activities that are calculated to insure their survival. The economic practices in these areas are such that are not only suited to the areas but are also molded or shaped by the areas. So also must the people develop rules of order which would govern their practices, which rules, in turn, would reflect the peoples philosophies in regard to life and their human values all within the scope of experiences achieved in the environments. A pattern of life that works well enough to assure the group's survival and to satisfy the basic needs of the people is thereby designed. And it is different from that which prevails either in Europe or India or any other places or parts of the world. The ideas formulated by the people in peculiar geographical environment are also different from those formulated by others of other part. So also do the practical manifestations of these ideas differ. Thus, there are differences between the African on the one hand and the Chinese on the other, in economic and social organization, in religion and art, in mythology and methods of keeping peace or making war. These differences, then, constitute the distinguishing factors, the personality ingredients of the one society and that of the other.

In most African societies, the family institution has the characteristic of solidifying the relationship between two different families or lineages, rather than between two



individuals only. Marriage in Africa is a union of the lineages for the purpose of procreation companionship, assistantship etc. and the continuity of that relationship. This contrasts with marriage in Western societies in which emphasis is placed on the union of the two individuals that are immediately concerned. Also in Africa the so-called bride-wealth is paid by the family of the bridegroom to the family of the bride and not vice versa as in Western societies. This wealth may take different forms in different places but it serves the purpose of giving sanction and legality to the union. For example, the bride wealth is known as *owo ori* or *idána* paid in form of money and edible articles like kola nuts etc., among the Yorubas of Nigeria. It is known as the *Iobola* among the Bantus of the Skoolas, Marabatand and Bantula of South Africa; and among the Kikuyu and all the people in the area of east Africa classified by Herskovits as cattle areas, cattle serves the important purpose. Not only does the individual furnish this by himself among the Kikuyu, but if the person is unable to do so, other members of the family are obliged to supply the cattle.

Of the measures that are calculated to insure the solidarity of the two lineages, the initial one is the marriage ceremonies. Among the Yorubas, the splitting and sharing of the kolanuts supplied by the bridegroom among the members of the girl's family seals the contract. The two families also share kola-nuts together. Among the Ibos, during the marriage ceremony each member of the two families (seven persons from each family) is made to come forward and make an oath, while eating a kolanut, that woe would betide him if he should see the doom of the families concerned and not take steps to avert it. From all these factors, one sees the essentialities in the stability of the traditional married life. It will be a tragedy if these systems are destroyed.

In the field of the arts, Africa has its peculiarities. Here

music and art are integral and functioning part of the society itself. This is contrasted to the condition in Euro-American societies where there exists the tendency to compartmentalize the arts and to divorce them from the aspects of everyday life. Western society even goes further to distinguish between "pure" art as opposed to "applied" art and so forth. But in African society all aesthetic activities are closely related to the whole functioning culture. In African society, therefore, while the usual Western functions of music as entertainment, accompaniment for the dance, and in religious services are also present, music is used, in addition, in many other settings. The Hutu in Ruanda have, for example, recognized twenty four general social song types as distinguished from religious songs, songs for beer drinking, war, homage to a chief, hunting, harvesting and general work. The Tutsi have a similar range. Even in political organization, the functions of music are apparent in songs sung in praise of chiefs. Among the Yorubas, the *asunrara* sings in praise of the Oba. The drum is a symbol for political power among the Tutsi, and no individual other than the Mwammi and the Queen Mother may possess sets of drums. In all essentialities the arts are closely related to the people and in such a setting should it be developed in Africa.

We should say something about government in Africa. We must emphasize that in all essentialities the idea of democracy is peculiarly African and should be kept as such. Whereas, in Europe or in most Western societies there exists a form of legislative setting in which the government and opposition sit opposite each other, in most or all part of the African societies having political organizations, the opposition and the government sit together and in a group. The King and his council sit together and anyone who chooses to dissent merely gets up and speaks out. Hence



in Nkrumah's Ghana, it was learnt that the government proposed that the next parliament be built in a horse-shoe form as in the traditional form to enable the government and the opposition to sit together and have the sense of oneness in the building of the nation.

The African mode of dressing shows its distinctiveness also. At this juncture one point should be clarified before we proceed. We must not fail to realize that the idea of clothing is not alien to the African. It is the strict enforcement of the use of clothe that was brought about by the missionary rules. For when we look at the ancient looms of Africa, it cannot be conceived that the cloth produced in such tasking intricate endeavours were made for the fun of it. The African uses these in addition to the hides and skins procured in hunting. In the tropical climate prevalent in the continent, the burning sun and the humidity prevents the continuous wearing of concealing clothes. It has been said that the missionary being preoccupied with sex himself had emphasized the continuous wearing of clothes and thus the concealment of sex-organs as pre-requisite for christian conversion. Whatever was the reason, it is a fact that since the enforcement of the continuous wearing of clothes, the African had developed pulmonary diseases which were alien to him before.

What we are saying concerning the mode of dressing as reflecting African personality is that such dresses are built to suit the climatic conditions in Africa and also reflect the African artistic design and embroideries. Western suits are made to conserve the little heat available in their extremely cold temperate climate. But on the other hand, the Nigerian or the Western Africa's *Agbada* and *Lapa* are open on the sides to let in fresh air to mitigate the effect of the tropical heat. They are made of cotton materials rather than wool also. It is important that their design retains,

unmistakably, their African character.

The philosophies of absolute justice, of selflessness or absolute unselfishness and of strong faith, loyalty and high-morality were and are still prevalent among the African peoples be they the Hausa, Ibo, Mende, or Kikuyu of the Kenya highlands, the "Bushmen" of the Southwest, and the Ashantis etc. of the West. Of the people of ancient Mali it was written by Ibn Battuta the renown Arab historian who, three hundred years before the *Tarikh es Sudan* was finished, visited this land of great African civilization after travels in Arabia and India and China: "The Negroes of this country", he said, "are seldom unjust, and have a greater abhorrence of injustice than any other people. Their sultan shows no mercy to anyone who is guilty of the least act of it. There is complete security in the country. Neither traveller nor inhabitant in it has anything to fear from robbers or man of violence". Continued he, "They do not confiscate the property of any white man".<sup>2</sup> Among the Kikuyu, the council of elders or Kiama administers justice and the members are in a state of brotherhood and absolute purity among themselves so that impartial judgment could be ably effected. The Oba and his *Igbimo* administer absolute justice under a honest condition among the Yorubas. Of the Ashanti tribes of the present day Ghana was told the act of a king of the ancient time. The king was shown a head of a prisoner whom he had ordered brought before him for an alleged transgression of the laws. The king fainted and died at seeing that some person or persons had taken an arbitrary action of decapitating the man without trial. Since the death of the king the decree was more strictly enforced that no one shall ever be punished without first being brought before the courts. Among the Kikuyu,

2 Battuta, Ibn, *Travels in Asia and Africa* 1325-1354.

the *Mathana* right is a right given by a man to his wife's brother or other relatives by marriage to use his land temporarily when the latter was in need. Among the Yoruba and the Nuer what we have we share (*Ohun a ri kajoje*) is the order. Even among the hunting bands of the Bushmen of South West Africa, a member is enjoined by social usages to give part of his *bonafide* share of the killing to another member. These are just a few of the peculiar African cultural characteristics about which a fleeting, cursory look is taken in this section simply to establish the theory of their distinctiveness and existence. A more detailed look will be taken of the core cultures of Africa in Chapter IV dealing with the cultural ingredients or building blocks of the African personality.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PILLAGING OF THE AFRICAN CULTURE— FACTORS AND SOME OUTCOMES

Culture contact between Africa and the West has brought about varying consequences. In some areas it has effected a socio-cultural change the nature of which is simple and cumulative modification of the existing indigenous culture. In others, it has been a radical modification of the existing cultures. In the latter instances these were especially where the existing cultures were not strong or complex enough to withstand the onslaught. But generally and in most cases in Africa the Western technological aspects of culture have been very domineering and readily impressive. In Nigeria, for example, rather than having an outright, wholesale modification of the indigenous cultures, what we have is a simple modification of what existed and an intensification of the conscious appreciation of the traditional culture possibly because of both factors of self-pride or nationalism, or the complex nature of the indigenous cultures and the faults inherent and obvious in the new foreign cultures. We shall elaborate.

Of the factors portending change in Nigeria the following may be enumerated among others: the changing economies from less to more use of money and more production of agricultural materials beyond the subsistence level; the actions of the missionaries; the influence of the audio-visual media of communication; Western form of formal education both at home and abroad; and the deliberate actions of the former colonial power.



## Changing of Economies and Mobility of Man

The change from subsistence agricultural economy to a large-scale money economy in Nigeria is by no means slow today. Not only have there been introduced different and more elaborate system of land cultivation as manifested in scientific methods and increased use of mechanical instruments, but also new elements in market products and commerce are in circulation. The large-scale production of cash crops like cocoa, kolanuts and palm nuts and their commercialization have brought greater motivation for and resulted in greater mobility among the people. Not only has more land been cultivated to provide both for food and money, but the women who had been limited in their marketing activities have had expanded boudaries to cover. Added to this is the increase in import goods and the local manufacturing of some which have provided more marketing materials for the hitherto busy housewives and farm helpers. The result is the increased mobility of the women and thus separation from their husbands and children for some duration of time. Memberships in the Market Women's Associations are increasing, numbering several thousands especially in such urban areas as Port-Harcourt, Ibadan, Lagos, etc. to name a few. This was a tremendous contrast to the traditional condition in which, in the majority of cases, women had been requested to work long hours alongside their husbands and sometimes with their children. The activities of the present-day associations often take the women far away from homes and permanent towns to places where they have to hunt for the delivery and subsequent trading of the new goods. The men, too, are sometimes separated, for there is no more monopoly by the women for the marketing of cash crops, manufactured or imported goods. Here also it must be pointed out that the



ease of travel brought about by the increase in the means of transportation plays an important role in the mobility of the people. The number of roads in the Western Region alone for the year 1959 totalled 7,419 and the number of vehicles registered for the same period being 3,379.<sup>1</sup> Added to this is the opening up of the entire country by means of airplanes and the railways. Travelling in Nigeria is much easier than it was twenty or thirty years past.

### **Missionary influence**

The early christian missionaries to Nigeria were first along the coasts such as the Badagry and the creek areas, Abeokuta, etc. Toward the middle of the second quarter of the last century there was obviously an increase in the presence and influence of the Christian evangelists. With their penetration of the land and the consequent evangelising came the introduction of Western culture and values first to their individual converts and then to a larger population to which the converts were also sent in turn. The missionaries, it must be pointed out, are undoubtedly agents of Western civilization in Nigeria and, indeed, in Africa or any other non-European areas of their penetration and preaching of the gospel. They deliberately, or otherwise, sought to impose the Western culture upon the traditional cultures. In this connection we must note that it was only as recently as 1926 that there was any attempt made at having some consideration or appreciation for the culture of the areas penetrated. In that year at the International Conference of Christian Missions at LaZoute, Belgium, there was a decided change in the emphasis of evangelism of the missionaries: "a change in emphasis by all missions

<sup>1</sup> *Western Regional Government Statistical Bulletin* (Ibadan, Government Printer, June 1959), pp. 80-81 tables 80 and 85.

from outright condemnation to general sympathy toward African customs".<sup>2</sup> Although missions were told to condemn "evil customs", they were forbidden to condemn customs comparable with Christianity and were directed to make use of African customs which have a valuable substance even though they might have some evil features. Hitherto, the missionary's goals were to bring "true" religion and a "better" way of life to the african "heathen" worshippers. And what in their racial arrogance was considered a better life was nothing other than the Western way of life.

Of the various Western ways of life introduced there is familiarity with formal education and the schools. The institutionalization of education is the case in point. There was a separation of education from the homes where oral tradition was prevalent, and from the age groups and their secret societies based on sex. What were taught in the new institution and their effects on the overall society are too broad for the scope of this brief paper. But suffice it to say that there had been and there are positive as well as negative effects of the educational systems. Here we would deal briefly with two aspects of the universal roles of the missionaries wherever they may be. Individuality and monogamy are well-known doctrines upheld by the christians in contradistinction to the cultures existing in the African society of Nigeria. As Westernmann intimated us:

"Conversion is a personal matter, an affair between man and God. A man draws his family with him, but for them as for him it is a personal step. When a person living in pagan surroundings adopts christianity he often loses the protection or even membership of his group and has to stand by himself."<sup>3</sup>

- 2 Arthur Phillips (ed.), *Survey of African Marriage and Family Life* (London. Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 371-372.
- 3 Dietrich Westernmann, *Africa and Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1937, p. 102.

From this quotation, it is apparent that a disrupting factor has been introduced into the families of every individual convert, a factor which only the ambivalence or lack of total belief on the part of the converts have prevented from tearing to pieces the existing communally organized, extended families. A fanatical Christian convert would have ostracized himself from the rest of his broadly-based family and defined his family to include himself, his one wife and their children only. But this is not the case in Nigeria or Africa as a whole. Social pressure and the generations of a well-based behavioral pattern or culture are preventing this holocaust. Even the idea of one-man-one-wife as propagated by the christian and which is very impressive to the Western-educated elite still has to establish a firm root (if ever it would succeed in doing so) among the overall population of Christian converts. Today, what the agnostically characterized converts do is first to marry about four or five wives in the traditional manner and the last one—usually with some form of formal education—in the church. Thus, by Christian Church standard he is a monogamist but by customary standard a polygynist.

#### **Audiovisual Media of Communication and the Education of many Nigerians abroad**

Among the many factors influencing change, we shall briefly deal with the media of communication and the foreign education of many Nigerians. Today, the radio is owned by a significant percent of the people, not only in the urban centres, but also in remote areas. In Lagos alone about 78 per-cent of the people own radios. And through the cheap service of the Rediffusion Radio Company to which the federal government granted exclusive contract in 1947, radio box extensions have been made



available even in some market stalls and work huts. The cinema, mostly owned by the Syrians, has played its important and all-pervading role in importing foreign—especially American—culture into the country. A country not yet possessed of its own cinema industries, Nigeria at present depends on Britain and America for cinema films. In addition to the cinema, the television was introduced in 1959 and has since been operating in influential fashion. It is not unusual now to have Indian films competing with American cowboy films in attracting, or rather further confusing, a people whose African time-honoured values have not had their thorough significance and inspiring characters demonstrated before them.

The education abroad of the elite, mostly in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, is not without its advantages as well as its disadvantages. Our concern here is its influence in the process of social change and the continuity of Africanness in Nigeria. The story has it in a manner clearly demonstrating the rate of emigration abroad for further studies that in the period 1954-55 more than 4,000 Nigerians<sup>4</sup> were in institutions of higher learning in the United Kingdom and about 400 only in the United States of America in the same period.<sup>5</sup>

Today, of course, the numbers have increased tremendously. In the U.S. alone we have more than two thousand Nigerians studying at the present moment. These foreign educated potential members of the elite are undoubtedly carriers of new ways and new ideas back home. And especially if they are not discriminating, critical acquirers of

4 10,000 students were in U.K. from the whole of the British Empire or Commonwealth at that time. 5,000 of these came from West Africa alone, i.e. Gambia, Sierra Leone, Gold Coast, and Nigeria. Of the 5,000; 4,000 came from Nigeria alone.

5 PEP, *Colonial Students in Britain* (London: Political and Economic Planning, Colonial Office, 1955), pp. 57-58.



their foreign education, their role will be and is usually, that of confusion and cultural self-annihilation. In Nigeria we have a group of people, mostly women, known as the "been-to's" (i.e. those who have been to "civilized" world or the U.K.). Theatrical elements with confirmed inferiority, this group is characterized by exaggerated, bizzare forms of cosmetic make-ups; impeccable British accent often projected sometimes to distort their native tonal language thereby making them look confused and mostly unintelligible; their catlike gyrating exhibitivie manner of walking and such like things. These were the women who invaded the British nursing institutions for their training with pay while on training. Usually possessed of a bare minimum of education generally not exceeding the standard six grade, this group has swallowed British Mannerism with unmitigated assimilation. Their low education did not allow them to have a critical, analytic assessment of the new culture which they only see fleetingly and from afar because they do not actually have opportunity for full and intimate participation in the foreign culture of Britain. Unlike the American-trained Nigerians who because of the existence of the American Negroes were able to mix with Americans, the class system of Great Britain and the limited opportunity for socio-economic advancement have hindered the full participation of many British-trained Nigerians. The immediate results of this are that the American-trained showed more signs of self-emancipation and thorough education or disillusionment. In the United States, the contempt that the white people had for the coloured people including the Africans, the presence of many people with diverse national origins and mannerisms, the pragmatic form of education and the expression of individuality, all are factors in interaction producing a more nationalistic and dynamic personality out of the Nigerians trained there. A story is in circulation

about the British-trained Nigerians who take pride in even 'out Britishing' the British in manner of speaking and eating. One day a lady was to eat *eba* with the mucous, slimy okra. She had such a dribbling with her fork and knife which was calamitous and her costly British gown was soiled much to her embarrassment and disgrace. But the American-trained in her own turn used her natural fork and knife (i.e. her fingers) in eating this highly elusive type of food. Before doing this, however, she engaged in an unusually elaborate form of ritual of cutting her finger-nails short, cleaning her hands with soap and water with napkin ready at hand for wiping them, and having another bowl of clean water on the table to wash and wet her hands with. When asked why she did not use her fork and knife, she quickly replied that it was foolhardy to do so and that pragmatism is called for in our manner of eating until we are able to invent any material that can scoop *eba* like a natural hand. Said she, "when I eat rice, of course, I use spoon or fork. And if the Chinese could continue to use their sticks, I see no reason why I cannot use my hands but wash them well, or else invent something new". Another America-trained man was found saying that when he speaks English he does so, making certain that he does not lose his own Nigerian accent. Asked why, he said that he would want the owners of the language to know that he took a painstaking effort to learn their foreign language and that he has his own mother tongue which is equally as good as theirs, if not even better. He continued, "If the owners of the English language are sophisticated and broadly educated enough, they should cultivate respect and appreciation for my own language and try to learn it". This is contrary to the British Nigerian who would wish to speak like a full-blooded Anglo-Saxon even sometimes with Scottish or Irish accent.

A Nigerian minister of state was visiting London on a semi-official duty and decided to visit the Nigeria House one day. Upon entering the house attired in his native *agbada* dress, he saw another Nigerian, a student, descending the stairway. As the minister later related the story, the Nigerian student in question turned his face aside and behaved as if the fellow countryman was an enemy whom he would dare not talk to or recognize at all, much less rendering him a service. He allowed the gentleman, his elder and countryman, to climb the ninety-some stairs only to find that the Nigeria office from whence the countryman was coming had been closed with a notice on the door informing the patrons of the closing for the whole day. The minister was so flabbergasted and totally amazed at what he later termed "an inhuman and unfriendly act of a countryman who was out to emulate the worst of the British culture". He could not see, and we agree with him in this particular instance, why the fellow countryman could not have done him the simple favour of informing him on the way that the office was not open. Simple as this incident appears, it however reveals the general attitude of some of the British-trained Nigerians especially in their training ground. The humanness, the characteristic Africanness as symbolized in an African's personalism or value in wholesome personal relations has been infested with the canker of extreme individuality of a Western atomic robot who considers himself and his interests alone, who sees himself in a Hobbesian manner of thought in which every human being is considered to be at war with another human being and therefore all people are potential enemies against whom he must protect himself.

We went through these pains to warn that our assimilation of Western cultures must have to be selective and discriminating with thorough analysis as to the compatibility of



such pattern of behaviours and thought to the nature of society and people that we are and nature of the society we wish to create in Africa in this twentieth century of greed and human helplessness in armament. Mankind's hopes have been centered on Africa, the first in world civilizations but the latest arrival in the modern exercises of social, economic, and political behaviours. It is hoped that moral and spiritual values which the so-called advanced nations have lost for a long time but which are native to Africa's core values would be disseminated to offer both a soul-searching opportunity for man's salvation and to truly crown his achievements on this planet. We need only to engage in a moment's reflection to conclude that man in the West has succeeded in controlling his environment and nature but has failed to achieve a total progress in which moral and spiritual considerations are at play. The over-emphasis on economic success which gives the erroneous impression that man is essentially a glutton and that he lives solely by bread alone from which standpoint everything and progress is judged; the lack of appreciation of the worth of man and his wholesome relation with others of his species; the determination of a man's worth solely in terms of his economic productivity—a factor which makes the elderly lose their respect and reverence which simple morality must have made the young whom they ushered into this world to give them; the prevalence of the Machiavellian philosophy of the end justifying the means regardless of the latter; the lack of belief in the Supreme force called God, the Almighty and His power and glory; these are some of the moral perversions of the Western civilization which is in a process of decline. The men of thought in these societies know it and are concerned about the decline of their civilisation. And for any newcomer to swallow these perversions indiscriminately is to acquire a



blueprint for a suicide rather than progress.

That the concern about the decline of Western civilization is ubiquitous and deep is no less eloquently demonstrated in the series of literature and mass communication media of lament that exist around us than in the following words by Dr. Robert J. McCracken, minister of Riverside Church New York City, who has cleverly distinguished wisdom from mere knowledge and has equated moral integrity and spiritual sensitivity with wisdom:

"Wisdom and knowledge should be distinguished. In this century we have made great strides in our acquisition of knowledge. There are things we know that Plato and Paul were ignorant of, but that doesn't make us wiser than they . . . Wisdom doesn't depend on factual knowledge. The modern intellectual with all he knows about science and literature and politics is inclined to be very conscious of intellectual superiority. He needs to be reminded that to know facts is not enough; it is necessary to perceive their meaning, to be able to handle them to constructive use, which is where our generation with its knowledge of the constitution of the physical universe, with its knowledge of the physiological and psychological constitution of human nature, has so lamentably failed.

A wise man knows more than facts. He has sagacity in the affairs of life, a sagacity rooted in moral integrity and spiritual sensitivity. Wisdom is wider and deeper than intellectual know-how. A man may have a mind brilliant and original but have the ignorance of the person who knows nothing except what he sees with his eyes and touches with his fingers. On the other hand, there are people with little formal education who are profoundly wise. They are not brilliant and they may be unlettered but they have insight and understanding . . . . . Knowledge has to do with intellectual activity. We are in the predicament that has over-whelmed us in this century because we are proficient in the one and deficient in the other. We have extraordinary control of nature but little control of ourselves and less of the forces that bedevil our civilization."

It is only necessary at this juncture to add that there is a proverb in our country which says that when three or more people are going along a narrow path in the bush and the man in the front happens to fall into a ditch, it is a lesson to those others coming behind him. In other words, one should always learn from the mistakes of others, either those before or around one.

### **Colonial Propaganda and Africa's Denigration**

Another factor influencing the change and behaviour of the Africans, is the deliberate propaganda mounted by the colonial powers who found it necessary and essential to paint the Africans' achievements of old in dark perspectives in part justification of the imperial pretensions and concomitant economic exploitation. For instance, the achievements of the forest states of Oyo, Benin, Ashanti and Dahomey that could not and should not be dismissed as evidence of African maturity in state-craft and cohesive political organization were denigrated instead of being extolled. All European accounts of these African states not only stressed their varying degrees of decadence during their period but were invariably characterised as dens of iniquitous human sacrifice, enjoying annual bloodbaths either in celebration of ancestral customs or as a means of bolstering up tottering tyrannies and autocracies. These achievements that could have served as source of pride and encouragement were defamed.

The individual kings and heroes who were stars in these Kingdoms were humiliated so that rather than serving as "significant others" to the Africans for the latter to emulate and derive pride from, they were to be shunned and possibly disowned. It has been said that to every cause there is an effect and for every effect there is a cause. But totally

ignoring this cause-and-effect nexus in regard to the transatlantic slave trade and the slaving raids which were aided and abetted by the Portuguese, British and other Western powers that were benefitting and profitting in it, the African kings and chiefs were condemned by the spokesmen of the imperial order. They were condemned, as righteously claimed by the imperialist, for continuing to trade when they (the slave buyers and encouraging market who sometimes dishonestly organised raids themselves and tricked so many Africans aboard their ships) were trying to stop it. Yet desperadoes like John Hawkins, and other human slavers were put up as heroes who had nothing to do with the inhuman trading they encouraged. The cultural contribution which these African states made to the world civilization were inevitably ignored and totally neglected as evidences of the African capabilities as nation builders and transmitters of civilization. The works of art, the music etc. were ignored or downgraded. The historians have more to enumerate among the states and kingdoms of the Africa of old which even in the imperialists' attempt to ignore and defame could not succeed because they appeared like a big boil on the nose that could not be hidden. Apart from the forest belt states mentioned above as examples of the African genius for statecraft, artistic merit and cultural attainment, one could add the following chosen at random as further evidence to reflect the African genius in several ways and factors that have contributed abundantly to the sum total of African cultural achievements which merits the name of African civilization:- the medieval Sudanese Empires of Melle and Songhai; the Mossi empire in the Upper Volta region; the Mende and Timne chiefdoms; the Hausa-Fulani Sultanate and Emirates of Northern Nigeria; the Jukun State and its divine kingship; the kingdoms of Buganda and Bunyoro in East Africa; the Zulu chiefdoms



to the South and the Central States like the Zimbabwe. As we maintain, rather than letting the Africans know these and do so in enhancing manner they were not taught and when reference were made to them, the references were even done in a denigrated form. Thus we had the situation in which the Africans knew more and confirmed their inferiority from the knowledge of their colonial exploiters like the king of England, the Robert Clives, the Winston Churchill's of "what we have (through hook or crook) we hold" fame and so on. The Africans, in other words, were denied the type of Western Ancestor worship found in the United States of America or other western society. In the American ancestor worship, there is an undying reverence for their country's "Founding Fathers" (the fathers that the British would probably call brigands and rebellious traitors). There is the strong belief in the supreme wisdom of all their great men now dead. The Americans would invoke the spirit of these elders, religiously study their every word in search for guidance, and they would argue endlessly, for instance, as to what George Washington or Abraham Lincoln would have done to solve this or that problem. Americans not only worship their dead but they expect foreign visitors to their shores to join them in so doing. For example, distinguished visitors to the country are expected to go to the tomb of George Washington and make offering to this, their great ancestor. This offering now takes the form of expensive wreath of flowers. The Americans have a day known as the Memorial Day on which all their dead relatives, fathers, mothers, cousins etc. are remembered. On that day, countless millions would journey to the cemeteries not only with flowers but also with other little gift-like objects to show their dead that they were not forgotten. The fact is that by this form of ancestor worship the average American is brought face-to-



face with his past heroes and those who constitute his "significant others" whom he should emulate and derive inspiration from for more meaningful life both at present and in the future. But rather than allowing Africans to know their past history and their heroes they were taught about foreign gods. Few Nigerians, for instance, knew of the great Gbonka Ebiri, Timi Agbale Olofa ina, Emotan the great heroine; Sango the Jesus-like deified human who became the God of thunder and war; Uthman Dan Fodio etc. Nor did many South Africans know of Chaka the Zulu warrior who gave the imperialists the "hell of a time" during the latter's invasion of his domain.

Even the African belief in the function and power of the spirits that makes them believe that their kinsmen could intercede in their behalf before the Supreme God is downgraded. Yet the Western people's belief in patron saints is the same. The western man's belief in fetishes is also the same. For instance, compare the African voodoo ornaments with the western peoples' countless thousands of religious and non-religious relics, medals, charms of almost every description worn or faithfully kept for protection against disease or some other evil, for safe journey, for a special blessing or favour, for success in love or any other special undertaking and, in short, for just plain 'goodluck'. These things were not confined to the so-called 'ignorant masses' of the western world but are used and cherished by the highly educated classes too. Our point has been clearly made.

In our view, no warning could be more fitting than this given at this occasion for us Africans to be discriminating in what we acquire from the Western cultures. It would be an achievement rather than a surprise if among us may spring an African Confucius who would call our attention to those moral and spiritual values and obligations which we have as a legacy from our ancestors and which the

impact of foreign cultures may lead us to lose. By such timely emergence the incipient moral decadence of our disintegrating society may be arrested and our feet set on the pedestals of true and total progress in Africa. In our Africans standpoint, progress is total, complete and true when the moral and spiritual values are infused and become guiding light, governing the production and distribution of materials and the establishment of system of values and the relation of man to man in the full gratification of their Creator and His glory.

### **Agents of Africa's Culture Survival**

Our next task is to analyze briefly some of the agents of stability and continuity and national identity in our Nigerian, albeit AFRICAN, society; the activities of these agents and their effects; and to direct the attention of our compatriots to what may be termed a blue-print for future cultural developments in our country. Those that come to our mind immediately are those illustrious sons of Nigeria, dynamic nationalists whose training in foreign cultures stimulated them into a better appreciation of the values of their fatherland and who thus returned home to mobilize the energies of the populace in this self-awareness and emancipation. In this connection, such leaders as the former President and Commander-in-Chief of Nigeria, Dr. the Honourable Nnamdi Azikiwe, the late Mazi Mbonu Ojike and his boycott-the-boycotable philosophy, and other nationals are important. The expression of nationalism both in cultural and political matters is not new in Nigeria. In fact it dates back to the initial period of European contact and the subsequent efforts of the latter to introduce the Western culture. We remember such men of antiquity as King Jaja of Opobo, Barrister Sapara-Williams and many others

whose role had been to maintain the African cultures of Nigeria in the face of threat from outside. For the sake of handicap that besets us here, we are not able to quote directly from these patriots even though we are familiar with their deeds as evidenced in the documents preserved in our national archives. We will therefore rely on the modern-day compatriots to illustrate our points. This is a legitimate thing to do because of the time and the condition under which the latter have been carrying on their glorious deeds. They have a more sophisticated populace to deal with whose national, political and cultural awareness have been more intensified by the continued impact of a foreign culture.

Mazi Mbonu Ojike's revulsion to the threat presented by the Western culture and his pride in his native African culture of Nigeria was so deep that to the uninformed and the cultural annihilist he might appear to have been driven to an extreme of action and nationalistic expression. With the philosophy of boycott-the boycottable, Ojike would not wear any Western-patterned dress, drink from Western-made cups or utilize Western cutleries. In a lecture he delivered at the Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos on the 31st day of March, 1948, the topic "Let us Revive African Music" gives an indication of the general attitude of this great African to things African. Declared he:

"The human motive for music is one throughout the world. But just as no two human personalities are identical in all respects, so music of nations must be dissimilar one to another.

He continued:

"Twenty active years at home, plus eight inquisitive years abroad, have collectively convinced me that our music is a legacy to love, a tradition to uphold, a heritage to revive. 'It needs no reform.



It calls for no apology.

It wants no distortion.

What our music culture wants is a new zest, a new devotion, a new patronage.

It must be strengthened in order to be consolidated, promoted in order to be loved and patronized."

In a language so challenging as it is repudiating, the speaker concluded:

"I have never in all my safari seen a country Like mine. It is a nation that despises its song, its dance; a nation that patronizes foreign dances to the utter neglect of its own. It is a nation of people who think of progress (and civilization) in terms of imbibing whatever is foreign. It is a people that have as it rejected its fashion, its drink, its food, its ideals of marriage, also neglected its music."

Concluding, he exhorted his people to:

"Let us sing of old Benin, and old Calabar, New Nigeria."<sup>6</sup>

Those of the readers who remember him would reflect on his daily chronicles in the *West African Pilot* of those crucial days. As for our American friends, they would remember him as that proud African nationalist who saw and was greatly disturbed by ignorance coupled with insult which Americans showed about things African and who was thus motivated to write a book entitled *MY AFRICA*. In the book, the writer chose to make some statements in his own mother tongue, the Igbo language, in order to demonstrate to his listeners that there were such things as African languages which the Americans would find equally difficult to learn as he had had to make painstaking efforts to learn the correct English.

Among the intelligentsia the feeling of cultural pride often finds expression in their writings and thoughts. And

6 Ojike, Mazi Mbonu, 'Let Us Revive African Music.' *West African Pilot*, Lagos, March 31, 1948 P. 2



this is stabilising to Nigerian African culture. For example, it was the opinion of that veteran Nigerian writer and expert on Yoruba culture, Mr. Isaac Delano that:

"..... People like the English whose custom it is not to salute themselves (i.e. one another) when they queue for a bus or meet casually in the street, curiously appreciate people saluting them. In Yoruba Society this simple custom is the basis of the culture that carries a soldier or a diplomat through his career. I believe friendliness among the common people of nations can foster the cause of peace more than the efforts of diplomats or the possession of the secrets of the hydrogen bombs. Salutation is the best possible way of ensuring friendliness and peace."<sup>7</sup>

Our last quotation in the modern expression of cultural nationalism is none other than that from the former President of our Republic, Dr. the Honourable Nnamdi Azikiwe. In the answers given a young American School girl who had asked thought-provoking but challenging questions, one cannot fail to detect the power of conviction and the pride behind the belief of this modern African messiah who had brought political consciousness to the entire Africa south of Sahara especially the West Coast, a man whose belief in education as a *Sine qua non* for the total freedom of Africa is a well-known fact. He answered the girl, Barbara Hepburn, in the following terms."

"I believe that the greatest contribution of my nation and my people to the 'world's history of ideas' may be considered under three main headings:

#### 1 COMMUNITY FELLOW FEELING

Our communal system of land tenure and peasant economy is based on the idea of live-and-let-live. This enables each member of our society to be his brother's keeper.

7 Isaac Delano, "The Yoruba Family as a Basis of Yoruba Culture," in *ODU: Journal of Yoruba and Related Studies* No. 5 (Ibadan: Ministry of Education Publications, N-d). p. 21

True, it was a simple society at first and it was not as complex as it is today; but this idea has been so basic in our social set-up that it has made the soil of Nigeria barren for alien ideologies with their conflicting doctrines of the land-less peasantry and a permanent wage-earning class.

## 2 GOVERNMENT BY DISCUSSION AND CONSENT

This idea enables able-bodied adults of our communities to participate in public discussions which affect the body politic.

Once any issue has been discussed, the collective will crystallizes and this becomes the majority opinion which is binding on all, including those who dissent but happen to be in the minority.

To me, these are the germs of representative democracy which respects opposition views but does not obstruct majority decision.

This idea creates a situation whereby our communities are governed by a council of elders. They may be chiefs, or elderly men and women, but they are regarded as trustees of our society. Our ancestors devised a system of continuity to enable our communities to be constituted for the maintenance of law and order.

Students of political theory regard this form of government as constitutional gerontocracy."<sup>8</sup>

In the view of this writer, no challenge can be more compelling; no thought could be more provoking. This is a challenge to all the intelligentsia and thinkers as well as formulators of policies of development especially to the student of African cultures and political structure. If we accept the premise that the Africanness in our values—in other words, our roots—should be the basis upon which our modern progress is to be based, it would not be inconceivable that the imported methods of socio-political

8 *Nigerian President Shuns Protocol and Replies to U.S. School Girl's Letter. Washington D.C., Embassy of Nigeria Press Release, May, 1964.*

practices of the modern days be infused with our own indigenous characteristics. If not only the pride held about these cultural factors, but the sheer fact should motivate the modern leaders that a freedom is well won and become more enhancing when it is known that one's way of life is not an imposition from another but a result of the ingenuities of the past transmitted to the present generation. To the apologists of African way of life and proven values of old we must give the warning that we are by no means advocating a rigidity of culture because we know the latter to be dynamic and that it does change from time to time. What we are advocating is that the African root be a basis for modification rather than uprooting; that these manifestations of man's creativity should be the order whereby the artist may produce something new and distinctively of his individual creation but within the range of forms and patterns which are a part of his African tradition; the philosopher or the priest reconciles what appears to be apparent contradiction in religious belief; the narrator gives a new turn to the plot of a familiar tale or the inventor introduces changes in technology derived from previous knowledge. Indeed, we are not advocating complacency and lack of adventure in things cultural and African, but we are saying that the products of this inquisitiveness should be within the framework of African characteristics. Indeed, we support you, Mr. President. Our traditional philosophy is that of live-and-let-live. According to a Nigerian proverb: *Egbe bere, Ugo bere, Nke si ibe ya ebela Nku kwa ya* (i.e. Let the eagle perch, let the hawk perch; any that wishes the other the contrary let his wings break).

## CHAPTER III

### SOME WHY'S AND HOW'S OF THE BLACKMAN'S SURVIVAL OF THE WHITEMAN'S VIOLENCE TOWARD HIM THROUGH THE AGES

Along with the raping and pillaging of African culture as described above was also the physical and spiritual violence of the whiteman of the west on the Africans whether those living in diaspora or in African continent itself. The record is so clear and known that only a few description will surface here if only to remind us of what we meant by violence of one race over the other. The most barefaced violence toward Africans on record is slavery in which Africans were kidnapped and bundled away as human cargos to faraway places overseas. The agony of being chained one man to the other and when some should protest were hacked down is well known. Also known were the fate of those strong protestors of the kidnapping among the slaves who jumped into the wide seas in protest against the humiliation and that of those who in slavery laboured without mercy in the plantation farms of America. We shall dilate on this later. But if we come nearer home the following recent acts are still fresh in our memory: the Shappeville massacre of 1961 in which sixty-nine unarmed, placard-carrying Africans were mowed down like weeds by the machineguns of the South African racists; the white-man NATO conspiracy going on in Angola and Mozambique in which freedom thirsty Africans are being chopped down by Portugal with the connivance and open cooperation of other NATO powers that supply her with gun and ammunition; the racist collusion in Rhodesia or Zimbabwe in which Africans are killed simply for demanding their human rights can be vividly listed. The question is



how did the African survive all these atrocities and in the process did not completely suffer the fate of the American Indians that were almost completely wiped out, or the aborigenes of Tasmania that have been completely annihilated. The answer lies in two areas basically which we will elaborate on—the African's solid basic personality, and his sheer moral force, his spirituality. It is the solid basic personality that does not make an African a 'nervous wreck' that would break up and fall into pieces like a euro-american whiteman in the face of a simple stress or hardship or in a situation of new experience. And this basic personality is developed from infancy and early childhood through the relationship of the child with his mother as brought about in the pattern of child care and rearing, and the attitude of the mother to the child. Particularly under reference is the pattern of child carriage in which the mother ties with her cloth the biologically, socially, psychologically and neurologically insecure child with its uncoordinated delicate nerves to her back in body-to-body contact and carries it to wherever she goes thereby affording the child the opportunity for neuro-socio-psychological security. This security is complete when buttressed with the "I am-happy-to-have-you" attitude of the mother. This security embedded in the child's basic personality, the basic personality which is said to be unchangeable throughout life, is what in part has carried the African adult through the thick-and-thin of life.

From a study conducted by a French lady Marcelle Geber on the psycho-motor development of African children in the first year and the influence of maternal behaviour on a mixed sample of children from Kampala, Uganda; Johannesburg, South Africa; and Dakar, Senegal, the author found a striking evidence of precocity in African children compared with a sample of european children. Using

Gesell tests for infants past neonate stage and methods devised by Andre Thomas for testing neonates, Geber found that nine-hour-old African infants drawn into a sitting position were able to prevent their heads from falling back, which european children cannot do until six weeks after birth; two-day-old looked at the examiner's face and seemed to focus their eyes, a feat not performed until eight weeks by european infants. She then made the following interesting conclusion and observations:

..... up to the fifth month, the motor precocity was remarkable especially in regard to posture, Between the fifth and seventh months, adaptivity, language and personal-social relations came to equal the motor development: the level was that of european children two or three months older.<sup>1</sup>

Geber went further to suggest that the initial motor precocity of the African infant might be due to the attitude of the pregnant mother. "The arrival of a baby is always looked forward to with great pleasure.....and is not a source of anxiety .... The mother .... is active up to the moment of delivery". Geber went further to say "Her happy acceptance of motherhood may be related to the slight degree of tonic flexion in her new born child. The continued precocity of older infants is attributed to the fact that the African children live "surrounded by affection", especially the "loving and warm behaviour of the mothers". Geber states, "Before the child is weaned, the mother's whole interest is centred on him. She never leaves him, carries him on her Back—often in skin-to-skin contact—wherever she goes, sleeps with him, feeds him on demand at all hours of the day or night, forbids him nothing, and never chides him". And in support of this hypothesis, she

1 *Journal of Social Psychology* Vol. 47 1958 pp. 185-195

cites the cases of some African children whose parents were westernized and who kept them in cots most of the time and fed them on schedules; they "did not show similar precocity after the first month, and later were inclined to be quiet and subdued. Furthermore, children examined before and after weaning are said to have shown "marked differences" in their behaviour and test results; afterwards they were less lively and precocious. This is attributed to the withdrawal of mother's love and attention at the time of weaning; the Ganda peoples custom of sending the child away to the grandparents for months at the time of weaning is mentioned here. But "children for whom weaning had not caused a sudden break in the way of life retained their liveliness after the weaning, and developed without interruptions", she concluded. The question one is prone to ask is, after seeing all these advantages in our African attitude towards children and the pattern of caring for them why are we ready to copy the less advantageous one of the europeans? The answer is wrong education and brainwashing!

Our submission here is that this solid basic personality free from anxiety was the bulwark of the African adult's adaptability to the series of stresses and strains—physical and psychological—which the violence of the western white-men have subjected him whether in diaspora or in Africa. We say in the diaspora too because as far as we know the former slaves carried over there through the ages still practised their African home cultures, the only one they were familiar with. Even in the United States of America where the process of being "broken-in" was said to be high, Melville Herskovitz as recently as the present century found what he called the "African carry-overs" in the pattern of culture of the American blacks especially those of the Southern States of that country.



Another cultural factor and gift that served as a means of sustenance and adjustment of the blackmen especially in the Americas, is the African spirituality which has its variant in the known musicality of the blackman. The Negro's musicality which made him to develop the peculiar American music called jazz and spirituals which he gave as a unique gift to that country and with which that country is known and admired all over the world is the case in point. In the United States, the suffering blackmen there truly became what Martin Luther King junior called "veterans of creative suffering". Their African spirituality made them embrace christianity and evolve a peculiar form of the christianity and use it as adaptive weapon to the ceaseless violence and persecutions that were inflicted on them. They developed the "store front"<sup>2</sup> churches with spiritual chanting and handclapping mode of worshipping and tension release. It is in these churches that the Negro who during the day had been physically, socially, psychologically and economically persecuted as in the many racial discriminations and prejudices, would gather in the evening and shout, clap hands and receive emotional release. While the Red Indians defiantly confronted the wild whiteman and his deadly weapons and got wiped out, the Negro would humour the aggressor and retire into his church and rationalize as follows:- "Just as it is that the Bible says that it is easier for the camel to go through the needle hole than for the richman to enter into heaven, so it will be difficult for the whiteman who is privileged here in guns and economic power and who is persecuting me to enter heaven. In fact, the Bible also says that we shall store our treasures in heaven and not on this earth where ants and termites will eat them.

2 Store-front churches are churches that sprang up in shops. Any open shops were turned into a church where people would gather and worship their God.



So even as I don't have any goods and materials here on earth because the whiteman glutton has taken all of them to himself even after having acquired them through my own sweat, my reward will be in heaven. My sufferings here are just temporary or are even the sacrifice needed for attaining something higher". The Red Indian who was able to get some of whiteman's guns during the latter's campaign to wipe him out and who used these guns to fight the whiteman of violence face-to-face was foolish because he was soon overwhelmed by superior weapons in greater number. He was soon wiped out in a campaign in which the slogan was "the only good Indian is a dead Indian".

We must not fail to give a glimpse of the nature of the persecution that were meted out to the Africans in America if only to acquaint the Africans in Africa with the situation as it was in America unlike the propaganda with which they have been easily fed. Take lynching and the various forms it takes, for example. A mob of whitemen in Valdesta, Georgia frustrated at not finding the man whom they sought for murdering a plantation farm owner one day killed three innocent Negroes who happened to be passing instead. The pregnant wife of one of the killed men wept so loudly at her husband's death and his manner of death that the mob seized her too and burnt her alive. A lynch mob sees a Negro who is purported to have blinked or winked an eye at a passing white woman. He has thus committed a heinous crime of insulting a gentlelady or he is having a soul beyond his class by allowing the thought of admiring a white woman cross his mind. He is caught, a rope noose is put on his neck, he is either tied to the fender of a speeding car or dragged along by an able-bodied man while others in the mob follow behind with clubs and sticks in their hands and beat the man till he is dead. After his death, he is either

hanged on a tree and a fire set on him from below, or a gallon of petrol is poured on him and fire set that he may burn to ashes. Lynchings of this kind according to the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, were diminishing. It reported for the 30 years ending in 1918, 3,224 cases in which Negro people were hanged, buried or otherwise murdered by white mobs. The slow progress toward cessation was noteworthy even until very recently. Slowly, tortuously the lynch rate fell from 64 in 1921 to 28 in 1933, to 5 in 1940, to none for the first time in 1952. It was later resumed in 1956. Lynching takes the form nowadays of "simple" dismemberment of the parts of the victim's body or shooting in the back from hideout as in the cases of Medgar Evers and Martin Luther King Jr.

Another violence perpetrated on the Negroes simply because they are black and not white was this one in a supposed christian country. A christian American on the Sabbath day, the Lord's day on 15th September 1963, in Birmingham Alabama, chose the Lord's house, the church, as a place to plant a bomb and kill three innocent black christian children worshipping there-in, simply because they were black. There are many others even more heinous than these. And seeing all these and talking of spirituality, I think it really takes a high level spirituality to do as done by some Africans nowadays who say that it is not Christ Himself that fails the Africans but the Euro-Americans who brought the christian religion. The Euro-Americans brought a religion whose moral and spiritual demands they felt too high and unable to meet and utilized it to a nefarious advantage. What one would say to such African believers is that as a good christian, they should take the religion, Africanise it and restore all its lost moral virtues and precepts and live and practise it as it should normally be practised. And if they feel they

must retrieve their lost prodigal christian brothers, the western people including the missionaries they sent to Africa, they should then take the rehabilitated christianity and go to preach it and missionise the western societies in the way christianity ought to be.

Colonialism and Imperialism are a form of violence and perhaps the harshest of the series of violence to which Africans have been subjected. The nature of the exploitation—economic and social—involved, and the fate suffered by the Nationalists who are out to fight it face-to-face reveal the violence involved which we should not fail to document in a study as this.

The evils of colonialism and imperialism have been enumerated and forcefully propagated by the students of political science. For our purpose a brief account is needed and we shall therefore look at two conditions of it—economy and education.

### **Colonial Economy**

Chief of the causes of colonialism and imperialism is economy. The quest for physical satisfaction has been one of the aims of life. The Hedonist philosophers are like all of us humans. They have sought to minimise pain and maximise joy and comfort. Karl Marx associated this human aim or quest with the economic interpretation of history. If goods are to be produced, they must be consumed or else there would be an over-production and there would be economic crisis. Since commercial and industrial revolutions, nations have encouraged commercial relations. Raw materials were needed in order to manufacture goods. From these have come the need for the preservation of the precious metals. Turgot and other Physiocrats, including Adam Smith, proclaimed the "laissez-faire" theory of trade,



whilst the mercantillists pleaded for the conservation of precious metals. These aided in giving impetus to imperialism which culminated in the acquisition of colonial empire for the monopolisation of the home industries of the metropolitan powers.

Some of the evils of the ensuing practice is revealed by the following statistics of the 1937 income and expenditure of the Copper Industry in the Northern Rhodesia:

**Income:**

Copper exported—£12,000,000

**Expenditure:**

1. Dividends	...	...	...	...	£5,000,000
2. Royalties	...	...	...	...	500,000
3. Income Tax	...	...	...	...	700,000
4. Salaries of 1690 Europeans	...	...	...	...	800,000
5. Wages of 17,000 Africans	...	...	...	...	244,000
6. Balance (other costs of operation maintenance, stores, freight, insurance etc.)	...	...	...	...	4756,000

From this statistics, it is obvious that one quarter of the twelve million pounds earned goes to the African legitimate inhabitants of the area whilst the others go to the imperialists. What should attract our attention vividly is the fact that five million pounds go to the shareholders among whom were no single African, and among the europeans the per person income was £5,000 whilst it was £14 among the Africans.

In fact, forced labour and peonage on Africans were the practice through the ages. For example, Herr Schlettwein or German government representative on the Reichstags Colonial Budget Committee, said that the Hereros of the former German possession in South West Africa "must be compelled to work, and work without compensation. Forced labour for years is only just punishment and at the same time



is the best method of training man". Native labour Regulation Act of 1911 resulted from this notion.<sup>3</sup> In the former Belgian Congo (Now known as Zaire Republic), natives were penalised for not supplying the demands of the "hostage" houses. In the Portuguese Cocoa Islands, virtual slavery was practised in the workings of the atrocious system of "apprenticeships". Acquisition of Native lands by force with no compensation; brutal treatment of native labourers are other evils.

### Education Under Colonialism

In Colonial Africa, education was not given and where a semblance of it was given it was on a lower scale and was calculated toward the following ends:

1. to keep the African in his place.
2. to prevent any national consciousness (education based on the needs of the African would undoubtedly awaken in him an urge to assert his independence and to cast off his colonial chains)—the "winds of change" has fortunately led to agitation for independence even where there was no education. For example, the former Belgian Congo where eighty-four years of Belgian rule produced only sixteen college graduates in a population of 13 million underscores the point.
3. In the British occupied areas, education was tailored to prevent diminishing prestige of the English civil servants and other imperial agents—in fact the system of education was to enhance this prestige at all cost.

Needless to say, education is of vital importance and it must be given on a large scale at a very qualitative level. Within few years in Nigeria when the native leaders ascended the saddle of self-government in 1953, thousands of scholarships had been awarded ranging from the fields of engineering to

3 Morel as quoted by Azikiwe, B.N., "Ethics of Colonialism", in *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 16. 1931 p. 299.

shoe-making. Several schools had been built and great numbers of teachers trained. Hitherto, the practice of the colonial government was to award a few scholarships each year and to extend same the following year when the same names were published with a few or no additions at all. In this perspective, the recent noise and propagandising about Nigeria's preparedness for stable independence through the alleged tutoring of the British should be understood as a misstatement. As Eric Severied said, "Not that Britain really educated these people. Britain gave just enough of them the chance to educate themselves, and what they learned was why they must rid themselves of Britain and how to do it fast". John Gunther reports Awolowo of Nigeria as saying in an interview that the British did not have the true interest of the country at heart. "In fourteen months under the present government (i.e. the western regional government of Nigeria of which the speaker was the leader) we have done more for Nigeria than the British did in one hundred and twenty years."<sup>4</sup>

The case for the African dissatisfaction about the colonial situation has been established by these reports of the latter's objectives as described. But when the African fights to ameliorate conditions and demand his right for self determination and human rights, even those western white people who were known to have fought similar fights and in whom the African had faith and hope were not only a disappointment but were also opponents of the African's struggle for similar rights. Specifically under reference is the United States of America that had had to fight the same British people for its freedom and independence in the popularised American war of independence. Whereas as far

4 Sithole, Ndabanigi., *African Nationalism*, London, Oxford University Press 1959 p. 47.

back as 1943, the common belief among the American government officials in Washington D.C. and elsewhere was that the African's passion for freedom was low and nil, it became obvious some seventeen years later that this notion was not true. In an address delivered at the Chatanuga Institute on August 19, 1943, it was said by Mr Henry S. Villard the then Assistant Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs (African Affairs inclusive) of the State Department that "(3) in Africa, only a minority of the peoples have expressed a desire for independence". In 1960, however, a total of sixteen nations were given independence in Africa. In this same year it became apparent that the attitude of the American government as expressed by the Secretary of State was not favourable toward the granted independence. The events in the 15th General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation showed this. We shall proceed to enumerate what happened in that historic session of the world assembly which brought together for the first time several heads of states of the nations of the world:-

1. On Friday, September 23rd, 1960, President Kwame Nkrumah of the Republic of Ghana mounted the rostrum and in a fiery, determinate, forceful speech characteristic of a nationalistic saviour and protector of the interest of the African peoples, demanded the Freedom for all colonial territories still remaining in Africa; asked for the cessation of the atomic tests being conducted by France in the Sahara, the tests which he maintained were putting the health of the African people in jeopardy because of the atomic fallout and about which millions of Africans have shown fear and anxiety. He also called for a look into the conditions in South West Africa which was under the United Nations mandate but placed in the charge of the South African government. On this latter issue the following were said by Nkrumah the Nationalist "..... I consider also that

Ghana has a particular responsibility in regard to what is taking place in South West Africa. The justification for depriving Germany of this colony and of vesting its government in South Africa was based upon a United Kingdom document entitled, 'The Native Tribes of South West Africa and their Treatment by Germany'. Explaining the attitude of Imperial Germany towards Africans, this United Kingdom publication exposed the acts of brutal suppression perpetrated against the Africans of this territory by the Germans.

"In fact, however, the policy laid down by the old German Imperial Colonial office exactly reproduced the policy now being pursued in South West Africa by the Union of South Africa. In his 1957 report to the Committee on South West Africa, the Secretary General has quoted a speech by a senator nominated by the Union Government to represent South West Africa in the Union Senate. This Senator, Dr. Vedder, actually delivered a long and detailed speech to the Senate pointing out that in every respect the Union government was merely carrying on the traditional methods for ruling Africans devised by Imperial Germany and enforced in South West Africa by Dr. Goering, the father of the notorious fascist Herman Goering.

"The United Kingdom document which made the case against Germany in regard to South West Africa was, in reality, a commonwealth document. At the Peace Treaty of Versailles, the Commonwealth was collectively represented by the United Kingdom which acted in the name of and on behalf of the British Empire. What therefore, was done at Versailles was done in the name not only of the United Kingdom, but of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and, though they were not yet independent, of India and Ghana.

"In a report made to the General Assembly last year by



the Committee on South West Africa, and approved by the General Assembly, the Committee stated that the policy of apartheid (racial segregation) as practised in South West Africa 'is a flagrant violation of the sacred trust which permeates the mandate and the charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights'.

"For thirteen years now the Union of South Africa has consistently disregarded the requests of the United Nations in regard to South West Africa. The Union imposes the most harsh and degrading regime upon the inhabitants which is not in any way in accord with the provisions of the Mandate. There is a duty on the United Nations to enforce the mandate and the United Nations must not fail in this duty.

"Mr. President, in this connection, I wish to make the following positive proposal. The Union of South Africa should be asked to surrender the mandate to the United Nations and a committee of all the Independent African States should be set up to administer the territory on behalf of the United Nations. If the Union of South Africa is unable to accept this, then the next general Assembly of the United Nations should take steps to terminate the mandate, make the territory a trusteeship area, and appoint the independent African States to undertake the trusteeship"<sup>5</sup>...

Among other things Nkrumah, demanded before the world that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) allies of Portugal and the United Nations prevail on that country to desist from pursuing the inhuman atrocities and subjugation being meted against the African people in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea and other Portuguese Africa. Declared he:

5 Nkrumah, Kwame, An Address Delivered Before the 15th U.N. General Assembly on Friday September 23 1960 pp. 7-8.

"In Portuguese Africa there exists forced labour which is akin to slavery, all political freedom is denied and though this is difficult to believe, the condition of the ordinary African is worse even than what of it is in the Union of South Africa. If the situation in the Portuguese territories has not yet become, as in South Africa, a threat to world peace, this is merely because the inevitable explosion has not yet taken place".

Such was the tone of the Nationalist and leader of his people who had a unique opportunity by virtue of his country's membership to speak before the world assembly in protection of the interest of his African people who had been the victims of colonialism and Imperialism for ages. But to the utter bewilderment of all the world, the United States of America secretary of State, Mr. Christian Herter, who was at the head of his country's delegation, mounted the platform next to Nkrumah and called all the demands communistic demands. He, Nkrumah, was a communist to have asked for the freedom and human rights for his subjugated African people. It must be clarified that the United States Government as the leader of the so-called free world of the West is externally committed to fight communism with all the forces at its command. What thus brought a disillusionment to the African people was that such demands being communistic meant that the United States government, a supposedly hero of liberty, as widely propagated, was opposed to the same liberty as demanded by Africa and would be ready to fight Africa tooth and nail as it would communism. If the Africans want to say it, this meant that George Washington, himself the father of American Independence, was a communist for daring to fight for the liberation of the thirteen American colonies.

2. When on December 14, 1960, the 43-power Resolution contained in A/L 323 dealing with the granting of Independence for all colonial territories in Africa came before the

General Assembly for voting, it was unanimously adopted by 89 to 0 votes. Among the nine nations abstaining was the United States of America. The others were, of course, Portugal, Spain, Union of South Africa, United Kingdom, Australia, Belgium and France. This latter prompted a voluntary comment by an observer that the colonial nations abstained from their indictment. What was interesting and, according to our point here, very instructive and contrary to all expectations was the inclusion of the U.S.A. in this group.<sup>6</sup>

3. The United States of America three days later finally came out in its own true colour as a perverter of a supposedly cherished principle of liberty and independence. When on December 17, 1960 the draft resolution A/C 265, Add. 1-3 endorsing the granting of independence to Algeria that had been fighting France for six and half years for its freedom and independence came for voting, it was carried by 47 votes to 20, with 28 abstention. This time the U.S.A. actually voted against the popular resolution and thus against the principle of liberty, justice, freedom and the inalienable rights of man which she had been known to propagate<sup>7</sup>.

Of course, it has now become a set pattern of behaviour with the United States of America to vote and nullify the moves of the Africans to fight democratically for the freedom of the Africans still under colonial bondage. Since 1968 the pattern has become highly intensified with stronger support for the racist and minority governments of the Southern Africa. When Rhodesia's Ian Smith declared Unilateral Independence from Britain because of the minority European Settlers determination to make a mockery of democracy and hold power over the 4 million Africans,

6 U.N. General Assembly Report A/PV. 947, pp. 21-25.

7 U.N. General Assembly Report A/C. I/SR. 1133, p. 27.

sanctions were imposed by the United Nations. But the U.S.A. was the first major power to break this sanction in November 1971 when it decided to import chrome from Rhodesia. In the months of October and November 1972, many of the resolutions dealing with the granting of independence and fundamental human rights to Africa were frustrated when U.S.A. voted against all of them.

### **The death of Lumumba**

Part and parcel of the series of Western violence on Africa is the destruction of the heroes and heroines of that continent, the heroes who stood against the barefaced exploitation of the continent, be it economic or social. Perhaps the most revealing incident in the role of the big powers in their relations to Africa was the Congo crisis. Needless to enumerate all the details of the troubled young nation, and needless to castigate any faction as being responsible for all the chaos experienced in the young nation and its influence on the whole world, it is expedient to say the implication of the greatest tragedy and the most thought-provoking, eye-opening part of the whole joint transaction—the shocking death of the symbol of African Nationalism, Patrice Lumumba. Just as in interpersonal relations between two persons in every day life silence means consent, so does tacit condoning of actions of one government by another especially if the condoning government is leader of a formidable group to which the acting government belongs. For the first time it became obvious to the entire world that a person's life could be easily and jointly destroyed in an international conspiracy just because that person happens to know what plans are on hand aimed at exploiting his people and their economy. The murder of Lumumba is perhaps a proof positive of the old saying which goes that



where ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be wise. But the world, fortunately, is a very compact world, its people forming a close entente, an inner circle in which there is clear knowledge of what goes on. One wonders whether, like any educated person and a genuine nationalist, Mr. Lumumba would have had a peace of mind if he knew that the doom of his people's economy and their sovereignty was being planned and implemented and instead of speaking out loudly as he did to his heinous ruin, but chose to remain silent and mute. Nothing is ever more destructive and of rapid degenerative character than a guilty conscience. Lumumba would not have remained a genuine nationalist and a defender of his people and their rights if he had chosen to do otherwise than to speak out his mind and face death gloriously, heroically as he did. For isn't it true the James Russell Lowell's saying that:

Once to every man and nation  
Comes the moment to decide,  
In the strife of truth with  
Falsehood,  
For the good or evil side . . .  
Then it is the brave man chooses,  
While the coward stands aside,  
Till the multitude make virtue  
Of the faith they had denied.

Lumumba chose heroically the side of the good. And the people the world over are now admiring him as a man who stood for the truth, the right, and the devout interests of his people not only of the Congo but of the whole Africa. He has gone down in history as a martyr.

We have said that we shall not go into the details of the whole joint enterprise of the ravacious devourers lest this turns to be a political analysis. We are not here concerned about who planned what and who implemented what plan

and so forth. We are only concerned with the sociological implication of the murder and the effect of it on the personality-formation of those whose eyes and minds are open and who thus knew what went on. The escape story of Lumumba was officially announced by the government of secessionist Katanga headed by his arch enemy, Moise Tshombe under the all-pervading influences of his Belgian Advisers, on Friday, February 10, 1961. His death was announced on Monday February 13th 1961. But the rumours had lingered that the announcement was a cover-up story of a murder which had been committed around January 17 earlier. It was around this time that the American government was hypocritically and deceitfully announcing a reversal of its former position of an all-out support of the so-called pro-Western government of Joseph Kasavubu and the tacit backing of the imprisonment of the black-mailed Premier Lumumba by his enemies. There was now the cry for the release of all the political prisoners and the reconvening of the suspended parliament. What came as a shock to the entire African Student body in the United States was the revelation over the W.T.O.P. radio at 6.45 p.m. on Saturday, February 18 that the Belgians in Katanga had believed that the only way to carry out their evil plan was to murder Lumumba out of the way and that the Belgians had informed their NATO ally leader, the United States, a week earlier before the actual murder of the broadly acclaimed African leader. The Drew Pearson's announcement went like an electrical current shocking the brains out of the students who had just concluded their violent demonstration in protest against what they had innocently believed was the handwork, singly, of the Belgian colonialists. We leave the reader to conclude for himself the lesson that the African future leaders might have learnt in knowing that the United States government that they had hitherto pro-

claimed as symbol of honesty, freedom, and all other virtues had aided and abetted the murder of their nationalist hero. Any order from Washington would have undoubtedly stopped the heinous murder. United States is the NATO leader. Its influence on Belgium, a less strong member of the grand alliance, is great and all pervading.

To know further the significance of the death of Patrice Lumumba, perhaps some little introduction is needed for a reader who might not have been familiar with the events. Patrice Lumumba was the Premier of the Republic of the Congo with the capital at Leopoldville. The former Belgian colony achieved its political independence on June 30, 1960, the independence which was preceded by an agitation for same in January of the same year, an agitation which shocked the entire world because it had come from a source where everyone believed all was well, peaceful, rosy and all people satisfied economically and otherwise. Lumumba was premier, Antoine Gizanga, vice premier and Justin Bomboko, foreign minister. President Kasavubu was a compromise president chosen by Premier Lumumba in a clever political maneuvering that broke the dead-lock reached during the transfer of power from the Belgians to the Congolese as reported in some June issues of the *Washington Post*. In order to understand what precipitated the secessionist movement and the resultant chaos that pained the young nation since its birth, we shall reproduce, verbatim, a report written in Paris, France by an emissary of the All-Africa Students Union of the Americas Inc. (AASUA), a body comprising African Students from all parts of the continent who were then studying in the U.S.A. As a result of their justifiable anxiety about the plight of their continent and because of the extreme propaganda being poured on the American public by the American press and in order to give them a true picture of things themselves, the group sent an



emissary to Paris where they believed the traditional French freedom of expression and writing would give them an objective analysis of the whole affairs. True to their belief, the following reports were sent back by the emissary.

**"Bussiness Is blamed for Riots in Congo"**

While the Right press here is accusing international communism of having deliberately provoked the Congo riots in order to provide propitious terrain for African communism, the Left press has another set of villains charged with the same crime. They are the big business interests profitably engaged in exploiting the resources of Katanga, the Congo richest province, who, it is alleged, set up in advance the vexatious Katanga secession attempt in order to maintain economic, if not political, control of the Congo's wealth.

"There are in the Congo, as in Brussels," former Premier Pierre Mendes-France said last week, "influential elements which are not resigned to independence and wish to conserve their economic privileges. They contributed to sabotage an already difficult transition. This is what explains the Katanga operation."

Several Left publications here see the situation in this fashion, the most circumstantial account of what is supposed to have happened being provided by the weekly Express, which derives much of its inspiration from Mendes-France. Editorialist Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber goes so far as to pin some of the responsibilities on Frenchmen, asking why nothing was done here to avert a crisis of which the French government had been amply warned in advance.

"Abbe Fulber Youlou (of the French Congo) and Jacques Soustelle gave very active support to the Belgian groups which were preparing a dismemberment of the Congo for immediately after its independence," he writes.

This undocumented assertion meets with some scepticism here, where the Express editor-in-chief has the reputation for seeing Soustelle behind every bush, but respectful attention



was given to Michel Bosquet's detailed article in the same paper of the Katanga situation. Bosquet accuses the powerful Union Miniere du Haut Katanga, a branch of the Belgian Societe Generale banking interests, of having backed Katanga Premier Moise Tschombe, with the purpose of separating this province from the rest of the Congo and maintaining its close association with Belgium—for the financial advantage of the company. The Union miniere du Haut Katanga (UMHK) exploits the rich deposits of the province, which produces 53 per cent of all the cobalt used in the world, 9 per cent of the copper and tin, and 5 per cent of the zinc and uranium. It has been accustomed to consider the Katanga, if not the whole Congo, as a subsidiary of the company. Before independence, the close inter-relation of company and government permitted the latter to let the government appear to be the boss, without danger to its profits. Thus the majority of its stock was held by the governmental Special Committee for the Katanga. But since the Societe Generale, parent company of the UMHK, was the Congo's national bank and issued all government loans, the UMHK was in no danger of being hampered by the government.

All this threatened to change when the spectre of independence appeared. The first move on the part of the company was to whittle down the majority of its stock held by a government which it would soon be unable to control. It was agreed that 22.5 per cent of the stock should remain with the government. But this agreement contained a joker. It was not specified whether the stock was to be turned over to the central government in Leopoldville or the provincial government in Elisabethville. The company saw an opportunity, by provoking the secession of Katanga under a leader whom they could control, of assuring their own position and profits against possible future incursions of the government. "The secession of Katanga," Michel Bosquet writes, "would permit the Societe Generale to kill two birds with one stone. It would cut itself loose from the Congo, a third of whose total fiscal revenue came from the taxes paid by the UMHK, and whose immense needs (aggravated by the flight of capital, the repatriation of the total gold and foreign exchange

reserves, and the consequent indebtedness) would risk being a heavy burden on the general budget for a long time. But it would keep Katanga and, through it as an intermediary, recover thereafter the other two profitable provinces, the neighbouring Kasai and Kivu departments. As for the bloodless remains of the country, let the U.S.S.R. take care of them, if it had the courage."

The first steps in the process was to put the right man in as head of the Provincial Government. Moise Tshombe, head of the Conakat party, was chosen. This group was at the time considered so unimportant that in an exhaustive series of articles on the Congo's political groups published here two months before independence in the Catholic daily *La Croix*, it was dismissed in one sentence while Tshombe himself was not even mentioned. Nevertheless, with the Company's backing Tshombe made his bid for the Provincial Presidency in last year's elections. As Lumumba was then in prison, his Congolese National Movement was not allowed to present candidates. The Belgian Union of Katanga Colonists joined forces with the Tshombe party. The only other party permitted to enter the elections was an insignificant splinter group.

"What value can you grant to elections in which Lumumba's party was not even able to run?" Mendes-France commented scornfully on this vote. Nevertheless, Tshombe won only 37 of the 60 seats in the Provincial Parliament, which under the constitution obliged him to take members of other groups into his cabinet, the majority not being great enough to permit a one-party ministry. An indication of pre-knowledge of the secession scheme in Belgian banking circles appeared in the trading in UMHK stock on the Brussels stock exchange. It had suffered a drop when the rioting began, but rose suddenly, for no immediately apparent reason, from 1700 to 2098 on July 11. On July 12 Tshombe declared independence.

The secession move would have been bound to cause trouble in the newly independent state even if there had been no other reasons for it. But some of the Left press here suspects the big business interests of Katanga also had a hand in fomenting the disorders throughout the Congo, through

like-thinking Belgians in other provinces. The object would have been to make secession easier by giving Leopoldville government other troubles to contend with, and also by making it appear in world public opinion as incapable of maintaining the public order necessary to the industrialized economy of Katanga.<sup>8</sup>

We are not concerned about whether or not the deceased Premier acted rightly or wrongly in all that he did. We are not concerned about his call for help from the Soviet Union and what led him so to do. We are only concerned that he is known to have advocated a united Congo, and a "hands off" policy against the former masters who were still not resigned to the idea of relinquishing their hold on their former colony politically and economically. For this reason, he symbolizes what all the present day African Nationalists stand for. His murder, therefore, would undoubtedly have a traumatic and disillusioning effect on the African students especially with the back-ground story fresh in their minds.

Another testimony of the significance of the man besides the protest demonstrations staged against Belgium for his murder in the major capitals of the world including London and Washington, D.C., is this poem written by President of Nigeria's Senate, Mr. Dennis Osadebay (Nigeria is a country believed to be one of the most pro-Western African countries and the most populous one in the whole of Africa):

Captioned:

*The Spirit of Patrice Lumumba Lives*, it reads thus:  
It is done;  
The mortal cloak of ash and dust  
Has returned to ash and dust.  
The mortal cloak of Patrice Lumumba  
Has returned to ash and dust,

<sup>8</sup> AASUA Secretariat Release, Washington D.C. U.S.A. July 31 1960.

Lumumba has changed mortality for immortality,  
Imperialism has done its worst;  
It is done;

Macbeth murdered Duncan to become King  
Macbeth murdered sleep, and peace;  
Macbeth found no sleep, no peace;  
They shall find no sleep, no peace  
Who murdered Lumumba's sleep and peace  
Imperialism shall have no sleep, no peace  
It is done;

Ye independent States of Africa, rise;  
Ye are not free, no, not free  
Ye have changed one kind of chains  
For a more degrading kind of chains;  
Rise and fight for freedom ye slave  
Weep for Lumumba; weep for murdered Youth;  
It is done;

The spirit of Patrice Lumumba lives,  
It lives in the heart of every nationalist;  
It shall roam around the hills of Africa,  
It shall hover seas and deserts,  
And Man's conscience shall find no peace  
Until the spirit of Lumumba is appeased;  
Ah! It is done.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed no eulogizing can ever be superfluous for a brave that is no more. Not even can thousand tongues sing adequately the praise of him who for truth and liberty died his work yet uncompleted. We are only playing our own little part when we say of the blood of Lumumba:

O tarnished hands that shed immortal blood of Lumumba,  
What liquid can there be to wash thy taints away!  
O vicious minds that hide from man their heinous plot,  
What pardon can God to thee be given!  
The tree of liberty ye attempted to fell;  
In dire ignorance forgetting the "blood of tyrants"

9 "The Daily Times", Lagos, Nigeria, Feb., 16, 1961.



Shall water its roots,  
That tree now planted firm on Afric's glorious soil  
Shall grow regardless of the grief of our foes.  
Its root is Faith; its stem is bone; its leaves, love,  
Its flowers shall blossom glory to inspire all  
freedom fighters.

It is our prayer, in the light of the circumstances, that the Almighty God enable us to take the stance of a man and to walk with manly steps in the way of unfolding the truth.

From the eloquent poems it is apparent that an African symbol of Nationalism and Youth had been killed. Among the demonstrating African students in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, February 15, 1961 one of the placards read "Every one Nationalist killed inspires thousands". Such is the view Africans held of the fellow youthful Nationalist whom they believed died in action and with strong conviction for the complete emancipation of Africa.

Just as documentation of violence toward Africans would not be complete without an account of colonialism and imperialism as a form of violence, so it is that in a study such as this an account must be given of the nature of violence which the degrading actions of the Union of South African Government under Melan, Vervoewed, Vorster and others of their kind constitute. Here is a selection of the approximately 70 laws concerning apartheid or racial segregation which the government of South Africa has passed. Their harshness speaks for itself:

#### AN AFRICAN PERSON:

1. May not vote in all elections and has virtually no voice in his future.
2. Had no voice in the establishment of the Union and in South Africa's choice to become a Republic.
3. Is forced off his land to the white towns when the whites needed his labour.

4. Is forced out of the cities because the white people now want complete separation.
5. Is forbidden to own land anywhere even in his own area Bantustan "homelands".
6. Must accept that 13 per cent of all South Africa's land is to become the home for all AFRICAN Peoples (70 per cent of the total population). The remaining 87 percent of the land has been allocated to remaining white people.
7. May be removed from any area at any time whether he has been born there or has lived there all his life. He has no recourse to the courts.
8. May not marry someone of another legally designed racial group.
9. May not carry arms.
10. Is not entitled universally to have wife and children living with him in the urban area where he has gone to serve the whiteman.
11. Needs permission to visit a friend on the premises of a friend's white employer (whites do not)
12. May not OF RIGHT attend a multi-racial social gathering (General Amendment Act).
13. May not OF RIGHT attend a multi-racial church service, or a church service in a white area.
14. May not freely choose where to live.
15. May not travel as he pleases.
16. May not leave his municipal area without a special permit.
17. May not do any building work (even an "odd job") in a white area without a permit.
18. Has in his own "homeland" Bantustans few political rights as both his chiefs and councillors are answerable to a cabinet minister and may be sacked by the latter any time without explanation.
19. Must always carry his passbook with him if he is not to be arrested.
20. May be arrested without warrant.
21. Must prove his own innocence when held under certain laws.
22. May not choose in what language his children are to be

educated, to what school they are to go or what college or university they are to attend.

23. Must pay school fees and must pay for his children's school books (most whites do not).
24. Is to use only those public amenities reserved for him (trains, platforms, entrances, buses, counters, elevators, stairs, telephone booths, taxis, theatres, cinemas, libraries, parks, benches, swimming pool, hotels, restaurants, cafes, beaches, toilets, banking facilities, etc. all in substandard level).
25. May not practice passive resistance in any form and may not encourage others to do so (71 of those Africans who carried placards in peaceful demonstrations were shot down with guns at Sharpsville in 1961 in what has become known as the Sharpsville Massacre).
16. May not strike.
27. Must allow labour disputes to be settled by a governmental all-white body.
28. May not organise or attend a meeting of more than 10 people without a permit.
29. Must accept as his new rural place of residence any "homeland" designated by the government.
30. May not leave the country without explicit permission.
31. Must allow his house to be searched anytime without a search warrant required.
32. Must accept the fact that white persons only can represent his trade union in official deliberations if he wants to join a trade union. Such a union must be run along strictly segregated patterns and the non-white branch can be represented in executive level only by a white person.

Such are the inhumanity and total violence to which the white, westernman of South Africa has subjected the African even in the latter's god-given land of Africa. The international conspiracy that allows these inhumanities to continue without abatement is well known. The Western, whiteman including his christian religion has found it expedient not to challenge South Africa partly because of the necessity of let-

ting the African know, without fail, the supremacy of the whiteman and partly because the whiteman's economic investment, the material investment in South Africa would be disturbed and the monopoly broken if any voice is raised about this man's inhumanity to man—The way of the glutton and the lackmoral!

The last major violence to which the African had been subjected was the socio-cultural one. Through calculated efforts, the whiteman's culture was being extoiled and consciously attempts were made to impose it on the African culture. The materialists of the west were convinced that the world should best be seen from their binoculars, the binocular which we here submit has a warped lense simply because of its over-emphasis on food and materials and the conscious relegation to the background of the moral, spiritual and psychological aspect of man. The decline which this lopsided culture is experiencing now might undoubtedly have been anticipated. For the recognition of its downward trend and stretch is ubiquitously known and readily accepted even by the most optimistic of the westernmen. Convinced of their self-declared "superiority" of their culture, a declaration which was strongly backed by ethnocentricism and racial arrogance and the points of bayonet and machine guns, they went all over the non-western world and Africa to impose their culture. The result is the cataclysm and the warped mentality in which the world suffers now that makes it to judge everything in food or economic and materialistic terms—to be called modern or developed, there must be a high per capita income and a high gross national product! In some places (fortunately not in all) man's worth is determined in terms of his place and capacity in economic production, his man's honour notwithstanding. The cultural adventurism of the whiteman in the nonwestern societies was not without some



sombre reflection on the way of life found in the new places. Yet racial arrogance brought about a development of intellectual blindspot where there would have been clear perception and appreciation. The British social anthropologists, both of the colonial and precolonial era, who went to Africa to analyse the society in depth, socially and culturally had among them those who distorted what they found in order to justify an assumed racial superiority. But there were also those who, possessed of a modicum of intellectual honesty, interpreted honestly what they found in the new society and as a result became so impressed and overwhelmed as to come back to their countries despising certain values in their Euro-American cultures. By so doing, what they did was to win for themselves an accolade of epithets and accusations from their countrymen and cousins. For example, American Anthropologists are known to accuse the British Anthropologists of these type of substituting "Bongo" (i.e. African) ethnocentrism for British ethnocentrism for daring to acknowledge the virtues in the values of the African culture. They were accused of "going native" (i.e. turning Africans) by recognising and appreciating African values and cultures. Whiteman's racial arrogance had even made many to utter what amounted to a sacrilege and heresy, to use religious terms. For example, some have been said to have wondered how, as they put it, the "untutored" Africans could have a conception of God. In other words, for the Africans to know that there is God, he must be taught as if he has no personal life experiences. There are those whitemen who having been impressed and totally overwhelmed by the intricacy and superiority of the works of art like the Benin and Ife bronze heads which they stole and smuggled to the museums of Europe and America were found wondering whether they were not the works of some mysterious outsiders whom they said came to

Africa like the ghosts of the Aesop's children story, did the work and disappeared into the thin air never to be found again. Not even a trace of them was supposed to have been left. Men of this school of thought are also the general believers that the African builders of ancient kingdoms like Zimbabwe, Bakongo, Yoruba, Zulu, etc were people who originated outside of the African continent because no good, they believe, could come out of Africa's Nazareth. Despite there denigration and assault of the African cultures, the cultures, and traditions of the vast continent waxed on. They withstood the onslaught of the western assault because of the strength and virtues inherent in them. Hence the phenomenon generally acknowledged in the African culture and articulated by none others than the renown Africanists like William Bascom and Melville Herskovitz who in their research work on African culture made the following observation:

Of the many complications confronting one who seeks to understand contemporary Africa, one is the fact that even where it is least apparent on the surface, all groups take over innovations SELECTIVELY. Some things are accepted, while others, not considered desirable, are rejected because they are incompatible with the pre-existing customs or unsuitable to the natural environment, to name only two of possible reasons. Even where selectivity in the acceptance of cultural elements from outside is recognised, analyses of the contemporary African scene too often fail to grasp the fact that selection is ADDITIVE and not necessarily SUBSTITUTIVE. European cloth adds to the range of fabrics and patterns; Kerosene lamps are used together with traditional ones; and european-manufactured china and ironware expand the range of goods produced by African potters and backsmiths. In time, they may come to displace the African-made products, but despite the severe competition of european machine-made goods, African weavers, smiths, and potters are still alive.

Literacy and schooling, which stand out among the many things of European origin because they are so widely desired

by Africans, illustrate both the selective and the additive character of the acculturation process. The African's eagerness for a European type of education does not mean that monogamy is equally acceptable, while the techniques of reading and writing do not compete with established traditions in non-literate societies. The desire for literacy is a response to a need which can be satisfied without inducing cultural conflicts. Even when considered as modes of speech rather than techniques, the new European languages in which instructions are given are advantageous to learn but do not necessarily replace the African ones.

In religion, where substitution has clearly been the end of proselytizing, this principle clarifies an otherwise puzzling situation. For, whatever their verbalizations, Africans have by no means given over their allegiance to supernatural forces when they have accepted the deity of another people. Rather, the new deity is added to the totality of supernatural resources on which they can call for aid".<sup>10</sup>

After all these violence against the Africans, the question that arises is why is it that the Africans did not and are not retaliating against their detractors and oppressors even when the latter are plagued and obsessed by the fear as to whether the Africans would retaliate and pay them back in their own coin. Let us be frank about it. Underlining those oft-asked questions like "will the new African nations go communist and revolutionary" or, "will they be racialistic and drive the whiteman away from Africa", is the fear which the whiteman has. Having seen that he has oppressed the people beyond reasonable limit, and having seen the spiritual strength with which the people withstood the violence and oppression, and having seen the sleeping giant gradually awakening, and knowing what he himself (the whiteman) would have done or would do as man of

10 William R. Bascom and Melville J. Herskovits (eds.) *Continuity and change in African Cultures*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958 pp. 5 & 6.



violence without moral qualms, he became fearful and started asking the staggering and soul-searching question. The answer to the poser is that the Africans are not retaliating because of their spiritual-moral qualities and virtues. The spiritual-moral force which is the basis of the African civilisation is the case in point. It is that which makes for ethical character; the urge to goodwill and fellowship and kindness; that need, the felt need that the average African has to love and be loved for no particular reason—make no mistake of this with the sexual or erotic love. The spiritual-moral force we mean is that which systematically and progressively develops one's concern beyond self to others; the desire for order and the beautiful in general and in the nature of man. It is that gravitational pull away from the mere bestial, animal existence and vegetation toward something better, more excellent, cleaner, nobler and much higher. This is what is the basis of the African civilisation and what prevents the Africans from retaliating. For it is something higher more ethical and nobler above the lowness which the perpetrators of evil and violence represent.

And that there has not been retaliation does not, however, mean that the Africans would again open themselves to easy violence. For to be once beaten is to be doubly wiser and better prepared to see that no repetition occurs, especially now that the world is better sophisticated. One does not even take, hook line and sinker, the biblical saying that one should turn the other cheek when one is slapped because it isn't necessarily true that this biblical order is carried out even by those who brought the bible and religion to the African soil. The twentieth-century African is a man of the moment influenced by the forces of survival around him and a man who is determined to survive in the competition for existence, ready to employ the use of all available



weapons of existence—the moral, the technological and the sheer physical-biological and all! He is wiser now to know that stubborn diseases always need stubborn cures and he is ready to apply them where they are called for and needed.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CORE CULTURES OF AFRICA AS THE CONTENTS, INGREDIENTS, OR THE BUILDING- BLOCKS OF THE AFRICAN PERSONALITY

We now consider those factors which the African from his birth onward has imbibed and internalised in the process of his upbringing and nurturing. These are the elements which, according to the theory of personality formation, have gone into the formation of the personality of the biologic African. They are primarily those peculiarly African cultural traits and characteristics common to all Africans. They are the elements in the African individual's formation of attitudes, tendencies (including emotions), and the patterned organisation of these, resulting in the expression of the peculiar African personality with which we are familiar. Most certainly, what makes the American individual to wonder and marvel to a point of being horrified never imagining himself undertaking what he would call such a horrendous, odd, and crazy thing as setting himself on fire to influence a political action as was done by some South Vietnamese monks during the early part of the American-Vietnamese war, is the fact that the two peoples have different philosophies of life and consequently different attitudes towards life, people and things. One is a materialist who could not imagine himself leaving the world composed of materials like the automobile, gadgets of various kinds, good house etc and the comfort they engendered, through an act of self-immolation in which he cuts himself off through his own act. The other is a spiritually inspired being who is bound by a higher-order set of values which makes him consider his personal being a sacrifice not too great but

simply worthy for the cause he seeks which is the collective, altruistic welfare of all the Vietnamese people. Indeed, the modal personalities of peoples which we find being expressed before our very eyes in our social interaction with such people in our everyday life, are nothing but the outward expression of the internalised values which propelled such personality expressions.<sup>1</sup>

The essentially humane and moralistic ideas, beliefs and customs among the Africans are the non-material aspects of their African culture which the individual African in his socialisation or upbringing has imbibed and internalised to form his personality. We now consider some of these cultural factors:

### **1. African Personalism or Emphasis on Wholesome Human Relations Among People**

One important characteristic of African life about which the scholars of African phenomena seem to show a consensus and which grows in part out of the moral philosophy of altruism, is the African group living or collective life as reflected in African personalism—an emphasis on wholesome human relationships among the members of the group at whatever expense and efforts including personal sacrifices of various forms. The Africans would go to any length to ensure and maintain wholesome human relationships among members of the community both on individual level and incorporate. In this act, their human social nature—man is a social animal—is given genuine, full expression and taken seriously. From birth man must depend upon other human beings. Physically and econo-

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 1 on the Theoretical foundation of the African personality concept.

mically he is dependent upon others for survival and, socially, he relies upon his fellow human beings for his personal development and his satisfactions. Man alone lives in true social groups. Like man, most animals form groups, and there may even be prolonged association, mutual dependence, and cooperation toward biologically common goals. The term society or social groups, however, can be applied to no animal other than man. For the ties which bind a human group together are not merely biological needs but abstract social relationships. Shared sets of common meaning or symbols, feelings of unity, and systems of mutual obligations characterize man's social groups. Some may attempt to read human counterparts into the life of other animals, but man alone has such social institutions such as a political state, an economic system and religion. He alone has laws and moral judgments. Social groups are more than simply a group or collection of persons. In a social group, several persons are in interaction; there are social relationships among the persons and, finally, there is a degree of consensus or concerted action. Social groups exist when there are social relationships among a number of persons. Social relationships, in turn, are a consequence of recurring or repeated social interaction between two or more persons. An individual, in his actions, takes into account what he considers to be the expectations of others and his behaviour, in turn, means that he expects others to act toward him in a certain way. These mutual expectations and a person's evaluation of them represent his social role. The African takes his social role as far as the social relationships are concerned with such tenacity and backed it with altruistic moral philosophy that gives it a religious fervour to the extent that he is willing and able to make sacrifices—personal, economic, spiritual etc—to see it endure and perform his obligations therein. Hence the



emphasis on wholesome human relationships at all cost. For what we have here is not merely the oft-paraded idea that the primitive man in group, band themselves closely together in order to avoid the onslaught of the natural and animal antagonistic environment. In the African case, *there is the altruistic moral belief that all human species exist for one another's benefit primarily and basically for the glorification of the Supreme God and their Maker.* This belief gives the added strength to the basic benefit derivable from any group integration and solidarity by reinforcing this with a sense of personal and group commitment to one another. Hence everyone has a stake in the maintenance of a wholesome social relationship in the group. And everyone will contribute to its further enhancement and sustenance. What we have we share in order to nurture, and all our actions will be calculated towards reinforcing rather than breaking the cord of human relationship. The visitor to our door must partake of the content of our pots even though he had arrived unannounced—in fact, he needs not announce his coming before hand. And the elders must work hard to mend and retie the cord of human relationships when and wherever it appears to have broken or is strained. This act is taken with sacred fervour and relish rather than lightly. The familiar shout of the crier when the council of elders among the Yoruba is ready to settle a quarrel testifies to this point: “*Ka gbohun, A toto o, Arere o, Ki onikọ pa ikọ rẹ mọ. K’abiyamọ tọju ọmọ rẹ, Ki ẹlenu pa ẹnu rẹ mọ. Okun aiye ja, Okun ọrẹ meji ja; Okun ẹbi ja, awọn agbagba fẹ tun so. Ẹnikẹni to ba di nwon lọwọ awọn agba yio jẹ ẹ niya* (i.e. Be calm, be quiet everybody; let the cougher conceal (or refrain from) coughing. Let nursing mothers take care of their youngs (preventing them from making a noise); Let every one keep his mouth shut. The cord of humanity is broken; the cord of human

friendship is broken, the family cord is broken and the elders are now ready to retie the cord and if anyone should disturb them in this work of reorganisation, such a disturber shall be seriously dealt with). Many factors contribute to the strong fellow-feeling existing among the Africans that we can elaborate only on a few of them at a time. Take, for instance, that Akan philosophy as explained by William Abraham of Ghana in his book *The mind of Africa* in which the African man sees all men as encapsuled spirits, spirits who are roaming this part of the universe and who do not have a feeling of externality to the world as the Westernman feels but who feels part of the world and being internal to it. It is no wonder, then, that a feeling of comradeship and wholesome relationship should exist among the spirit-men, the superorder-men, so to speak, as found among the Africans. The spirit-men only see higher and feel deeper than the no-spiritmen who can only operate on a lower level of abstraction and cannot see beyond their nose. I think by now the westernman must be humbled by the fact that in the African he is dealing with a complex being the knowledge of whom he does not possess and about which knowledge he has merely been speculating and scratching at the surface. Man really worths more than materials.

The crisis of the twentieth century is a crisis of human relationships. It is a widely known fact, a fact that is widely propagated in many of the literature of lament that filled the literary world, that mankind's achievements in the area of social relationships have not equalled his achievements in physical science and technology. Within a few centuries man has solved many of the mysteries of the world around him. His endeavours have progressed from the realm of the folklore and magic to that of science. His knowledge of the earth and its resources, and even the vast areas of

outer space, surpasses the wildest imagination of the primitive man, the medieval philosophers or the early adventurers. The tremendous information he has amassed has enabled him to build great dams and irrigation projects to prevent catastrophic floods and droughts and open up marginal lands to cultivation. He has learnt to control pestilence and many diseases so that his expected life span has tremendously increased. In large parts of the Western world, at least, modern technical skills have provided food, clothing and shelter for most of the population, and scientific research today increasingly deals with such intricate problems such as nuclear fission, electronics and changes in human cells. Unfortunately, these technological advances have not brought with them a comparable degree of conquest over man's problems of relationship with other persons. His success in social relationships generally has not approached his progress in his physical environment. But the unfortunate thing is that those of the third world and Africa who possess the skill in this area have not been allowed to give expression to this skill. They have either been pressurised into an existing unhealthy mould or made to think that what they have is useless and not relevant to man's existence. The Western gluttonic or economy centred culture or civilisation which emphasises economic, and military supremacy invariably and aggressively makes useless and mock those who ever thought of the idea of invoking morality even as a vehicle for directing the use of these technological material and in charting the course of human relations on our planet. In the United Nations Organisation dominated by the super aggressors, the world is not allowed to make the moral voice of the weak heard because it is the might and the economy that matter. The latter when it makes its sound is considered simply as a tiny blowing of the air and is not taken seriously or is



even ridiculed. Even the window dressing idea which says that any nation, weak or strong, small or big, has a seat and a vote is being considered an effrontery. It is being advocated in the U.S.A. now that there should be differential seats and voting to reflect the powers of the Nations because, according to the dollar man, he who pays the piper must dictate the tune—regardless of whatever the tune may be. In that same country, a former secretary of states, Dean Acheson, was found saying recently that morality does not come into consideration at all when foreign policy or relations are to be formulated. He said it to President John F. Kennedy when that deviant of a man was going to let the soft part of him to gain upper hand and let moral integrity to come to play in relations between states of the world. Self-interest (usually economic, backed with militaristic) is the chief criterion.

The Western man's lack of moral fibre and qualm not only is deepseated and has long history, but it has found its expression in many forms. The reason why Hitler had no qualms in killing six million Jews and why many Jews have been treated with unmitigated persecution and shunted from pillar to post in many western countries was explained by a psychoanalyst recently. He said it was because of what he called, Christophobia—the fear of Christ. Christ, a Jew, brought the western world a religion whose moral demands are too high and too difficult for the western man to meet. So, as a psychological principle of scape-goating or displacement, he decided that every Jew must be persecuted and hated. Yes, it is a hard moral demand for one to turn the other cheek when one is slapped; to love one's neighbour as oneself and give one's coat or material out of many that one has to others that have none. It is especially hard when the aggressive *id* inside one, that offending Adam, is so strong and seeks constant expression



in ways that are customary and traditional to one as is the case in the western man of violence.

From the above, it turns out that those who brought Christianity to Africa themselves hated and loathed it and its moral demands. This explains a lot of things. First, the hypocrisy of the white man who does not practise what he preaches which is so obvious and everywhere becomes understandable. Those Africans who even went to the whiteman's country to discover that many would rather go to a beer parlour on a Sunday than to go to church there and who were shocked by this discovery need not be shocked. Those who even experienced a racial discrimination of not being welcomed at a Christian church because their color was black and at the church where the advertised topic of the sermon being clearly displayed at the entrance was "Love thy brothers" should not be shocked either. And those who marvelled at the idea that a Christian in Birmingham Alabama in America should choose a Sunday morning 15th September 1963 and a church as a place to plant a bomb and kill other Black Christian children who were worshipping the Lord Jesus, son of God, should take solace in the fact "not all that call me Lord, Lord shall enter the kingdom of God". The U.S. government is paying American farmers who have scientific knowledge of producing food in surplus, not to produce it. Yet millions of mankind die in India for lack of food—morality? humanity or what?

One other interesting point that becomes so clear from the above is the explanation for the age-old story of the missionary holding the Bible in his hand when he arrived in Africa and quickly giving it to the African chief from whom he took the land in exchange. The poor African now holds the Bible while he has been robbed of his land. What it explains is that it is possible for an exploiting

agent to come in the guise of a man of God to do his task. In other words, a man of a gluttonic culture to whom food and material are the most important values and who, as we have maintained all along, is lacking in moral fibre would have no qualms about disguising himself as agent of the high God and the preacher of the gospel, a half-hearted gospel, in order to achieve his exploiting role. The frame of mind of the African and the morality in operation at exchange transaction is the one that one should examine closely. As the story would have it, the African chief having seen the white, pale-looking man in search of a 'needed' land which he another son of God has in abundance, was moved with great pity for the man in need. The whiteman to the African is a doubly punished and doubly under-privileged man. Denied of color which should give luster to his being, and considered along with the crippled, albino, the hunchbacks, etc. as man meant to be slaughtered in sacrifice to the gods (Eni Orisa) the God, the Supreme God who is the father and Maker of all, the African said, should not make him to suffer in addition for lack of land which the African has in abundance. Hence, the African was moved with pity and he translated the existing African altruism into practical action even in the case of the stranger at his gates. Let him have the land to use like all others, he said. There is no notion of selling the land as this was a strange idea. But what did the pale-man do? He quickly sent to his home country to send battalions of soldiers and gun and ammunition to protect what he called "my property". The colonialism and imperialism that followed are known by all Africans who have earned for themselves the title of what Martin Luther King Jr. the Negro American has called, "Veterans of creative suffering". No doubt condition of distrust and mistrust have been created. But the Africans by their

cultural values still say they reject that passage in the bible which says "may God keep watch between you and me in our absence". They say this can only obtain among common exploiters and rogues on a common path of plundering and exploitation. The African altruism leaves no room for distrust or mistrust, they say.

The point being made here is this. The western man through his technological development has only advanced human civilization and culture half-way. Civilization is incomplete as long as it leaves the other arm with which the bird of human advancement would inescapably have to fly—the moral, the spiritual as translated in part in the organization of social relations, interpersonal and international rapport. This other aspect of human civilization the Africans have perfected very greatly through the ages and may be their greatest contribution to the course of humanity if only they could be given opportunity for the expression of this cultural trait, the functioning of the African personalism.

But whether or not the greedy, selfish world that has been driven to a fossilised material mould allows the African to influence it in achieving the goal of the complete development of man, one thing must be made clear to the Africans. They must be made to understand that they have great asset in their African personalism. For it is a great socio-politico asset consisting, as it were, of a readiness of the individuals involved to share in the joys and sorrows of one another and even of the entire world; a readiness to accept others as they are be they of the same race or not, or be they of the same tribe or not. Indeed, it is also a great economic asset, even though this aspect often appears somewhat hidden, an asset that can be translated into reality through human investment—has anyone ever explored the possibilities to which the African human



groups especially the extended family can be translated including economy-wise! The African's peculiarly particular conception of the human being as a member of a community with all its rights and privileges and the mutual solidarity which is engendered by the resulting wholesome human relations are important assets that the Africans should seek tirelessly to preserve rather than allowing themselves to be brainwashed into thinking it unimportant and imbibing the poison of a lopsided civilization of the west which is in a process of decline. The world of greed and aggression backed by weapons of destruction in which we live now, more than ever, requires this kind of saving grace for it and its contents to endure.

## **2. Respect for Elders for Moral Reasons and the Worth of Man**

An important variant of altruistic morality and humanism among the Africans is the premium placed on the worth of man even at the decline of his virility as in the old age. The respect given the aged among the Africans extend beyond the basic fact of their vast wealth of knowledge and life experiences. It is primarily based on the simple morality that they are the forebears of the society and the usherers and sponsors of the youngs to this world. For this simple reasons morality requires that they be given their due respect, recognition and appreciation of their role. The Africans reject the westernman's idea of the worth of man in terms of his productive capacity and ability in economic field as being morally wrong. One of the sources of fear and great insecurity of the aged in the United States of America today is the attitude of the society to the man of age. In that country where economic success is the highest goal to which everyone aspires, the old who are no more able to contribute to the



production are usually treated with disrespect and even neglect despite the fact that in their prime of virility they had made their own contribution. As soon as a man is sixty-five years old and his labour can no longer be depended upon in the factory, he is cast aside and for the rest of his life he will be plagued by a sense of worthlessness because he is no longer evaluated as being in possession of the leading value of the economic deterministic society—productive capacity.

For this same reason and that of lack of worth on non-economic level, the altruistic moral philosophy of total security of each member of the group and care for the aged embedded in the extended family system of Africa was not found in the United States of America. In this system, not only did the group offer the individual the psychological support needed; not only did the group constitute a cushion back on which the individual would fall in time of distress, but the aged in the group was cared for as a moral obligation. In the United States of America, a country vast in riches and material prosperity by whose standard other world nations are judged as to their development or none of it, it took not less than thirty hectic years to debate and decide whether the old citizens should be provided for in a programme of social security and medical care. Those who protested strongly argued that the programme would not offer enough profits to the capitalist. In Great Britain the same was the case. There is a strong protest from the physicians who are supposed to take care of the sick, the afflicted and the aged because, as they say, the social welfare programme does not afford enough gain. In fact, in recent time there was a brain-drain in which the professionals including physicians of Great Britain have migrated to the United States of America where they could earn more dollars than to be bound morally to work in the welfare programme for the

underprivileged. The Africans reject wholeheartedly the Aesop's folktale of the old cat now rejected because he could no longer pounce on the rats as he used to do in his hey days. To be old in Africa is to be respected and taken care of. Everyone looks forward to the time he would be old not with fear and apprehension but with a feeling of a crowning experience. Every child in his socialization is taught to respect the person of the aged, and old age itself. He is constantly reminded that for moral reasons if he is going to be old one day, as everyone hopes he will, he should not molest any old person now for the sake of Nemesis, the God of vengeance. Hence the saying "he who aspires to be old should not take the oldman's walking stick from him." (*Eni ma dagba ki igba arugbo lopa*) The walking stick is the old man's support and personal adjustment; Even to the blind among them, it is the eye. Why rail on the aged and humiliate his dignified person?

Apart from the sheer moral consideration, our elders have bequathed and are still bequathing to us many things for which they should be respected. Take for instance, the wisdom and life experiences locked in the proverbs and sayings which constitute guide post and search-light to the wise. According to a Yoruba proverb: *Owe leṣin ọrọ, bi, ọrọ ba sọnu, owe ni a fi i wa a*, i.e. the riddles of lost idea is usually solved by resorting to the use of proverbs. What, for instance, can ever surpass the following wisdom as revealed in the respective proverbs:

1. *A p'epo lehin agba, agba nbo wa*, i.e. one who strips off the covering from the aged will get old himself one day-and be treated the way he had treated his aged ones in their time.
2. *A pari ki m'okun losa*. A bald headed man should not attempt diving in the river, or look before you leap.
3. *Apalara, igbonwo ni iyekan*. i.e. Learn to rely on your own efforts or if you want a thing done, do it yourself.

4. *Alagbara ma m'ero baba plẹ.* (Zeal without knowledge is fire without smoke)
5. *Alafia igi ni alafia eiyẹ.* (The health of the tree is the health of the bird that will perch on it or Live-and-let-live)
6. *Alaso ala kii joko si isọ elepo.* One with white clothe should avoid sitting in the stall of a palmoil seller OR Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones
7. *Alumoni meji ki igbe owo enikan, a ki i jẹ meji laba Alade; eni jẹ iyan ko gbọdọ jẹ isu.* (Two shares of goods should not rest in the hands of one person, one never eats two forms of food in the hut of Alade; He who eats a pounded yam should not eat yam, i.e. You cannot eat your cake and have it.)
8. *Amọju ba ẹkun S'are je.* Too much knowing or excessive elaboration spoils Sare's leopard story. i.e. Moderation is virtuous. N.B. From a folk tale, Sare saw an animal in his father's farm and ran home to tell his father who, thinking he had seen a leopard, killed a cow to celebrate his son's escape from the jaws of death. The boy then explained that the animal he saw was eating Okro, so it became clear that it must have been a harmless animal like the antelope.
9. *Ariṣe larika, airika baba iregun.* If you have done nothing, you'll have nothing to recount to your credit OR No kindness is ever wasted.
10. *Aparo ko wọrun si ọlọdẹ, ẹniti o ngbe ranọ ni o nwọrun si.* It is better to light up a candle than to curse the darkness.

The respect for elders sometimes takes what to the uninitiated may appear a disturbing dimension. Take the honorific use of the word "they", "them". The Yoruba considers it disrespectful to address a senior, an elder, as "you" singular (i.e. *iwo* in Yoruba). He would rather use the honorific plural "you (all)" (i.e. *eyin*). And in the third person he would use "they" for the singular elder as a way of showing not only his respect for the elder but also his own good home-training or upbringing. Rather than calling an elder or a senior by his first name, he would use a teknonym, "father-



of-so-and-so" after the latter's offspring or simply "my senior".

Even at death when the corpse of the dead would be referred to by the Englishman or Westernman as "it", implying a lifeless and useless thing, the Yoruba still uses the honorific term to describe or address the corpse keeping in mind the status of the deceased while yet alive. This writer once went to the University College Hospital to claim the corpse of his deceased grandmother. He was struck by the deference shown by the Yoruba nursing-sister-in-charge in the concern about the death and in the mode of address in reference to the dead as far as the death certificate was concerned. At one point it seemed the writer had come to collect more than one corpse and those of some dead queens for that matter—morality per excellence! Such little respects here and there for others and for oneself are the things that make life worth living, living in sheer appreciation of one's being by others and by one self.

### **3. Community Fellow-Feeling as Reflected in the Communal Land Tenure and Ownership**

The African communal system of land tenure and peasant economy is based on the idea of live-and-let-live. This enables each member of the society to be his brother's keeper with each person having access to means of production which of course is not alienated from the group corporate. This idea has been so basic in our social set-up that it has made the African soil barren for alien ideologies with their conflicting doctrines of the landless peasantry and a permanent wage-earning class. Conceived of the group's basic selflessness which allows every individual the opportunity for the fullest development of his personality and potentials, the alienation of land is foreign to the African mind. Rather,



the land is held in corporate for the common benefit of all with the allocation to every able-bodied member who may need it at a particular time and period. What we have we hold and share is the philosophy.

#### 4. Live-and-Let-Live Philosophy

The traditional African society offered an opportunity for each member for his self development and fulfillment to his fullest capacity. The individual developed his talents in an atmosphere of great toleration and mutual support. To live and allow others to live in the way they deemed fit was not only practised but every member of the group was enjoined to follow it to the letter failing which sanctions were levied on the violator. The sayings and watchwords which give direction to the acts of the members of the society are replete with this basic philosophy that any child in his socialisation is made to imbibe or internalise them. According to a Yoruba proverb, *Ẹiyẹ ki ipe ki ẹiyẹ miran ma fo. Ẹiyẹ ti o sọwipe ki omiran ma fo nṣe ni apa rẹ yio da*. Literally, this means "no bird should prevent another bird from flying. Any bird that so does would have a broken wing." The Ibos of Nigeria also has the same idea in another form. They would say *Egbe bere; ugo bere Nkesi ibe ya ebela, Nku Kwa-ya*, meaning let the kite perch; let the eagle perch; that which refuses for the other to perch may his wings break. Here is a philosophy that was traditional to and enforced by the Africans of old but which is very much needed for mankind's survival in a world today where intolerance of ideologies, greed and acquisitiveness, immoral colonialism and neo-colonialism reign supreme—a world that is so steeped in the path of immorality that it is tenuously sustained by a mutual state of helplessness in which warring giants have armed themselves so much that it is a fear of annihilation of our

species that has prevented each one to start a nuclear war each knowing fully well that both the originator and the defender in such a war and mankind as a whole would be wiped out.

The fact of this philosophy being with us, we cannot help but see the erroneous information being peddled by those early European adventurers, plunderers and anthropologists of tribes being in ceaseless internecine wars with one another as a myth created to justify the ulterior motives of those men who wished to justify what they called "civilising mission" and who in actuality have ulterior motives and nefarious goals.

#### **5. Altruistic Philosophy of the African being his Brother's Keeper**

Next to or, a variant of the African personalism, the notion of the brother being his brother's keeper is strikingly common to the Africans. Even under "the wind of change" and modernity as is conceived nowadays, this philosophy still holds even though on a slightly modified form. It is one of those values that one would predict to last long or eternally despite the incursions of lopsided civilisations. There are many variant manifestations of this philosophy which have implication for the modern society. We shall consider some and point out their implications and relevance for the modern time so that the marginal men or the westernised miseducated few could see and launch themselves without shyness on the path of self-emancipation; and so also that those who are already practising them without fail may continue undauntedly.

(a) *Medical Variant of the philosophy of being one's brother's keeper*

Perhaps no other system offers a better, even literal meaning to the idea of one brother being another's keeper than the traditional system of the care of the sick among the Akan people of Ghana. According to Busia, when a traditional healer decides to treat the patient, the sick man's folks would appoint one from among themselves and introduce him to the healer as the patient's Okyigyinafo, his supporter, or literally, the one who would "stand behind" him. This representative of the kinsfolk would discuss with the healer all matters concerning the treatment of the patient. He would be responsible for any fees to be paid and for procuring any supplies the healer needed. The appointment of such a representative is enjoined by custom. Everyone looked to his kinsfolk for support and security; their failure to name an Okyigyinafo would amount to disowning the patient. No Akan family would fail a relative in this way, for it would be a standing reproach to the family. The kinsfolk would select in addition to the representative, one or more persons to nurse and attend the patient. If the man was married, his wife or wives would nurse him. If the illness was serious and protracted, there would be a blood relative attending him as well. The family representative and the family attendants were given detailed instructions about the use of the various medicines and about taboos and observances. There might be medicines for the patient to drink, to use in his bath, to rub on his skin, to take in his food, to apply to his anus; medicine for syringing, medicine to place in incisions made on the body. Various procedures and rules had to be observed. And these relatives have to see that everything is done right and essentially stay along at all time with the sick patient. What better security could a sick patient who needed it get than this double assurance of being wanted and cared for.



by the rest of the family and seeing that people are around at all time to keep him company should things take a turn to the worse and if to the better to keep his good company and make him feel lively? It is instructive that lack of this built-in-customary security is what is behind the so-called psychosomatic medicine in the individualistic western societies of today where a person gets sick not because anything is physiologically wrong with him but because he needs attention and security from other fellows. But because every body is self-centred and extremely individualistic no one cares for the other. But man being a social animal needs someone to "sweat on" him; someone to show concern about him. In the African care related and many others known, not only were the attendants concerned about the sick (in fact the whole extended family whom they represented are more than concerned) but by their activities and restlessness and labour they constantly show him that they would make any sacrifice under the sky on account of him, his health and life.

This phenomenon seems to explain what is ubiquitously observed in the modern hospitals in Africa among the African nurses, doctors and their African patients. The doctor's concern seems double. Having been brought up in a culture that taught him to be his brother's keeper, he is not only interested in saving and preserving the life of a patient, but he is concerned about the life of the patient-brother, his African brother for whom he is a keeper. The nurses are not just "ladies of the lamp" doing what the profession requires but are doubly committed to care for the brother African patient. Some even would go to the extent of empathising with the patient his sickness so as to show their concern. One could say that many a patient who would have been at the gate of heaven seeing this concern might have taken a second filip to live rather than die knowing that he is



wanted here on earth. Even the most doubtful of the illiterate patients would receive efficacy from the pills given with smiles! The African doctor's and nurses' congeniality, devotion to duty, their African charm coupled with sheer I-care-very-much-attitude which they display towards their African patients are important assets in the business of healing which they should not lose. These they must continue to use to reinforce the modern scientific system of medical care. Yes, to the African healer either in traditional robe or the foreign garb the death of every man diminishes him tremendously. But before the demise, the temporary ill health of the other man disorganises, disorients and fills him with the feeling of a temporary incapacitation of his own body-part and heart—because that partner-brother whose smiles, and “socialawa” (from social awareness) give him human fulfillment; his partner in the chain of wholesome human relationships for full, meaningful living; his partner in true humanity is temporarily impaired and so he too feels! This feeling is best revealed in that feeling of happiness, joy and relief which the nurses express without any inhibition whatsoever when their hitherto sick and helpless patient now recovers. Everyone of them now comes to his bedside expressing the attitude of ‘I’m-glad-for-you-and-myself-that-you-are-well-again. They seem to say “get-up, brace up yourself and let’s continue the journey of life once again, you for me and me for you as brother and sister in humanity, reinforcing each other with sympathy, love and affection that the arduous tasks of the life journey may be made easy.”

*(b) Economic Variant of the Philosophy of being one's brother's keeper*

First and foremost let us clear one point or misstatement. It has been said that it is difficult and impossible to have among the African elite a man of riches and capital. It is

said that by the time each one meets the great demands of his extended family, he is left penniless. Though on the surface there is no doubt about the veracity of this statement, what we quarrel with is the motive and hidden thought leading to the statement. There is always an air of derision and dissatisfaction underlying this notion. When the westernman steeped in his materialistic and economic deterministic, self-centred values makes this statement, it is an attempt to deride the African for spreading his money to the advantage of his family members, immediate and extended. Yet the African must fulfil this essentially moral and cultural obligation. But the area of the economic obligation of the westernman does not extend beyond himself, one wife and the children. Anything beyond this he would not move an inch. Even his own parents are no more his business. But to the African, the extended family is his obligation even if he is the only one, among twenty or forty, that has made good or is successful. To him, if he is rich, it is a collective richness and when and if the wealth is distributed and reached everyone leaving him no penny, all that he has left is collective poverty. And what difference does it and should it make. For who will the African be who in the midst of riches could watch his extended family suffer want and deprivation and yet have a peace of mind? Those western educated African elites who appear to complain about their extended family obligations are doing so against the wrong thing and person. Deep down in their sympathetic African hearts they have the desire to meet these obligations but their purses were militating against them giving them the appearance of selfish beings with self-interest only. For it is a truism today that the African elite in this immediate post colonial Africa is not rich in the real sense of the word. What he has is a mere pittance of the crumbs from the table of the colonial powers who had for long been feeding fat on the rich natural resources of African

society and who had for long used these resources to beautify and develop their Euro-American societies in various ways. The Africans would have to develop the natural resources of their land, derive wealth from them and utilise these wealth for the welfare of all in the society. And ironically to be able to do this they still have to shout "hands-off" to the former exploiters who are now in another garb of the neo-colonialist! With the meagre riches or semblance of riches in the hands of the elite, the complaint about fulfilling the extended family obligation is, from the point of view of the elite's Africanness, a chasing of the shadow or a wrong horse. What is needed is a return to the old African original spirit in which the present disadvantaged extended family members are seen as being unsuccessful in their contribution to the commonwealth of the family through no fault of their own. If they are seen to have made their individual honest effort at contributing but are handicapped by lack of formal education or the wherewithal of the modern economic and social competition, any effort at assuaging their sufferings would not be seen as an unnecessary burden or someone else's burden to which one is not obligated. I think the source of satisfaction to the true African elite should be and is, in many cases, in the welfare of his kith and kin primarily and the wider society secondarily. What the individual elite must do is to see that there are no lazy drones and parasites among his relations who would refuse to make their own honest effort at working. And if effort is made but the contribution is not as big as that of the qualified, skilled elite possessed of the modern techniques and knowhow, there should be no cause of complaints and cries. Take the traditional hunting expedition of the family as an example to demonstrate the point being adduced. When the group returned from the expedition, if Ogunwale has killed four deers, Tunde three, Adeola two and Sotunde none, while high praises were showered on



Ogunwale and all the successful ones, Sotunde was not in disgrace at all and is not made to feel ashamed unless it was reported that the reason for his failure was that he slept in the shade of the trees while others were working. As long as his efforts were the same as the others, his share was the same because he had done as much as Ogunwale in the real sense of it. This means that if the labour was equal, Ogunwale himself was not wholly responsible for the outcome of the hunting, no more responsible than he was for his greater height, swifter feet, his handsome appearance, or the beauty mark on his cheek—all of which were due to a power outside of and beyond Ogunwale and the rest of mankind.

To complain about the extended family obligations and at the same time spend disproportionate amounts on personal aggrandisement as is done by some elite who have no difficulty or qualm in embellishing themselves with very costly dresses some of which are fifty pounds per yard of eleven yards, or a gold chain costing one hundred and seventy pounds (chain is only one item of jewelery that a woman puts on; there are bangles and earrings costing equally heavily) is to be immoral at least and heartless at most. That amount lavished on the individual's self enhancement can be a great source of happiness to the many relatives who are lacking in articles of balanced food and good clothing.

To put it succinctly, wealth is a relative term. Those Africans who in the post-colonial era may have claim to riches by African standard are really truly not rich or wealthy by the Western capitalist standard in which people talk in terms of millions and multimillions. And the little riches that the Africans have could best be utilised for the benefit of all in the spirit of traditional African altruism. To complain of the extended family obligations as is done by some is to shirk one's responsibilities and become heartless in a way contrary to the spirit of Africanness. The extended family



member who visits an elite in the city is instructive. In her morality that sensitises her to the principle of reciprocity, and in her manner of demonstrating her own efforts at contributing to the family pool even though in her 'window's mite', She has her bag full of yams beans etc. from the rural areas which she brought as present for the elite whom she has come to extend her goodwill and social support to primarily and from whom secondarily she would collect some money for her survival needs. To shun her and turn her away is to be immoral, heartless and gluttonic. And these are very un-african, we maintain. We said she has come to extend her social support to the elite. Our contention is borne out by the following belief of the African, albeit the Yoruba. The Yoruba would say *Enia laṣọ mi; Bi mba bojuwehin ti mo ri awon enia mi inu mi a dun, ara mi aya ga ga: enia laṣọ mi.* i.e. literally "People are my very clothes. When I look back of me and see many of my people following me, I am very glad and pleased and I am lively. For people are my clothes." In other words, the individual's humanity and human nature and social security is derived from among the people around him who give him personal gratification and psychological fulfillment in the social response he receives from them as a social animal he is. The Yoruba African have many ways of enjoying this social gratification. The more people that attend their social functions like wedding, house warming, second burials of their parents etc. the happier they become and the greater evaluation they receive from their fellows especially if greater number of people that matter in the society are in physical presence. Thus, a man forsaken by his relatives for whom he never cares is at a very great loss. His colleagues would brand him as someone without a source, a base, one who literarily is ejected out like the stool from a flying bird. The point we are making here is that for an elite to take care of his extended family relatives is for

him to be moral basically and to engage in the protection of his own self-interest in the long run. One's people are his clothes. They are the cushion back on which one falls in time of stress and trying experiences, who share of one's sorrows and joys. What we have we share especially as each has contributed his own efforts in many and diverse ways some success fully and some unsuccessfully.

Another measure of the elder woman member of the extended family's contribution to the common purse, though one that appears subtle but nevertheless important and significant, is her use in the house of the elite career woman as a nanny or babysitter. Whilst the careerist goes out to earn a living to supplement her nuclear family's high cost of living, the elder woman stays in the home taking care of the little children who need the attention of matured women for their wholesome growth and development. The elder woman's rich repertoire of experiences, the experiences she had accumulated even in the upbringing of the present housewife careerist when the latter was young, are now being made available to the offspring of the latter. The usefulness of the grand parent nanny who though cannot read nor write but nevertheless is wise with commonsense and maturity could be seen in the following story of a teenage nanny or housegirl whom the careerist told when she was leaving the house in a hurry for place of work that after the nanny should have finished feeding the baby with the baby food she should put "it" in the refrigerator. The teenager thought that the careerist told her to put the baby in the fridge and she did simply that! Of course, the infant froze to death! The elder woman would never have done this. Her adult experience would have prevented her from committing such fatal blunder. By making her wealth of experience available to the family, our contention is that the elder member of the extended family is making her own contribution to the

common purse, the commonwealth of the family even though in a little way. What is needed among the elite is a complete and thorough restructuring of their attitudes towards their extended family relatives whose statuses are enough to respect, adore and recognise them. To complain about them is to be immoral, to bite the fingers that fed one, or shunning the base ladder through which one had ascended the height.

One further example will suffice to support our contention that the elite of post colonial Africa would have to restructure their attitudes and reexamine their action towards their extended family members. The present elite, influenced by the Western philosophy of individuality and self-interest in contradistinction to the African philosophy of altruism, are faced with the challenge as to whether to be African in thoughts and actions in this line or be westernised and be dehumanised. For the sake of simple universal morality and African altruism in particular it is extremely indefensible for an elite to go all out to indulge in personal psychological self-gratification while many of his relatives are dying of poverty around him. Take the rich elite who attends a social function and at a dance chooses to demonstrate to all present and the native orchestra that he is rich by giving out bales of currency notes of high denominations as a present to the flattering vocalist of the orchestra or to a friend or concubine dancing on the floor. Some bigshots in Lagos are known to indulge in this act very frequently that the public know them to have a pocket that is like a bank vault whenever they go to functions. Such men have been found to "spray" the vocalists with fivers (i.e. five pound notes) totalling five hundred pounds in response to the latter's flattering. There are others, especially women, who might be found to dress themselves up each with clothes and jewelry totalling two thousand pounds. At the coronation of a rich socialite at Abeokuta recently, a woman was found dressed



up in expensive clothes, rows of bangles on the arms and crowning herself with a cake-like hat made of pure gold—a gold cake on her head! Such are the extent to which the rich African would go to enhance himself psychologically while pockets of poverty and destitution abound round him. A rich person whom this writer knew very closely recently died leaving properties worth at the least seven or nine hundred thousand pounds. The total would be one million pounds on close scrutiny. With a most fantastic building erected in his home town costing about fifty thousand or more pounds, a house which many come to the town simply to watch and admire, and a wardrobe full of expensive clothes some of which had moulded for lack of use, the man's riches was fantastic. But at his death not a single member of his extended family was moved by his death. A daughter of his deceased sister was heard to have made a remark saying "so it is true that a richman can die, en?" The fact was that these immediate relatives—the children, the grown up offspring of his elder brother and elder sister who all numbered only eight—were left to languish in want and poverty without a single attempt made to start them on some trade or even help them when they solicited help from him for their individual economic adventures. In fact, knowing him or being related to him was a disadvantage to such relatives because one of them was known to have approached another richman in the town who was known to give out loans to traders to lend him some money thereupon the richman retorted that this fellow had come from a rich family with a giant uncle and that the man has simply approached him in order to make jest of his riches in attempt to compare it with that of his uncle! But knowing that his uncle had nothing for him as expected by the people around, the youngman bursted into tears and wept bitterly cursing the fate that made him related to the selfish uncle. As we were saying, at the



death of this uncle, no member of his extended family was moved. This was so clearly observed by many in the town to the extent that another richman who was a friend of the deceased and who in his own turn had established a factory for manufacturing secondary articles thereby providing jobs for many but whose riches is nothing compared with that of the deceased who was acknowledged as richer, had to make an open soliloque at the funeral ceremony by saying "Yeh! Mr. so and so died and no member of his family is moved at heart about it. Yeh, I am going to change my attitudes towards my extended family", meaning that from thence on knowing the fate suffered by his friend who had neglected his family, he would take care and provide for his own extended family so as to be mourned and remembered when he dies. Among other lessons to be learnt from this statement of a richman who thinks aloud, it is significant to note that the man—as indeed every African wishes—would wish to be mourned and remembered by his people.

Lest we forget it. The immorality of the idea of the extended family neglect is the crux of our contention.

## 6. Isalejo (Hospitality)

One important area to which the characteristic African altruistic philosophy is extended is attitude of the African to strangers and visitors to his door. Among the Yoruba, the word *Selalejo* connotes generosity on the part of the host and comfort on the part of the guest in addition to its literal meaning, to show hospitality to a person. What we have we share that all may be satisfied is a watchword among the people which extends also to the visitor or stranger who must be satisfied. The Yoruba African and the western or Euro-American attitude to hospitality can be seen or deduced from the following incident. A group

of students once visited a European lecturer's home in Ibadan during the latter's absence. They met his European wife who opened the door and asked, "Yes, what can I do for you?" To which question one of the students ejaculated and said: "Most certainly madam, you cannot do anything because I have n't offended either you or your husband". Two things are obvious here. There is the difference in language construction to express particular attitude. First, to the Yoruba African there is a common assumption that the guest's problem is the problem of the host too in the typical African altruism. So, an African wife in this case would not have asked "what can I do for you?" To ask what can I do for you implies that the questioner wishes to do something for the guest for which she hoped to demand a reward in form of payment for his services. To the African who believes that he is his brother's keeper he would *ipso facto* take the stance of someone faced with a problem which he is poised to solve for himself. In reporting to the absent husband upon his arrival home, the African wife would say thus: "three young people came in during your absence at about 4 p.m. They had four bottles of soft drinks and a beer. They stayed for thirty minutes while we chatted about the plight of the country and the role of our new, educated women. I have never met them before, but I think they must be your students. I did not ask for their names. They were very nice and courteous young folks whose good home training were well reflected in their comportment. One of them was particularly a complete *Omoluwabi*". What is instructive here is the fact that the woman had never seen or met the young people before, yet she was rather spontaneous in her reception and hospitality toward them. The shock which many Nigerian visitor-students received in England because of the British attitudes towards them when they

paid visit is relevant here. The Nigerians were often astounded of the fact that even when they met their British hosts at the table during a visit, the latter would never make a mistake of inviting them to partake of the niceties. Rather, they would only give them newspapers "to stare at" as the students would express it. It was said that sometimes their hosts would be so lukewarm bordering unto antagonism in their attitudes when visited without special invitations to do so.

Yoruba by common custom treat their visitors, both the familiar and strange, unknown ones alike, with spontaneous and uninhibited reception. To them, no introduction is needed for a stranger to be welcomed. Asking the strangers about his travel experiences and background before extending hospitality to him is an unnecessary subjection of a distressed person to extreme stress when he should normally be made first and foremost to feel relieved. Hence the first thing offered is a bowl of cool refreshing water and articles of food and so on even before the stranger's origin is known. This attitude emanates primarily from the altruistic good naturedness of the people, the attitude which they normally express towards their own kith and kin in the community. In addition, there is a saying which expresses the fact that the present host could in the future be a guest to the gate of the present stranger in the latter's own domain. *Omi lenia. Bi o ba san wa a tun san pada*, that is, human beings are like a stream of water which flows hither and thither. The stranger in the present circumstance has just happened to flow in this direction now. It will be the turn of the present host to flow to the territory of the present stranger and will be treated nicely in his own turn if he should treat the present stranger nicely. This notion of reciprocity of hospitality is further backed by a stronger moral consideration which makes an individual to be repaid in whatever



coin is suited to his action. Cases are not wanting in stories of gods or spirits which travel *in cognito* and would repay anyone who did them evil instead of the culturally expected act of hospitality. Besides, it is simply good and rewarding, the Yoruba would say, to do an act of kindness and generosity even to a stranger. The kind have the unfailing blessing of Olodumare, the Almighty, and of men always:

Igba Olore ki i fọ,  
Awo Olore ki i faya  
T'owo t'omọ ni i ya'le Olore

That is,

The calabash of the kind breaks not,  
The dish of the kind splits not,  
It is both money and children, goodness, that  
flow into the house of the kind.

In other words, it is generally believed that no mishaps ever befall the kind but his lot is always material blessings. For kindness begets kindness. And one has every reason to feel a sense of righteous indignation at an act of evil which is done in recompensation of an act of kindness and generosity. Such recompensators by their action and nature are considered accursed.

The Yoruba whose culture is essentially based on good character would go a long way to please a visitor to their gates simply because it is assumed that the stranger might have been a man of means or a gentleman and head of his own household who was in control of his domain or castle but happens to be travelling now. The Yoruba in their liberality and sheer consideration for the lot of the stranger would say *Alejo ki igbe ile le ori lọ sajo* i.e. A visitor is never expected to travel with his house carried on his head (like the snail his shell). And so he must be housed and be made comfortable and subjected to no hardship to

which he had not been accustomed in his homeland. This is another Yoruba way of acting out what is commonly obvious among them. Every Yoruba group must have a head. This group includes the home. And the head is entitled to a respectful and dignified treatment. Any adult visitor to their gate is taken and presumed to be a head of some home where he was treated with respect that becomes such persons. He needs not suffer any indignities and deprivations simply because he is in a strange land by sheer circumstances. That the Yoruba would spontaneously extend the notion of an exalted personality to the stranger whom they have not met before and who had not revealed his background history and status to them is significant because in a way it shows a degree of selflessness and the practical manifestation of the dictum, "do unto others as you would they should do unto you". A selfish person might have been so self-centred as to assume his own superiority to the approaching stranger whom in that frame of mind he would tend to look down upon. A reciprocal expectation that the stranger in his turn be polite and show evidence of good character and breeding is what is expected and this is certainly not exorbitant. Every Yoruba, the stranger inclusive, is expected to demonstrate that he was well brought up by his parents whose emblem he carries about by the virtue of his existence and former socialisation. A good home to the Yoruba African is a place where good training and nurturing in character and good behaviour including good mode of addressing people are imparted to the young. And the children must be ones that are taught and who accept training as good children should and would do. A bad child is an *alailekp* or *akpigba* meaning one without character training or one that was taught by the parent but refused training. The good child is supposed not only to accept and show good

character training in the home but should show the glory of the home outside through his own good behaviour and deportment there. *Ile lati nko eso rode* (charity begins from home).

Sometimes the belief of a prospective gain, not just altruism, underlies an act of hospitality done. For instance, there is a belief among the people that one good act of kindness done is never lost. *Ore ki igbe*. In the same vein any act of evil done is never lost. It would have its own reward, too. The Yoruba, in recognition of these facts would say: *Eniti nse rere ko maa se lo. Eniti nseka ko maa se lo, tika tore ikan kii igbe* i.e. He who is accustomed to doing good as well as he who is accustomed to doing evil should continue unceasingly. For neither would ever be lost, each being rewarded accordingly. Herein lies the additional motivation for doing acts of kindness and hospitality to a stranger as well as to fellow citizens. And who knows also, the stranger at one's door could even be a god in the guise of man who, after having received any form of treatment, good or bad, might reward one accordingly and on the spot! And as gods are mysterious and lavishing in their rewards one would rather do an act of kindness than of wickedness or evil to a stranger at one's door.

Lastly, the Yoruba in their attempt to ensure the good treatment of strangers to their gates according to their altruistic bent have raised the status of the unknown stranger to an unprecedented height by including his treatment in the mores, folkways and social values in their culture. Every Yoruba, rich or poor, is expected to show careful treatment to things of value even though those things may not belong to the individual concerned. The fact that he knows that such a thing costs money is enough for him to take care of it. It is only a wretched man without a hope



of betterment who would have his doorsteps deserted by god of fortune that would treat things of value badly. Such a person is known as *Otosi alaimoyi owo, alakori*. This fact explains why in traditional and modern times, a person's parked car or any such highly valued objects are not scratched or molested in the owner's absence. To do so even when no other eyes are looking is to invoke the wrath of the god of fortune who would desert that person's doorsteps and he will thus never be rich enough to buy his own car.

The relevance of this point to the treatment of the stranger is that the Yoruba would say in their proverb: *Alejo ni owo, ki e toju re*, i.e. Money is a stranger or visitor. He should be taken care of. In other words, the importance attributed to money and things of wealth and value should be extended to a visitor.

Finally, it is good character (Iwa) and good reputation to be benevolent to others especially one that one has never met before and who *ipso facto* is underprivileged and is an underdog. Good character makes for good and wholesome social relations. Selfishness is a bad thing that does not promote the good of the community as a body and therefore according to the ethics it should be abhorred. Thus, a selfish person is often held in contempt and is stigmatized. To be benevolent and hospitable is simply right.

Our chief point in the delineation of these essentially African cultural values and characteristics is that they are those things that reflect and project our humanity which we do not want to lose as a race even though others in other parts of the world might have been de-humanised because of a mess of pottage. Spontaneous hospitality is a characteristic African phenomenon that should be preserved. Surely enough, the gluttons and the economic deterministic, morally bankrupt have exploited this goodnaturedness in the past making us sensitive not to allow ourselves once

more to be similarly exploited. But the African needs not reject and lose this characteristic. All he needs do is to be circumspect and be cautious and be not simplistic in his behaviour. Yes, it was true that the whiteman had exploited the African's spontaneous hospitality and sense of compassion for him. For instance, it was said that when the whiteman came to Africa, the African chief saw him as a man with double jeopardy who should be pitied. First, as white as he was, he looked like the pitiable albino in whom God did not complete His creation. Such people as well as the hunchbacks and stilted people are usually sacrificed as undesirables to the gods. Hence they were called *Eni Orisa*. Having been so primarily handicapped, the African chief took greater pity to the whiteman saying that it is unfortunate that he should in addition be suffering from deprivation of land which he, the African, has in plenty. So when the whiteman was making effort to acquire the African's land, the latter saw it as an act of a desperate, deprived person whose need should be met to enable him to have a place under the sun and make up for his double jeopardy and accursedness. Least did the African know that the object of his pity and human compassion would send to his homeland for a military troop to come and protect what he (the whiteman) considered his "property". Yes, to be once beaten is to be twice shy, it is true. But one needs not be led into losing one's humanity because without it one is empty and the wider world is at a great loss.

## **7. The nature of music and artifacts and their relation to life**

The artforms of a people have been described as the practical manifestation of the ideas and beliefs held by the people. That is to say that the non-material aspects of the

culture of a people sometimes have their practicalisation in the material aspect of the culture. So, those artifacts represent the ideas and beliefs held by the people who produce them in the way that before any individual starts to create something he would have first and foremost possessed some conception of such a thing in his mind. The carpenter who creates a chair must have had an idea, a theory-like idea so to say, in his mind about the type of thing he wishes to produce and perhaps the type of creature that would use it. Thus, he conceived of something that a creature called man with his back to rest and his buttocks for sitting and his folded legs to rest on the ground would use. Hence he created the type of chair we are familiar with. Whether the type of people that would use an artifact is considered before its creation or not, one fact is indisputable and that is that an idea is in the head of the would-be creator of the piece which he later practicalised in the form we see it concretely. And our standpoint here is that many of such artifacts or artforms produced by a people of a common environment and culture usually take certain similar form which is of a distinct kind different from those of other people from other areas. Hence we are able today to distinguish European arts from African arts or oriental arts and so on and so forth.

The students of African artforms have told us that certain motives or idioms run through such artforms. There is, for instance, a certain escape from naturalism in the African sculpture, a kind of preoccupation with a spirit world, a type of abstraction which tends to distort what is being shown. It has been said, for instance, that the African tends to put emphasis on negative light areas rather than on positive mass as is done by the western artists or sculptors. The African is said to carve out apertures or spaces rather than mass as is done by the Western man. And he does so



in a rhythmic fashion. In the paintings, we also see distorted forms depicting the distinctive ways in which the African creativity is shown. What this creative expression symbolises, this writer is incompetent to decipher. But nevertheless the fact of the existence of this cultural form he is ready to accept and strongly defend notwithstanding the fact that the existence of this peculiar African forms was recently made popular through Picasso who had copied it from Africa only to come and resell the forms to Africans. As regards the music-art and its peculiar form and the use to which it is put in traditional and modern times, one does not need too much professional knowledge of music to know that there is a noted emphasis on rhythm. The familiarity of the average African with this rhythm over a protracted process of socialisation has created an acute sense of rhythm in the African. For instance, music is used in African lives in various forms even in spurring farming people to action as is done when the farmer is cutting his field; it is used in folktales that is told the children under the night's moonlight; it is used during wrestling with composition that spurs or disarm the wrestlers as the case may be; it is used in social and religious activities, to name some uses. The music form has its dissonance and consonance, characteristics that make it African music that need not be forced into the Western or oriental moulds which have their own respective characteristics. It is left for the students of African music artforms to conduct researches into them and propagate and preserve them in their distinctive forms having, of course, the possibilities for adventurism as they wish to have.

## 8. The meaningfulness and Sociological Significance of African Names and Naming

Shakespeare once asked "What's in a name? that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet". He thereby expressed, though unintentionally, what is essentially the cultural attitude of people of the western societies to names and naming. What through the ages since the culture contact has been a source of wonderment and sometimes of frustration to the Africans were the names which the newcomers to their territories bore and are bearing. Evidently because of their own attitudes towards their own names—attitudes based upon their culture—the Africans found it difficult to understand why a western man would bear such names as Featherstone, Oglethorpe, Stone, Wood, Rintintin, Bettleton and so on. For cross-cultural purposes, therefore, it is instructive to note that to the non-western man of Africa, or of Nigeria, and in the examples chosen here the Yoruba and the Ibo in particular, names have their Sociological and cultural Significance. Not only do names have their meanings among these ethnic groups, but this meaningfulness makes possible the use of names in sociological phenomena such as the person-to-person, group-to-group relations in the community; order maintenance and social control; the expression of the aesthetic and the like. And when once at birth a name is given a child, there is a notion of permanence about it.

The procedure in this paper is first to present the fundamental philosophy which determines the attitudes of the ethnic groups toward names and naming and then present a classification of the names according to their sociological usages and to intersperse this classification with penetrating analysis thereby laying bare the diverse meanings (social, religious, psychological) with which the names are pregnant and have sociological significance.

The Yoruba as well as the Ibo believe that there is an agreement between the name given a child and that child's soul. Hence the saying that when a name is given a child, the child's soul or spirit must give an assent by saying "yes" to the name. The Yoruba as a way of expressing this notion would, at the completion of the naming ceremony, greet the child through its parent by praying that the name suits the child's soul (*Ori*) and becomes the child (*Oruko a mo ori*).

What is the nature of the *Ori* or personality-soul that the name should agree with it? The soul, to the Yoruba, is the "inner person" and their name for it is *ORI*.<sup>2</sup> It is this *Ori* that rules, controls, and guides the "life" and activities of the person. *Ori* is the word for the physical head. But to the Yoruba the physical, visible *Ori* is a symbol of *ORI-INU*, the inner head, the "inner-person" which is the essence of the personality.

*Ori* is related to the *Orise* (The Head-Source of being i.e. Olodumare Himself) the former having been derived from the latter. It is Orise or the Olodumare whose prerogative it is to put the *ori*, the personality-soul in every man.

*Ori* and *Ipin* (the destiny or portion) are also closely related but are not one and the same thing even though in consequence of their connection one is loosely conceived synonymously with the other. For example, destiny is known as *Ipin-ori*—(*Iponri*)—the *ori*'s portion or lot, and because of this it is sometimes loosely referred to simply as *Ori*. Despite this, however, the distinction is clear because in the act of taking one's destiny from the origin of life, it

2 This portion of the metaphysical thought of the Yoruba is derived essentially from E. Bolaji Idowu's *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, London, Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd. 1962. See especially chapters 13 and 15 on 'Olodumare and man's destiny' pp. 170-201.



is the Ori that kneels down and chooses or receives it from the Maker.

One's Ori can be good or bad according to the latter's individuality. Hence a person who is fortunate and prosperous in life is called Olori-re or Olori-rere—'one who possesses good Ori; one who is unfortunate in life is described as Olori buruku—One who possesses a bad Ori. "This", warned Idowu, "is more than saying that a person is 'lucky' or 'unlucky'. It is a matter which is inextricably bound up with the person's destiny".<sup>3</sup>

Ori in its totality is an object of worship to the Yoruba. Hence one hears generally *Lagbaja fi adie bo Ori re*—So-and-so appeases or worships his own Ori with a fowl. Two important reasons make the Ori an object of worship. First, as it is the essence of personality, it must be kept in good condition so that it may be well with the person. Secondly, one must be on good terms with it, so that it may favour one.

The Yoruba *Ori* is analogous to the Ibo's *Chi*. According to the latter's metaphysical thought, there is a triad of gods pertaining to the individual in life, viz. The *Ashi*, which maps out from the womb what the person would be or what his *Nkwa*, "destiny", would be in life; there is the *Chi* which takes over from the *Ashi* as the person is born and guides him such that everything that the *Ashi* had mapped out for him could come true. Lastly, there is the *Onyenuagwu*—the god parent—who is usually a living man or woman. It is Onyenuagwu's duties to take up the responsibilities on earth of the godly or religious matters concerning the god-child. He consults oracle on his behalf, appeases his *Chi* for him through the necessary sacrifices; guides the child and helps to train him in life.

3 Ibid., p. 171.

A person's Chi must say "yes" to name given the child and if the name happens to be bad (and therefore not accepted by the Chi) the Chi could be choked such that the person's Nkwa or destiny is not allowed to come to fruition. In such an incident, it is said of the name *Igugbu Nwa afa*—the name that kills the child.

Such is the nature of the Ori or the Chi that the child's name must be suitable to it, accepted by it and agreeable to it. Following this line of thought it could safely be surmised that the Yoruba naming ceremonies, usually performed on the eighth or ninth day of the child's birth and in which sacrifices of foodstuffs are made and incantations recited, serve the dual propitiatory purposes of appealing to Supreme God and Make and appeasing the child's Ori that needs must say "yes" to the name given at the naming ceremony. The modern day arbitrary choosing, changing and adopting names engaged in by the so-called sophisticates influenced by the western education is therefore an offence against the gods who, anyway, do not say "yes" to these names.

The Yoruba and the Ibo give names according to the circumstances surrounding the birth of the child and of the home. Hence the statement: *bile tiri lawo kato somoloruko*—'the state of the home is usually considered before the naming of a child. Is the child born with a peculiar characteristic from the womb? For example, is it born with an unruptured membrane, or with feet first, etc.? Is it born when the home was in a joyful state by being visited recently with a good fortune, or was it born when there was a recent bereavement? Or is it born when there is a feud in the home and the community? The name is given which reflects the circumstance. Two implications derive, therefore, from this. First, each name of everyman is more or less a full sentence (no matter how much it is shortened)

with full meaning and implications. Secondly, as long as a man's life in the community is filled with day-to-day activities, the repertory of names is inexhaustible and there could not be a resorting to giving odd and meaningless names. In fact, if there is no event or happening to mark, one is still left with the opportunity to maintain a wholesome relation with oneself and one's Supernatural by giving thanks to the latter and glorifying His name and His Almighty power through the naming of one's child. Consequently, Yoruba names fall into three broad categories: (a) The *Amutorunwa*—or literally the name brought by child from sky-heaven—e.g. Taiwo or Ejime (Ibo) for the first of the twins; (b) The *Abiso*—or the name given to the child voluntarily by parents; and (c) 'the *Oriki*—attributive names expressing what the child is or is hoped to become.<sup>4</sup> A few examples of the *Amutorunwa* and *Oriki* names will be given very briefly while we will deal deeply and at length with the class of names *Abiso*, which is filled with the sociological meanings and implications which are the objectives of this paper.

#### **Amutorunwa names:**

As the title implies, these are the names that were brought at birth, e.g. Taiwo.

<i>Yoruba</i>	<i>Ibo</i>	<i>English</i>
Taiwo	Onyeisi	First of a pair of twins
Kehinde	Agiliga	Second of the pair of twins
Ọkẹ		Bag (a child born with unruptured membrane)

#### *Oriki (Ituafa) or Attributive names*

These are attributive and endearing names describing or expressing what the child is or what it is hoped it would

<sup>4</sup> Rev. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas*. London. George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1921. p. 79.



become. The Yoruba believe that it is possible sometime for one to live to fulfil what meaning one's name implies. Hence the expression—*Oruko ma nro ni*—One's name sometimes compels one to its meaning. Thus when an oriki is given it is sometimes not unexpected that the child be what it is said or behave in that manner. Besides, the endearment which some of the oriki names express is an assurance and reassurance of the parents' love and affection for the child thereby giving him that psychological needs necessary for his wholesome personality development. Some example are as follows:

	<i>Yoruba</i>
Ajani	One who possesses after a struggle.
Adumadan	One who is as shiny as the ebony black
Asabi	One of select birth
Balogun	A war general
Aponbepore	One who is as reddishly beautiful as good palm-oil.
Amoke	Who to know is to pet
Ajamu	One who seizes after a fight.
Alake	One to be petted.
Opclenge	A slender person
Aduke	One whom many compete to pet.
	<i>Ibo</i>
Anyawu	One who is as beautiful as the rising or setting sun.
Nwaba	Father's pet
Adaku	A child that is complete. A child of wealth or a child born in wealth.
Ezenma	Queen of beauty.
Ugagbe	That which reflects beauty as a mirror.
Uli	A natural beauty spot (like a mole)
Ezenwa	The most Kingly among children.
Obiageli	One who comes to enjoy life
Ugo	An eagle, king of birds.
Unwala	A tree reddish in colour, tall, straight and stately, outstanding in the forest.

### *The Abiso Names*

These are the names given voluntarily by the parents. This class of names bears most of the sociological implications as we have maintained all along. Therefore, we shall analyze them deeply as follows:

#### **Names given in order to maintain and make peace among the Community members**

The dynamics of social living in human communities, communities of social animals with powers for reasoning and verbalizing, calls for the performance of the adaptive functions in which the members adapt to one another and to the social environment. Adjustment of desires, rights and temperaments of the individuals such that they do not jeopardize those of others; resolution of conflicts and the elimination of disruptive factors are some of the essential functions that a society must grapple with. If organization, stability and order are to be maintained in our human societies, these problems must be grappled with.

Another important problem in the human society is that of goal attainment. Every society sets out the goals which its members must attain. But the attainment of these human goals could ably be achieved through co-operation with others in the mobilization of the human and non-human resources necessary for the attainment of the set goals. And goals are best achieved under the condition of stability. Thus, peace must be sought and when found be maintained in the community. The would-be disruptive elements must be determined and eliminated and where there is disruption already, a social healing must take place. The Yoruba and the Ibo give names in their attempts to attack these aspects of the human problems. A child which arrives around the time when his parents were having a conflict with others in

the community (his circumstance of birth) affords the opportunity to send message to the other conflicting party and warn others about the parents' abilities and thoughts. ABOKA (i.e. Aboka ife a tunya isi) is an Ibo name which in its full meaning says "if you persist too much about your anger, you will reach an unpleasant end, i.e. the anger itself may kill you". This is like the English saying that moderation is wise and anything done to an extreme would lead to a disastrous consequence. This name was given to a child by his father who became a source of envy and grievances because of an appointment in the local council. Others who felt he should not have been appointed over some other person became hostile towards him. Following this, his wife gave birth to a son and he seized the opportunity to warn his colleagues and restrain them from extreme actions for the sake of peace and stability of the society. The uninitiated may ask whether this act would not aggravate the situation by the name serving as life-long reminder of the grievances. But the Ibo say, when asked, that the contrary would be the situation. They say that those who were so addressed would not only forget the whole affair but would accept the name as a verdict against them. This is following the proverb and notion among them which goes that when a person is given a name his gods or spirits generally accept it. ASIKADI (i.e. Asikadi anyi adi) is another Ibo name that is pregnant with meaning and message. For in its full meaning it says, "If you want us to live together in peace, we will; but if you will the reverse, so it will be".

**Names given to warn against and challenge envy  
which usually leads to conflict**

The great premium which the Africans place on a wholesome relationship with others in their community (the



concept of "African personalism" has been used to describe this peculiar emphasis) has its correlate in the moralistic altruism among the people. The Yoruba would challenge one another in their proverbs and names to live to moral expectation in the group's altruistic interest. A name such as MABINUORI (from *A ki i binu ori ka fi fila dedi*, i.e. one does not so much grudge or envy the head so much so that the hat meant to adorn it is placed on the buttocks instead) tells the others in the community to give the bearer his due share of honour and not begrudge him as to deny him this honour. As the would-be envier would not want to be detected as having this kind of unhealthy feeling thereby becoming a potential enemy of the bearer, he goes a mile more in his behaviour to show that he really recognizes the bearer and his qualities. Another one is ORILONISE i.e. it is my good fortune or destiny that makes me what I am and please do not grudge me. For your grudge would be useless and disruptive.

#### **Names given to challenge the prospective evildoer to enable him refrain from evil**

What is not usually known about the so-called primitive or the non-western societies and the relatively low degree of social problems in form of criminality and law breaking in them is that there is inherent in these societies the built-in system of social control found in the values and metaphysical thinking and thought patterns of the people. In these thoughts and actions, the people challenge one another to be law abiding and refrain from evil deeds. For instance, an Ibo mother gave her child the name IWEObi—Anger of the heart. Although she, as all mothers do, was hopeful about the child's health, yet she was afraid of the malice of other women whom she believed might use witchcraft

to threaten the life of the child. In other words, their "anger of the heart" might kill the child. Upon hearing this name, which is a warning to the other women, the latter were supposed and in fact did refrain from harming the child. Rather than that, they became good guardians of the child on whom they showered their benevolence for the fear of being detected in the future should the child die and witchcraft detected as the cause of his death. Another instructive name is the one which simply says EMENE—"don't do". If the instruction is not to do evil, presumably because of the evil repercussions involved, why do it; even when the law-maintaining officers are not around? In fact, who needs so many law enforcing agents around?

#### **Names given to maintain wholesome Relations between Man and the Supernatural**

Every human society must not only perform the adaptive function of relating its members to their social environment, but must also relate them to the Supernatural. Man in society yearns for the "why's" of his existence in life and the explanation of all the mysteries that plague and surround him. "Why am I existing, who created me and why"? are some of the questions that man must ask in his community. Hence there exists the Religious function that every human society must perform. A person who maintains a wholesome relation with his Creator, the Supernatural, certainly derives a relief in the satisfaction that he is in good grace before the Almighty, the All-knowing and the All-dispensing Creator of all things. For his burden, he so strongly believes, would be lessened here and the hereafter. The Yoruba's conception of God leaves no doubt as to His power and beneficence over them and consequently the reasons why they must be at peace with

Him. To them Olodumare, the Supreme God, is the Creator (Eleda), the King, the Omnipotent, the All-wise, All-knowing, the All-seeing, the Immortal and the Judge. It is this Almighty God that man, His creation, must live to glorify here on earth. Also, the Yoruba in their domestic philosophy believes that when a child gives thanks today for a deed done him yesterday, he receives more good deeds for showing such appreciation (*Bi Omode ba dupe ore ana yio ri omiran gba*). Thus the series of names which are given in thanks to the Almighty God and in the glorification of His power and might. For to Him they are subordinates and children to whom He has shown kindness and who must show appreciation and receive more kindness. The following are examples of such names: *Oluwaseun*=God be thanked; *Olutoyin*=God is worthy of worship; *Olutobi*=God is mighty; *Olufemi*=God loves me; *Olusola*=God does me honour; *Ife Olumipo*=My God's love and affection for me is great and unsurpassed; *Olumoroti*=It is only with God that I stand. The Yoruba people's flare for what might seem an extreme courtesy could best be further understood when it is known that their culture is essentially one based upon good character. For the latter reason the socialization of their young is calculated toward the production of an ideal man of virtue in him called, *Omoluwabi*. According to chief Isaac Delano "An omoluwabi or a cultured man in Yoruba society does not mean a wealthy, prosperous, learned, courageous or influential man; he must be someone in whom we find a little of all virtues and it does not necessarily mean that he must be an angel."<sup>5</sup>

5 "The Yoruba Family as the Basis of Yoruba Culture" in *ODU: Journal of Yoruba and Related Studies*, No. 5, Ibadan: General Publications Section, Ministry of Education, n.d. p. 23.



## Names given to Insult or Appeal to the Plyers of the Heavenly Spiritual Abode and the mundane Earth to Achieve a welcome Objective

The Yoruba and the Ibo give insulting or appealing names to the class of children known as *Abiku* and *Ogbanje* respectively (literally meaning "child born to die") in order to make such child to live rather than die. Who are those children and what is the metaphysical thought concerning them? Writing about Yoruba Cosmology, Peter Morton-Williams once said: "We must, therefore, imagine the cosmos as made up of Sky and Earth enfolding an island-like World. Beyond the limits of World, Sky and Earth may be thought of as touching, since it is believed that certain spirits pass freely between them".<sup>6</sup>

Among those spirits that "pass freely" are the wandering spirits of *Abiku* children. The Yoruba believe that there are companies of *Elere* or *Abiku*—"Wandering spirits of children given to the prank of entering into pregnant women being born only to die for the sheer relish of the mischief". Anyone of them who is being sent on this errand of mischief must make agreement with his companions that on a named date he would return to his normal life of the spirits. That is, he must die from this world. Whenever anyone believed to be of this company is born, the parents take every care to prevent his returning. Very often, it is believed, he will return in spite of every precaution. But efforts are nevertheless made to prevent his death. Sacrifices may be offered to appease the companions so that they may not put pressure on him to return to them. And when such a child has been "born and dies repeatedly", names are given that would either appeal to him, to please stay, or even to insult him.

6 "An Outline of the Cosmology and Cult Organisation of the Oyo Yoruba", in *Africa Vol. XXXIV*, No. 3 July 1964, p. 244.

Some mutilation of parts of his body may be done so that he may not die again should he return. For instance, charms are usually tied on such a child or ugly facial marks put on him to brand him in order that his old company may refuse the association of disfigured comrade which fact must oblige him to stay. Hence such names as:

Apara	—	He who comes and goes
Akisatan	—	No more rags (to bury you with)
Kosọkọ	—	No more hoe (to dig the ground for your burial)
Malọmọ	—	Don't go anymore
Oku	—	The dead
Igbẹkọyi	—	Even the bush won't have this
Akuji	—	Dead and awake
Tiju-Iku	—	Be ashamed to die <sup>7</sup>

The Ibo would disgrace the child outright with the names of objects that the child itself knew to be dirty, viz:

Udene	—	A vulture
Ugbaja	—	A container used for certain type of sacrifice and usually thrown away after use.
Nkpakugha	—	A dustbin.

When the child reflects on these names, it is believed, he would not die. Or his companions of the spirit world would reject him for being so dirtily named.

### Names and Seniority:

Finally, in the status distinction among the Yoruba, names are very important to signify the various designations that individuals hold especially in respect of others with whom he may be having interaction. In his penetrating article on "The Principles of Seniority in the Social Structure of the Yoruba",

7 Samuel Johnson, *op Cit.*, p. 2

William R. Bascom says the following about the co-wives in a polygamous home:

'Failure to use the proper term in addressing co-wife may lead to serious consequences. The insult may take the form of using a term which does not show sufficient respect, but the offence may be just as serious if a term is used which obviously shows too great for the difference in status involved. Thus for a fifth wife to address the fourth wife as "my mother", especially when a sneer can be detected in tone of voice, might easily be as disrupting an incident as for the fifth wife to address the first wife merely as "my senior wife" instead of as "my mother".<sup>8</sup>

"What's in a name?" Do we need any further persuasion to convince the reader that to the Yoruba and the Ibo and, indeed, to the Africans in general the answer to this question is "There is much in a name"?

What perhaps seems more meaningful and pertinent to the modern Nigerian Society which is undergoing a crisis of social change and of separation, is the continuation of this, the cultural practice of giving names according to the existing circumstances. Even the modern elite who have been greatly influenced by the western culture are reverting back to this age-old practice. An American-educated elite who recently took the bold step of marrying across ethnic line (a culpable thing to do traditionally to marry a stranger) gave a very instructive and meaningful name to the first offspring of the union. The name was given both in Yoruba and Ibo languages (the two ethnic groups of the parents). The child was named IKANNIWA, ANYIBUOFU which respectively mean "we are all one". According to the traditional practice of reacting, those who felt so angered by the union and even

8 William R. Bascom "The Principles of Seniority in the Social Structure of the Yoruba", in *American Anthropologist* Vol. 44, No. 1 Jan March 1942, p. 43.



those who felt that the war between the ethnic groups ranging in the civil war was justified would have an opportunity, upon pronouncing the child's name, to reflect that there exists no difference and no animosity should exist between the ethnic groups. For the ethnic groups have traditionally lived and interacted for so long even before the coming of the Europeans. And if the cultures are analysed (as in part this paper has demonstrated) there are more similarities than dissimilarities between them.

Lastly, the elite have also used their names and the act of naming to express their feeling of nationalism especially since the rise of nationalistic movements against the British Colonial Rule. A cursory analysis of the series of change-of-name advertisements in the newspapers of the country in the late forties and early fifties showed such a pattern as the following:

"I, formerly known and called Mr. Sylvester Egbuna wish to be known and called from henceforth Mazi (for Mr.) Nkemka Egbuna."

The elimination of the English names was the case in point. It is also instructive about the bearer's name that Nkemka means "My own is greater". At that time there was a rebellion (which has now taken full ground) against the missionaries' practice of baptizing their converts and giving them European names. This, the nationalists argued, emanated from the feeling of superiority by the Europeans. There is nowhere in the christian doctrine, they argued, that it is said that unless one bears a particular name one could not be called a Christian. "What's in a name?" There is definitely so much in a name.

Yes, the Africans say so. To us names are cultural. They tell us who we are, what our thoughts and aspirations are. They express our relations with our Maker. Above all, they

represent our attempts to understand the universe and ourselves, our place in the universe and our attempt to achieve order in our human midst. And in as much as they serve these purposes they have meaning to us and help us to relate ourselves to the order of things. We do not wish to have them changed and exchanged with others that do not have meanings to us.

I, formerly known and addressed JOHNSON ADEYEMI SOFOLA, wish henceforth to be known and addressed as JAFOTITO (i.e. Ja fun otito 'fight for the truth and the right') ADEYEMI SOFOLA.

#### 9. IWA (Character, morality):

Most certainly there is no doubt that the question of what is right and what is wrong, what to do and what not to do has agitated the soul of man everywhere for long. No one knows when the question of morality as an object of theoretical consideration to man ever started. But it is certain that man as a dweller in the community has concerned himself with the question either to preserve the community life or to preserve his own life and more especially when in seeking this self-preservation he relates himself with the source and origin of his life, the Supernatural. We are not in the present medium concerned with origins. Rather, we are concerned with the object itself and the extent to which it serves as the motivator, the inner propellant of action, and the actions which we see, behold and appreciate as resulting from its urgings. Another truism about which we are also concerned and which is so crystal clear almost to the point of needing no restating is the fact that different people at different places in our world have given differential hearkening to the urgings of this inner propellant. There are those who with a sense of levity and non-care coupled with sheer

wickedness have turned deaf ears to the dictates of morality and good character. Such persons or groups of persons are invariably called immoral and even amoral depending on the degree to which they observe the moral values and whether they have had it in the past and through a sin of commission and omission have lost their sense of morality. On the other hand, there are those persons or groups of persons to whom the observance of the dictates of morality represents the essence of life and even the beauty of life and living. Such persons are said to be morally rich and to be men of character. Their everyday life, including their relations to other men and even to other material objects, are guided by morality. From this latter point follows the idea that two worlds, are open before us. The first, representing the sphere of influence of the first group of people (i.e. the immoral, amoral lacking in moral qualms); the second, representing the sphere of influence of the moral and the men of character. Whereas sin is a universal human phenomenon, the quandary that characterises the first world is either mitigated or completely eliminated in the second as a result of the characteristic influence that prevails in each world. In this vein, the quagmire which characterises our world today, a world greatly influenced and aggressively dominated by the "lost-morals", or men without moral qualms, becomes understandable. Our twentieth century world is in quandary simply because it is dominated by the westernman with his extreme emphasis on the supremacy of the material and economy to the utter exclusion of the morals that normally should have guided the production and distribution of these materials. Yet all is not lost. Like the metaphorical Sodom and Gomorrah it is high time the Lot's of our human race took over to save all of us from the imminent peril. It is high time those still possessed of sense of morality and character were given the opportunity to influence our world with their invaluable qualities so that



all may be saved from the impending perdition that stares us all in the face.

To the African, albeit, the Yoruba variant, character (Iwa) is the very stuff that makes a man's life a joy simply because it is pleasing to God the Almighty. Man's well-being here on earth depends on his good character and his place in the here-after is determined by God, the Supreme, according to the individual's character. It is therefore believed (and the fact taught the young from the beginning) that good character must be the dominant feature of a person's life. In fact, it is stressed that it is character that distinguishes a man from the animal, the brute itself. According to a proverb, *Eni himo ti ko niwa, Oluwa re fi abe jo na* i.e. he who ever begets a child that has no character is at a great loss.

The extension of this basic value to the social and economic life is what we found in such guiding principles and life philosophies about which we are familiar and of which much has been said. The ideas of live-and-let-live, one man being his brother's keeper; the sense of altruism, hospitality even to strangers, and the like are the case in point. It is high sense of morality that makes the continuously winning African in a game of *ayo*, or any game at all, to seek to lose at least once so as to afford his opponent an opportunity to win and thereby achieve a feeling of self-gratification. According to a Yoruba proverb *Je, ki nje ni ayo fi ndun* i.e. win-and-let-win is what makes the game of *ayo* or any game to be interesting. A motor magnate of Ijebu-Ode, the late Shoye, was known to have dismissed any driver of his many passenger lorries who, after plying the roads for about five or six years did not possess a lorry of his own with which he earns his own private money so that he too could be rich. It was not that Shoye felt that he had paid the drivers high enough for them to save enough to purchase their own lorries. Not at all. Rather, in his altruistic belief and encouragement, he

meant that the drivers should have been underreporting their daily takings from transportation trips and should have kept some for themselves, this time through his own connivance at what to a westernman would be a case of gross cheating. Shoye's attitude emanates from the Yoruba African's belief that a richman should be the source of success of other would-be rich men. *Ara enia ni ire wa.* An ideal Yoruba man of good character is one who allows others to prosper through him. He is one who makes opportunities open for such success.

In human relations, the Yoruba say *Bi a ba se igi ninu igbo, ki a foran ro ara eni wo.* i.e. literally whenever a person breaks a stick in the forest, let him consider what it would feel like if it were himself that was thus broken. In other words, do to others as you wish them to do to you. Have a consideration for the feeling of others whom every action of your life would be affecting. This is because, *Bi o ti ndun omo eku, be na londun omo eiye,* i.e. As sensitive to pain as are rats' little ones, so sensitive to pain are birds' little ones. That is, just as you as an individual are sensitive to pain so also are others whom your acts would be affecting if they are wicked acts. Thus, as character it is that makes for good and wholesome human relations in the community, it is a compulsory rule binding every member to act in ways that would promote the good of all the community. Cooperation is one act of good character that would promote the good of all in the community. Thus, *Otun we osi, osi we otun ni owo fi imo.* i.e. when the right hand washes the left hand and the left hand washes the right hand that is when the whole hands become clean.

Truth and rectitude is another virtue that would promote the good of all in the community. The Yoruba stress this very much as an essential element in human relations. It is believed that the truthful and the upright have the never

failing support and blessings of the gods. The Odu corpus recitals in the intricate system of divination and the religion of the people has something to say about this. For instance, a popular song from an Odu called Eturupon-meji says as follows:

S'otitọ; Ẹ̀e rere,  
S'otitọ o, ẹ̀e rere;  
Eni S'otitọ  
N'imaale igbe

- i.e. Be truthful, do good;  
Be truthful, do good;  
It is the truthful  
That the divinities would support.

On the other hand, the liar and the untruthful are condemned as their acts would not contribute to the well-being of the community. In fact, such acts would destroy the social fabrics of the community. Thus another Odu corpus says,

Eke pa obi, odi  
O-da'-le pa obi, ko yan;  
oni-nu-re pa obi, oye peregede

- i.e. The liar casts the Kola-nut, it is unauspicious;  
The covenant-breaker casts the Kola-nut, it gives bad omen  
The good-natured casts the Kola-nut,  
It is plainly auspicious.

And the covenant breaker will disappear with the earth to be carried away by the earth that would open under his feet—*Eniti o ba dale, a bale lo.*

Such are the emphasis placed on character, morality and good naturedness that the African would go to a great length to have them observed and become the watchword of their daily lives. This belief in character and morality, it is true, have given the African a bloody head in their encounter with the westerman of the old and the present.



But the Africans need not be disarmoured, for character is at all times a good armour. *Iwa rere l'eso enia*. It is good character that is man's guard. The bad people, or people of evil character are they who fear needlessly, for it is their sin that haunts them and cause them to fear needlessly.

## CHAPTER V

### FACTORS IN AFRICAN SOCIETY'S KNOWN SOLIDARITY AND COHESION

One of the sources of puzzlement to the non-africans having contact with Africa for a long time past is the type of group life and cohesion which such persons found among the Africans. Almost without exception the European scholars of African scenes agreed about the existence of a corporate life which, according to them, contrasted very drastically with the impersonal, individualistic life in their own western culture. Such suggestions that the individual in Africa is totally absorbed in the group to the extent that he loses his individuality or personality and that the group spreads its wings on the individual to the extent that he is choked, reflect the "absurd" impressions which the cohesive group-life of Africans made on these foreign investigators. It also underscores the puzzlement it constituted to them (Sees P. Radin, *Primitive man as Philosopher*). But to the extent that Africa is seen in this perspective, the Africans themselves should appreciate the values and virtues of their culture. For more than ever before what the world needs in this age of complexity, perplexity, war of man against man, greed, intolerance and technological dehumanization are morality, humaneness and human cohesiveness and mutual support for the meeting of, and conquering these oddities. It would be one of the greatest ironies, and a suicidal one for that matter, if Africa which possesses these elements should lose them through its reckless westernisation or europeanisation of values. Yet many in the ignorant African societies of today do a lot of things for which they do not have explanation but simply because the impinging materialistic

and technological culture of the west which they copy baselessly is dazzling to their eyes. And if none other reputable ethnologist than Paul Radin could own up the fact of the European or western scholar's handicaps and intellectual blindspot brought about by racial arrogance when he says: "What makes for error in our interpretation (OF AFRICAN PHENOMENA) is a certain mistiness of vision due to that sentimentality from which the northern European finds it so difficult to free himself", then the onus lies on the educated elite, the appreciative African elite, to perform well their elite-mediation role of systematically interpreting the African social scenes to the Africans so that a meaningful step may be taken towards meaningful progress and living. As a step in this direction of self-appreciation culturally let us ask some questions about some common everyday customs or happenings of African scenes which can even be labelled supportive core cultures of Africa but whose utility and meanings may be hidden and not readily easily discernible:-

#### **Aso Ebi (Group Uniform) and its Sociological Functions**

Literally translated *Aso ebi* (Yoruba) means the cloth of the family or kin. In other words, it is the clothes worn by members of a kinship group or a family. The idea here is further extended in a free translation to mean that it is the cloth that is worn by members of any group or by people collectively rather than one that is chosen by an individual solely for aesthetic or protective reason. Any Yoruba inviting others in the community to participate in a celebration which is important to him chooses a cloth of certain worth, colour and design as the one that all his well-wishers and participants are expected to wear for that specific ceremony. Thus, as many invitees as he has invited would be



found to have undertaken the expense of buying the dress and wearing it on that day. Age-group members do often have *Aşoebi* for their annual festivals, ceremonies and festivities. So also could be found cooperative voluntary organisation members wearing *Asoebi* as a means of identifying their individual group on occasions that bring together many and diverse groups. A large or extended family or nuclear family can at any time of the year buy identical dresses which its members will wear for the demonstration of their group's *esprit de corps* and rapport.

What are the sociological significance of this cultural trait and common custom? In its various ways, *Aso ebi* serve as a means of identification of groups affording the members of the groups the opportunities for reinforcement of one another with sympathies to meet the trials and tribulations and pleasures of life and integrating the group. We shall elaborate on these points. Firstly, to the celebrant who had invited people to join him in his celebration, each participant and wearer of the *aşo ebi* by making the financial sacrifice to buy the selected dress is saying and demonstrating "I wish you well and all the best and I herewith identify myself with you on this your occasion of rejoicing or bereavement (as the case may be)". And herein lies the supply of the individual's life's important need, namely, the need for response from his fellows which we all need and crave for in life as a social being with psychological needs. The feeling that a person matters in the community to the extent that others care about him and his welfare carries every individual person far and long in life, and makes life worth living rather than taking his own life as in suicide and so forth. The fact is that in different interactions in various groups, people need the favourable response of others based on the attitudes of love, respect, esteem and the like. The series of shocking anomic suicides which are so common place in the so-called advanced

individualistic societies of the western world should find their explanation from the lack of response which the individual victim experiences in his community. This is what Emile Durkheim, the renowned French sociologist, was pointing out in the latter part of the last century when he discovered that many suicides were committed in some specific western societies because people lacked what he called social integration. Hence, fewer suicides were committed among the Roman Catholics than among the Protestants; and less among the closely-knit, less complex societies than in the complex urban centres where individualism reaches its peak.

There is a system of mutual obligation and aid created by the use of *Aṣṣẹbi*. For according to the Yoruba custom, an individual who buys an *Aṣṣẹbi* for his friends celebration expects the friend to reciprocate in kind when it is his own turn to have celebrations. Thus, by this act an invitation for a future participation and sharing of one's joy and sadness is extended. The Yoruba receive good psychological gratification and satisfaction from seeing many invitees or well-wishers joining in their celebrations. But to assure this for the future, one must make the sacrifice, financial and social, in supporting others in their own celebrations. If he fails, the individual is stigmatised and no one would turn up when he has any celebration. The greater the number of well-wishers present at the individual's celebration the higher the person's prestige. The well-wishers, by their individual and collective act of buying and wearing the *Aṣṣẹbi* are eloquently saying in the peculiar African altruism: "We are united in brotherhood one with the other (You and I) and all others who join you in this celebration". And herein lies an integrative function of the *Asoebi*. One of the most important functions to be performed by every human society in order to achieve stability and orderliness and good organisation and even to endure, is the integrative function. This in-

volves the whole question of the interrelations of the units inherent in the social system, the attributes of trust and the generation of morals and the collective will among its members. It is because of these factors that every society enacts rules which every member must observe, thereby preventing society from disruption. Moral pressure inherent in an integrated group makes for the obedience of rules and regulations which makes the society at large to avoid disruptive conflict. What could be more socially integrative to a group than the feeling of camaraderie involved in a sharing of mutual affection based further upon mutual dependence and obligations.

*Aşqebi* serves as a recorder of history, and helps to establish and enhance status and prestige too. It also serves as a leveller of status if only temporarily. In the community, *Aşqebi* is bought for age group annual ceremonies. And since at many of the once-in-a-lifetime ceremonies *Aşqebi* is bought, it serves as a medium of recording or earmarking these occasions—a supplement to the oral tradition of history recording. Once an *Aşqebi* is bought for a specific occasion, one does not feel entirely too free to wear it every time afterward. To do so is to tell others in vivid terms that one does not have other clothes one would normally be expected to possess to enjoy high prestige and have good evaluation by others. So, everyone in the community sees to it that the *Aşqebi* is worn sparingly, if at all. Hence many people there are who, upon a moment's request, can present as many as ten or more *Aşqebi* they bought in the past. "We bought this in so-and-so year during the burial ceremonies of so-and-so's father", it would be said with relish, pride and personal satisfaction. The older the person the greater the number of *Aşqebi* he can produce which may even be in a fairly new condition because of good preservation and nonuse. And to be able to produce an *Aşqebi* that no other living person in the community can produce is a living testimony of one's old



age. To be old in a Yoruba, albeit, African community, is to enjoy high prestige and exercise authority and seniority.

These apart, the old person who is able to present an old *Asoebi* in still good condition shows a commendable sense of value. To the Yoruba, it is a man who shows lack of appreciation that tramples over valuable possessions (*Otosi Alaimoyi owo*). The appreciative man takes care of anything of value. This is why, in part, a car parked carefully along a street is not destructively scratched by a poor man who up to the present may not yet possess one but hopes, even by the preservation of somebody else's, to have the good fortune smile on him in the future. For according to a popular belief one who does not appreciate objects of values (and thus does not take care of them) may for ever have the goddess of fortune deserting and avoiding his doorstep. He would become a man of ill-fortune and poverty, (an *Alakori*).

*Asoebi* levels the gap between persons of higher status and those of lower one and thereby eliminates, if only temporarily, the built-in antagonism between the have's and the have-nots. All wearers of the *Asoebi* by this common uniform are equal—at least for the occasion on which the *Asoebi* is worn. The poor man (*talaka*) feels that he is at least equal to the richman (*Olororo*) because he wears an identical dress with him. Such a feeling, albeit for a brief moment, purges him of his previous feeling of financial inadequacy. He may also feel so honoured by this temporary levelling of his status that he seeks accord with the rich man. The effect of this in terms of social control in the community is important. The individual may become less inclined to commit criminal acts against the society, particularly where property destruction is involved.

Inter-dependent activity, consensus, and morale are the principal factors affecting the integration of groups. *Asoebi* contributes to these.

And considering the parties at which the *Asoebi* is usually worn and where camaraderie and pleasure are shared, one cannot help to see the additional therapeutic function performed by this gathering as testified to by the following thought expressed by one such partaker of the party as culled out in one of the leading dailies of the increasingly more complex Nigerian society. Writing under the title "What the hell's bad in throwing a lavish party" the party going observer had the following to say:

If you fail to appreciate what those rollicking weekend parties do for Nigerians, then you haven't had a taste of their deliciousness.

Those parties, I assure you, are some kind of pep pills. When you are under their spell, you're completely lost in a new world. And who wouldn't want to live in a world different from this wretched one for a change . . . . If you don't have to die to be there . . . .

Even when the spell is gone, you can still look back in nostalgia. If you're a party loafer, you dream of another week of pleasure. Afterall, there'll always be some friend's uncle's friend holding a party somewhere. And our parties, unlike the pep pill, does no injury to the brain.

Just think of the awful pressures of this society—the cost of living, the shocking untimely deaths, the repercussions of the rat race. And think of those staggering statistics of lunatics in our midst—some 6,000 of them. Whoever hears that party loafers are among them?

I assure you, if people in those developed countries have to put up with as much pressure as we have, they'll be picking up their lunatics dead. The point is that our gay parties are in fact a tranquiliser. And the louder they are, the more tranquil they keep our nerves—thanks to the creator of juju music. If you want to know how profound the juju music is, just watch the mannerisms of the dancers. Watch the lips moving rythmically, like toothless grandpa in a practical demonstration of his gratitude over the arrival of new yam.

And the half-closed-eyes of some dancers suggesting someone dreaming of a heavenly pleasure.

Or the effortless panting of some others that seems to portray lady Chatterley in a total surrender to the climax.

Believe me, nothing can be more transcendental than our juju music. It penetrates your bones and everything about you is dancing. That is why whatever anybody may care to say about our extravagance on such occasions, I'm convinced that the rewards are worth the exercise.

Afterall, who takes the money and gifts dished out at the parties—are they not fellow Nigerians? and come to think of it, people don't carry their money to heaven, do they?

If you ask me, what we should do is spread those gifts and money a bit more evenly. It's one way of bridging the economic gap, you see. Like dishing out a bike to every farmer in your village to mark your 50th birthday.

It makes the journey to the farm less tedious and ultimately lengthens the life-span of the farmer—producer of the nation's food. Or, like dishing out a goat to every woman and see what it does for her household budget.

And to the musicians, just fling across a bag of 10 Kobo and 5 Kobo—at intervals. Afterall, are musicians not part of the society? And don't they deserve to build houses and ride cars and send their children to the grammar school?

You see, a lot of people in our cities today can hardly afford a square meal. Think of what it means to such people if a fellow citizen declares his surplus and they can follow him to his hometown and feed on him for the week-end? Just another meaningful way of being your brother's keeper, I think.

Whichever way you look at it, party spending is part of our lives. But if you want to make it loud without paralysing your purse, just be like my uncle. What he did? Well, he spent his money alright and received his psychological gratification but made the money come back to him.

At her father's wakekeeping, he decided he would dance with nobody but his wife. He had all the fivers and pound notes and five shillings tucked in his pocket. One by one he pasted them on his wife's forehead to the loud sheers of guests.

Then came the following morning. And wrapped up in his arms, feeling thoroughly pleased about it all, she heard him



whisper: "Remember, darling you've had the housekeeping money—for six months."<sup>1</sup>

One needs only to add that apart from this therapeutic function of partying in a complex urban, trying community, the money spent on the Asoebi worn at the party is kept in circulation and the country's economy made more buoyant.

*KIKINI (Salutation) and its sociological functions.* An important peculiar African culture trait, peculiar in the extent and volume of its scope, is salutation. It is definitely an extension of the altruism among the Africans, a fact which makes it extremely easy and makes the individual African so free of inhibitions as to express his goodwill and feelings towards the other African. To the Yoruba of Nigeria, it is, in addition, an index of the morality and good breeding of the individual omoluabi—the ideal Yoruba African man of good character. What then are the functions of this seemingly subtle custom and its contributions to the maintenance of solidarity in the community?

The veteran Yoruba Scholar, Isaac Delano, was said to have made the following observation about the individualistic and introvertic British:

"People like the English whose custom it is not to salute one another when they queue for a bus or meet casually in the street, curiously appreciate people saluting them. In Yoruba Society this simple custom is the basis of the culture that carries a soldier or a diplomat through his career. I believe friendliness among the common people of nations can foster the cause of peace more than the efforts of diplomats or the possession of the secrets of the hydrogen bombs. Salutation is the best possible way of ensuring friendliness and peace"<sup>2</sup>

1 Lagos, *Sunday Times* 23rd July 1972 Page 9

2 Isaac Delano, "The Yoruba Family as a Basis of Yoruba culture", in *ODU: Journal of Yoruba and Related Studies* No. 5 (Ibadan: Ministry of Education Publications N.d.) p. 21

Friendliness or goodwill is the first and foremost among the various functions that salutation performs. Greetings and salutation represent a practical demonstration of the goodwill which the greeting person has toward the object of his salutation. Not only does it demonstrate to the greeted person that he is not alone in this trying world and that there are people who care for him and his welfare (afterall, in the salutation itself one invariably asks about the health of the person being greeted) it also serves to disarm, so to say, a would-be antagonist who hitherto had been reflecting or even sometimes doubting the behaviour of the other person, the behaviour which he could only make outward inference about as to whether or not he had goodwill towards him. In the example of the British queuing for bus given above, a familiar occurrence in the many western cities of the euro-American individualistic societies where we are told that by nature the urban characteristics of anonymity, impersonality and secondary-group relations makes for a war of man against man in Hobbesian mode of thinking and behaving, one could posit the idea that a man who is saluted by another man is thereby being disarmed of his 'natural' antagonism toward the man offering the greetings and that at least the greeted person's circle of enemies is reduced by one. We will not posit this idea because we have been told that since everyone in the western society has assumed this built-in-antagonism or 'natural' war, any act of an unknown person extending a salutation to another is *ipso facto* an invitation to criminality and molestation. It must have been said by the city atomist warrior to himself that the novice who was greeting him must have had some ulterior motive in his mind and therefore he (the greeted person) must take care. Or it could be, he may observe, that the greeting person is a rustic who does not know that he should refrain from being friendly with all and sundry in the

urban area or city. If this is the case, he would say to himself, I might as well exploit the rustic and see what I can dispossess him of. But in the African set-up where altruistic belief prevails, one is free to posit this idea that a goodwill is being expressed and one is being disarmed of the superficial ill-will, if there is any, that one may nurture here and there probably because the other man did not partake enough of one's palmwine the other day (an act of goodwill in itself complaining that one's love for the other has not been fully taken advantage of).

When salutation becomes persistent and constant, it undoubtedly serves as constant reminder, assurance and index of the goodwill that is in store for the greeted person in the heart of the saluting person. Thus there is being constantly fulfilled that desire for security which all of us mortals have in our everyday existence. And to the Yoruba Africans, a source of joyful well wishing that at a later day turns to acrimony shows that something is wrong and steps should be taken to investigate and make amends to retie the cord of friendship which might have been strained or even cut. The Yoruba would say *Aja ti o ba ti nrini ti on yo sini, bi o ba rini ti o si bere si gbigbo, ki a sora*, literally meaning a dog that normally sees an individual and hails him and rejoice at him when it should see him at a later date but started barking instead shows that there is something wrong and one should beware. The premium placed on wholesome human relations compels the individual to make personal efforts to restore to normalcy the goodwill which hitherto had been in existence. And the fault may well be with the individual. Rather than pointing the accusing finger, the mutual interest in the welfare of the community compels the individual to make personal sacrifice and initially assume the guilt and thereby feel free to investigate the cause of the strain.



Like the therapeutic function of laughter on the laughing person, salutation offers a tension release to the initiator by purging him of the tension within him. In laughter, the body nerves are relaxed and given opportunity to regain their tonacity. The chemical process in the body is also given a catalyst which temporarily slows it down for the body to recoup itself and get a greater filip for longenvity in the same way as the body is like a mechanical battery which is recharged with adequate rest. The process of initiating salutation involves an act of momentary self-sacrifice, self-forgetting or self-letting-go. The individual leaves aside all consideration of social status and all else that can make him maintain a superficial social distance. And by such a state he reduces himself to his basic humanity unadulterated with superficial hatreds—of race, colour, personality, tribe and sex. By the act of saluting others, one gains self-freedom and tension discharge only to kill two birds with one stone by thereby being also in rapport with one's fellowman in the community of human social animals. And being in good rapport one receives ones social and psychological gratification.

The Yoruba go a greater length beyond their individual self-love and self-gratification by helping to draw out the best in the other person through greeting and offering him higher inducement for greater achievement. They have a greater repertory of greetings: greetings for somebody working that he may receive relief in the arduous task and at the same time be encouraged to continue the work since by natural command he must work to earn a living. Hence, they would say to a person working: *Ekú ísẹ* i.e. greetings for working. There is greeting for walking, for sitting, for standing, for crying or weeping, for rejoicing and for anything that can be imagined. The essential thing is expression of goodwill towards the other person and a lot of goodwill carries man

far and long in our complex modern society. With these factors among the Africans in their human communities, places where they in actuality commune and communicate with one another in various manners, is there any wonder why the psychosomatic illnesses that plagued the extremely individualistic western or euro-American societies in which individual simply gets sick for lack of attention and concern by his fellowmen are absent in the African societies? Unless there could be an illness for receiving much goodwill from others with whom one faces the odds of the complex community living—If there is, this may plague the Africans. But we doubt whether such illness exists. For we have been told that among the greatest desires of man, the social animal, are security, recognition and response from other human social animals.

#### **A Comment on the African Extended Family System**

Any consideration of solidarity or none of it in African society must include the probing of the family. For within this institution are reflected the very core of African life and world-view in more active and practical terms. The close relationship between the life of, or the life in, the community and that in the family is such that one would be correct to say that the existence of one is the existence of the other and that the solidarity of one is the solidarity of the other. Thus, the functioning of the African personalism or the emphasis on wholesome human relation as posited earlier can be found within the institution of the family. A thorough analysis of the institution reveals to us that its characteristics are varied and they represented its virtues which make it even more relevant to the modern world. From the sociological view-point we find its relevance, and from the economic view-point we find even its greater

relevance to the modernisation processes going on in the African world of today. In a nutshell, one finds in the African extended family system appropriate answers to the problems created by the modern world of atomic individuals with emphasis on social and economic self-interest. What is left for the Africans is for them to seek a restructuring of the institution within its traditional framework and to utilise it in its most effective and advantageous forms rather than discarding it as outmoded as is being done by the miseducated elite schooled in the western values. We shall elaborate.

The very process of formation of the family as evidenced in the marriage system has a kernel of solidarity as we all know. For instance, traditionally in Africa marriage is a union more between two lineages or extended families than it is for the two individuals that are directly involved. Therefore every member of the two large families has much to contribute to the survival and success of the marriage. Among other things, it is their duty to see that whims and caprices of the young ones involved do not lead them into bringing about the breakage of the much-valued union of the two families—in fact, how could the young ones dare! During the marriage ceremonies, this stake in the success of the marriage and solidarity of the lineages involved is demonstrated by the members present. Among the Ibos of Nigeria, seven persons from the two lineages would come forward each taking an oath while partaking of the kolanut offered saying woe betides him if he should see the doom of the families concerned and does not take step or steps to avert it. Should he see anything that would work to the detriment or instability of the marriage and the families, it is his duty to prevent it and insure the stability and endurance of the union. The splitting and sharing of the kolanuts offered in the atmosphere of honour-pledging among the Yorubas during the ceremonies seals the marriage contract. Thus, the family



having been assured of stability and solidarity extends these to the wider society as found in the solidary community. This basic tendency toward solidarity in the traditional marriage system contrasts very strongly with the western-influenced system as practised by the missionary-educated African elite some of whom would even base the reason for their marriage on such a flimsy and ephemeral factor such as the shape of nose of the bride or the way she walks and the like. But what happens to the love when old age comes and the nose takes a different shape from what it was admired and loved to be—divorce and hence the series of infidelities and broken homes as found all over the place in modern times! Knowing the importance of the family institution in any society, the family which is the basic unit of the society, the disorganisation of the wider society can be averted by the strengthening and organisation of the families. The traditional African family has many virtues which can be modernised to achieve stability and solidarity of the modern African societies.

Apart from this solidary nature of the extended family, it can also be the fulcrum of sound economic development in modern times. For here indeed is the institution within the framework of which basic cooperative self-help enterprises can best be developed. Those who take effort to analyse it would find that the extended family is in fact a cooperative in spirit and practice. Why can't it become the nation's basic economic unit? It is one of the best means through which individual initiative, self-reliance, self-help and cooperative efforts may be promoted and realised.

The traditional extended family was indeed a cooperative in spirit and practice. Ideally there were no drones in the community and each person is taught to share whatever he had with the others in the family while each person is expected to contribute his own effort to the common pool.

It was inconceivable that anyone would sit back on the labours of others. But those who by no faults of theirs were not successful in making their own contribution to the common pool are however protected and not made to suffer for want. The Africans were even cognisant of the fact that all members possessing varied talents could not possibly make equal and identical contributions to the pool. What was required was for each person to make his efforts according to his ability and best based upon his honesty. When the group returned from the hunting expedition for instance, if Ladele has killed three deers, Ogunde two, Yinka one and Songowanwa none, while high praises were showered on the successful ones, Songowanwa was not in disgrace whatsoever and he was not made to feel ashamed, unless of course, it was reported that the reason for his failure was that he slept in the shade of the trees while others were working. But as long as his efforts were the same as the others, his share was the same because he had done as much as Ladele in the real sense of it. This means that if the labour was equal, then obviously Ladele himself was not wholly responsible for the outcome, no more responsible than he was for his greater height, swifter feet, his handsome appearance, or the mole on his nose—all of which were due to a power outside of and beyond Ladele and the rest of mankind. Thus, in this act of the African to share with the honest unsuccessful, who had made his effort but with the smile of ill-fortune, the African have had an insight into life's realities and the basis of justice that countered head-on the western society's theories of individualism and individual initiative which rule out assisting forces, make the individual his own god absolutely and therefore entitled him to all the fruits of his labour, physical and intellectual without consideration for others. In other words, the African society and the extended family, offered the individual both the social and economic

security. An extension of this is the degree of familism that is practised. The African extended family of today still practise familism to a high degree. And by Familism we mean:

1. A feeling of belonging to the family group;
2. Integration of activities of family members for the attainment of family objectives;
3. The utilisation of family resources to help needy members;
4. rallying to the support of a member, if he is in trouble; and
5. the maintenance of continuity between the parental family and new family units.

The fact is that with the characteristic altruistic philosophy and world-view existent in the African society in which man still regards himself as his brother's keeper, familism has a rich soil in which to thrive and has continued to do so. To consider the African traditional extended family outmoded and non-relevant to the twentieth century world is to lack the grasp of the structure and needs of the present world in which we live. The extended family has never been as relevant as in the present world of complexity, greed, acquisitiveness and scotched-earth competition in economics and struggles for survival in a trying environment dominated by scientific inventions that are harbingers of strains and stresses. What is needed is the modernisation of these family characteristics to suit the immediate need of the moment but never an uprooting as is the vogue among the miseducated who are prone to external model tendencies in the expression of their inferiority complex. Our African community and family of brotherly and sisterly relations and love must be saved, preserved and utilised to meet the modern strains and stresses of our time.

One way of modernising the extended family for utility in the present time is to make it the basis of cooperatives that should be formed for the economic



development of the new African societies. The extended family, or other natural groupings, could form the basic socio-economic unit which could expand into inter-family, intertribal and national cooperations in socio-economic matters. Those African economists who lament the lack of capital which they say exist in Africa, seem not to have done their homework. If they did, they would have found out the traditional economic cooperation that existed in the African societies. For example, there was, and there still is, in the African societies a system by which capitals were formed for the use of the individual citizen. The system called *ESUSU* among the Yoruba and other groups in Nigeria, and *SUSU* among the mendes of Sieria Leone is the case in point. A group of people, say ten or five, gather together and agree to contribute monies on every market day. A share may be five shillings. The ten people each would contribute five shillings and in turn the whole fifty shillings would be given to one of them who now has a bulk of money to carry out his important projects. An individual could take two shares in which case he collects the bulk money twice. This system is a rudimentary cooperative capital formation which could be utilised for capital accumulation today. In fact, some of the salaried university dons of Ibadan have been engaging in this act. About twelve of them would gather together in January of each year and each of them would contribute twelve post-dated cheques for a commonly agreed amount and at the end of every month when their salaries are paid each person in turn collects a total of twelve cheques in the amount, encash them and use the huge amount to meet financial exigencies. It is a wonder that these dons and researchers who appreciate and are benefitting from this traditional practice of capital formation could not recommend it to the Business men who often run cap-in-hand to banks for loans which are not usually easily

given them for their trade. The self-reliance attitude which is lacking among the African governments who seek aids and got them with strong strings attached to the aids, the strings which usually represent a neo-colonial exploitation of their economies could have been achieved even though to a lesser degree by such governments. It is an error of judgement to assert as many do nowadays that Africa cannot develop without external financial aid. It can develop if only the leaders would explore and exploit its internal potentialities—the call for inward look into Africa is here relevant again.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FUNCTIONING OF THE AFRICAN PERSONALITY IN THE 20TH CENTURY WORLD

Before considering the functioning of the African personality in today's complex world, let us see what nature of personality has emerged from the organisation of attitudes, tendencies and values as delineated above. By way of recapitulation, some of the philosophy, the world-view, values and thought-patterns that form the ingredients or the building-blocks of the African Personality are live-and-let-live; the emphasis on wholesome human relations; the belief of the universality of man and communality of the people in the community; the historic sense of the unity of the human society as consisting of the ancestors, the living and the future generations yet unborn; spiritual attitude to life and attachment to communal life with communal responsibilities; a keen sense of rhythm; the conception of man as one roaming spirit in the chain of spirits in the universe and so on. What emerges from these, representing the African personality is a moral altruist who is dynamic without being arrogant his dynamism having emanated not from his ignorance but from the *socialawa* (the social awareness) of one who knows what are required of him in social situations but who, possessed of the supermundane power of a spirit-being (though one that walks here on earth), pities the rash, the oppressor-mortal-being with his limitations, the latter who in his ignorance and human stupidity chooses to mete out wickedness and inconsideration to others of his species; a dynamic being whose head is bloody from experiences yet unbowed deriving his satisfaction and self-assurance from the knowledge that he has not exploited others for material and social gains as in colonialism but rather has himself been



exploited from which experience he has had the knowledge of what it is to be exploited; an unapologetic self-assertive personality whose self-assertion stems in part from a resistance to the conscious efforts of others to suppress him and his cultural values, in part from the conscious self-assurance of the validity, sanctity and virtues of these cultural values, and in part from a burning desire to have a place, a niche, to stand in this world; a being that though is conscious of the need for self-assertion yet is tolerant, altruistic and cooperative enough to see and accept the need for man to throw his lot with other human beings in our planet thereby maintaining wholesome human relations with them irrespective of race, colour, creed and foolishness and who would go a long way in doing this not out of a cheap but a strictly moral consideration—a fact which makes the African man to love and pray for even his enemies and detractors. This is the African personality, the personality that has been formed from the myriads of forces with which internally it is pregnant and external to it, influencing it from within itself and from the social environment; forces which propel its external expression from within itself. This is the personality whose presence in its multifarious functioning is felt in the African continent of his main domain and origin and in the diaspora of the Americas and the West Indies; a force to reckon with at the United Nations Organisation and other comity of nations and everywhere. This is the personality which in its expression of an inward peace and stillness maintains an external composure and gait, head and chin raised high, and with deliberate, calculated dignified steps proclaims to the world: "Black is beautiful" and "I am black and proud of being so". This is the personality whose functioning in the twentieth century we shall shortly consider.

In the twentieth century world of greed, man-inhumanity-to-man and the series of complexes so created by man, the

African person has one main objective—that of his own survival primarily. And secondarily he may endeavour to influence others morally with the remotest possibility that the immoral or the amoral by sheer chance may allow himself to be influenced by the impinging moral force around him.

Yes, the African personality must seek first to survive under the odds created by man and spearheaded by the westernman. Whereever he goes on earth today, he has the westernman to contend and interact with. If he does not interact with him directly, he will interact with him on the level of the values he (the western man) has created. And these are lopsided in form and content. Let the African personality go to the East, West, North or South of the world. he would see and meet the westernman either in active action or he would meet the manifestations of his previous action. The western man has invaded the North of America and without any moral qualms wiped out or maimed, debased and socially assaulted another of God's creation there: While preaching a philosophy of social Darwinism of the survival of the fittest and elimination of the weakest and supremacy of the military might, he has succeeded in almost completely wiping out the Indian original owners of the land. By calling himself the fittest (and therefore one justified to live on the earth) and with the motivating motto of "the best Indian is the dead Indian" he has wiped out the indians who might have shuddered at the immorality of a white species under the pretext of seeking freedom of worship of a christian God had come to grab their lands and thereby resisted with all their own possible force. Those of the survivors of dissipated Indians, who are now lumped together and degraded in the few Indian reservations are still deluded in their thinking even after three centuries of their assault. While the predator constantly and violently flaunt his ill-gotten gains and riches in the face of the world proclaiming himself the "richest",

the most "blessed", the "most privileged" and probably the "best chosen" of God's creation on the earth, and by so doing actively impressed the rest of the world that has been made to believe in the supremacy of the bread, the material and the dollar as if man lives by bread alone; the disinherited Indian still nurtures in the inner recesses of his mind the erroneous idea that perhaps by his high standard of affluence attained, the predator may now have room in his mind to be touched by a tinge of moral compunction. Hence, recently the reservation-dwelling Indians feeling the horror and inconvenience of being packed like sardines in their limited area were led by a famous actress to plead for restoration to them of the St. Quinten Island where an absolute maximum security prison was hitherto built thinking that at least by occupying such a place they could at least breathe-in some fresh air. But rather than being given such a little concession, we knew what happened to the deluded Indians. They were driven back to their reservation and some were put in jail.

Go to the South of America. The same story repeats itself perhaps with a little twist to the pattern of human degradation. Go to the Australian sub-continent and the island of Tasmania. The black fellow's annihilation has been completed in the latter, while the plight of the few surviving aborigines in the former is not an enviable one. In fact, to make assurance doubly sure and his domination unmitigated, the western man has since evolved a policy of not allowing any immigration of any black person into that land from any part of the world.

Come home to the "dark continent" supposedly domiciled by the "dark" people, the Africans. No moral qualms would prevent the scramble of the Western man for the land of the darks. And where the darks even had the guts to think that a twentieth century tactics of appealing to the moral conscience utilising the supposedly widely propagated public



appeal of placards-carrying would appeal to the conscience of the whiteman, no moral qualms would prevent the Africans from being mowed down like weeds with guns as was done in the Shapeville Massacre. For a racist regime in Zimbabwe to continue undeterred in its line of man's inhumanity to the African man, all it needed to do was to remind its own western cousins that it is doing the same things now that the latter had done and that it is even protecting and preserving the western civilization by its own actions. The westernman of Portugal has his own peculiar twist to the inhumanity perpetrated by a dehumanised, hardened and psychopathic, amoral heart. In this category also is Spain and those species of westernmen who take sadistic relish in the art of subjecting a living creature with capacity for feeling pain and pricking to provocation, taunting and finally killing it with sword as is done in the bull fights which is taken as a sport in their country. It is a height of heartlessness when a matador faces a wild bull with a red piece of cloth and makes it charge towards him while teasing, taunting and provoking the beast. And when the beast would have exhausted his energy in unparalleled anger at chasing elusive target, the matador now delivers what is ironically called "coup de grace" by piercing his sword into the heart of the beast. The wild crowd of blood-letting admirers watching now shouts, Ole! Ole!! or hail, hail apparently deriving pleasure in the whole act. No wonder then that subjugating human beings to inhuman oppression and slavery as in colonialism means nothing to them.

That Portugal with this background of heartlessness should lead the way in subjecting man to the basest indignities of being treated like animals and tools as in the slave trade and slave trafficking and lately in colonialism only underscores what form sadism can take. And that the same country rather than granting freedom and independence to

its African territories has resorted to the act of heartlessly massacring the under-armed freedom fighters should serve as no surprise.

It is following a pattern. Rather than being surprised, the resisters should be steeled in their efforts at winning their freedom. And that other western men are supporting Portugal by supply of arms as is done by NATO countries should neither be a surprise. Rather, it should be seen as a pattern of western man's natural wickedness, heartlessness and violence towards the black people of Africa. One needs only to add the incidents of the dropping of an atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki—an act that wiped out about 100,000 people at once; and the present killings with the testing of more devastating lethal weapons as is going on in Vietnam far away from the American soil; or the insensitivity to cries of helpless non-westerners who do not want the fallouts from France's atomic tests to maim them and the generation yet unborn to complete the western man's picture of callousness and sadism.

The variant form of human wickedness, callousness etc which is found in the over-emphasis on economicism or supremacy of the food and material over all else as if man were a glutton, could find its explanation in the callous disregard of the preachings of the apostles of humanism and morality at the crucial, critical moment or period in the history of the western civilisation. If the African should show amazement about how in the world a human being could ever place material and food above the worth of man as is done by the western man, it is because to the African as expressed by the Yoruba: *Fifu ni owo fu ko to enia iyi* i.e. money and materials may shine and glister but it does not amount to or match human worth. Those Americans who in the early sixties when the vietnamese war and American intervention was hotting up showed extreme surprise at how vietnamese

monks could set themselves on fire in order to protest and advance the cause of their country's freedom were reflecting their western materialism. As some explained it off, this act of self-immolation could only be brought about because the vietnamese had no television and cars to ride. If they had, they would not have been ready to sacrifice this life of pleasure because of what they called "flimsy thing like morality." But to the non-western man of vietnam what is the worth of human life and edifice without moral content to propell it and give it meaningful direction? For goodness sake let the Africans hold fast to their belief that, as Yoruba would put it, *Ekunkii je ohun aikasi*, the tiger does not because of his self pride eat the corpse of an animal that is already dead unless he kills it himself meaning there could be dignity even in poverty.

The fact is that the Western man reached his present stage of moral emptiness because at the crucial period when his attention was being called to the idea that he could infuse his scientific achievement and excellence with morality, he turned a deaf ear and made a wrong, fatal turn by making material progress to be all and all, the end in itself without spiritual-moral force. The physiocrats and those other propounders of economic philosophies of the eighteenth century who were utilising the scientific knowledge in analysing the socio-economic scenes of the time and setting the blueprint for the later societal development, had the privilege of having apostles of morality shouting loud into their ears the need to integrate morality into their economic philosophies. Rather than hearkening, they were steeped in the notion of laissez-faire and the supremacy of the Natural Law of scientific ideas. Indeed, it was true that Condorcet in his preaching was found saying, among other things, that the moral development of man should be an aspect of the *total development of man and materials*: " . . . . May it not



be expected that the human race will be meliorated by new discoveries in the sciences and arts and, as an unavoidable consequence, in the means of individual and general prosperity; By FURTHER PROGRESS IN THE PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT AND IN MORAL PRACTICE: AND LASTLY, BY THE REAL IMPROVEMENT OF OUR FACULTIES, MORAL, INTELLECTUAL AND PHYSICAL, which may be the result either of the improvement of the instruments which increase and direct the exercise of those faculties, or of the improvement of our natural organization itself? . . . . Nature has fixed no limits to our hopes . . . .” (*Italics ours*). Indeed it was also true that this optimistic hope was rejected by the scientists who took instead a deliberate turn, a wrong turn. They believed idealistically that the methods of science could also be used in the study of politics, morals and religion, and that man has reached the greatest height of his development from which he will never, according to their belief, relapse back into barbarism. They were so easily deceived into wrongly believing in the fact that mental development alone was the decider and measure of progress and that, as a result science, by expanding creature comforts or raising the standard of living, so to speak, and developing and refining the weapons of war and barbarism, was in that way actually advancing civilization and all that is meant by it. It never crossed their mind that by progress and civilization should be meant the advancement of the human species, the total man including his spiritual-moral aspects! Instead, they developed one aspect of man—the material aspect—and left the other equally important aspect leaving him to fly with one wing, so to say. At this time they, the world’s greatest thinkers, scientists like Darwin, Spencer, Malthus, Freud, Ricardo etc turned to the service of the rampant materialism, that malignant entity that gradually spread like a social cancer

eating out the heart of the moral basis of society. Men who were apostles of morality like Hume, Kant, Condorcet or Mazzini were disregarded and left frustrated to be thought of only as being great minds to be pitied as idle dreamers of the impossible. Condorcet's last clarion call and frustrated statement and warning that could give the opportunity for a second thought and a self-reexamination of the progress so far made so that amends could be made was equally disregarded. Said he, "We perceive that the EXERTIONS OF THESE PAST AGES HAVE DONE MUCH FOR THE PROGRESS OF THE HUMAN MIND, BUT LITTLE FOR THE PERFECTION OF THE HUMAN SPECIES". (Italics ours). This same warning the African world is today giving as a result of the experiences the world has had since the enlightenment which has since turned to impoverishment—of man, his soul and his social fabrics. Who ever thought that even the racial discrimination of today which was the result of the warped mentality that sees money and science as both the image and the soul was warned against as a goal that should be loathed? To the rich mind of Condorcet and his voice like that of a Nazarene: "Our hopes, as to the future condition of the human species", he expressed, "may be reduced to three points: the destruction of inequality between different Nations; the progress of equality in one and the same nation and, lastly, the real improvement of man".

The Westernman's religion, Christianity, also failed him in his direction of real progress. By failing to guide the direction of western man's thought through its moral influence at the crucial moment, we have the lopsided civilization of the west which is in its process of decay today. Rather than guide and influence, the Church abandoned its mission and itself became more economic and political rather than spiritual.

Our consideration of the functioning of the African personality in the twentieth century should include a blueprint of what he should do in a social or economic situation especially when in contact with other social participant who, being propelled by a different culture from the African's own, *ipso facto*, reacts to people and situation in ways prescribed by his culture. The westernman is propelled by western culture and world-view and the African is also propelled by his African culture and world-view. In a culture-contact situation in this shrinking and shrunken world they both would definitely meet in the fields of social and economic action. We have said earlier that these areas had for long been dominated by the westernman. Now that the African man has come to the scene and meeting the world in hopeless or helpless situation of unwholesome human relationships and man's inhumanity to man, shall we watch him act and deduce motives for his actions. We have said earlier that the African has an objective of survival and self-preservation in the face of twentieth century odds, and that secondarily (if possibly the other person allows himself to be influenced) to influence the other person by letting him see and know that there could be other ways to the situation other than what the other person had been accustomed to for long, which ways had since left the world in a state of stalemate and unavoidable turmoil. Perhaps if the other man sees and appreciates this other ways, mankind may yet be spared the self-annihilation that stares it in the eye at present. Let us take two characters as for an example. The first is the African man of African culture, the ideal Yoruba man of character called OMOLUWABI\* (from the word *omo ti olu iwa bi* i.e. the child whom the god or goddess of good character begot—*ipso facto* a chip off the old block, so to say). By the nature of his meaningful name he is a man of character, gentle, cultured, combination of assertiveness cum forbearance;



urbane and possessed of suavity, always well-dressed reflecting a totality of good home training knowing fully well that he reflects his home through his actions outside. Especially, he is one possessed of moral fibre and qualms who would find it detestable to commit the act of one American youngster in 1957 who planted a bomb in the plane in which his insured mother was travelling and killed the additional thirty-five other innocent passengers in the plane so that he could collect the insurance money on his mother's head and be rich. (He would not do this because to him too *Fifu ni owo fu ko to enia iyi* i.e. money and material may glisten but humanity is worth more than material especially man of honour). The other man is an ODAJU (from *eniti oju re ti da ti ko ni itiju ti ko ni ifa aya ti a npeni faya*) a bare-faced man without shame or qualms; the material loving man or "economic man" who would maximise his gain at all costs including murder or whatever weapon available; man without moral consideration on anything who is satisfied as long as his material gain is achieved; a man who underrates human worth as against material worth; the lone-ranger of social situation who pays less premium on human relations; an atomistic man. In their ensuing inevitable interaction, *omoluwabi* must be on his guard knowing fully well the stuff of which *odaju* has been made lest the latter takes advantage of him. When *Odaju* steps on the toes of the *omoluwabi* in the manner he had been used to doing with impunity in the past, almost instinctively the latter should step on the former's toe in quick return so as to bring the message home that he would no longer tolerate that act and that neither would he give his other toes to be stepped on because 'it isn't necessarily so' what the bible says that one should turn the other cheek when one cheek is slapped. *Omoluab*i can later pontificate about the evil of stepping on other people's toes if *odaju*

would ever listen—of course, we knew he won't. In matters of economics, when *odaju* recklessly, in a manner characteristic of a glutton, braces himself up to exploit him as in the past by, for instance, putting forward a proposal like, say, twenty-five percent to seventy-five percent in the exploration of the oil resources of his African land, *Omoluwabi* should tell him that it should be the other way round—he, African, taking the seventy-five percent whilst *odaju* takes the twenty-five percent. *Omoluwabi* should add the expression "take it or leave it", knowing fully well that *odaju* the glutton, the material lover who badly needs the oil for the running of his factories would take it. *Omoluwabi* in all consideration should let *Odaju* know that he cannot be fooled anymore. *Omoluwabi* in his hospitable bent may invite the *odaju* to a luncheon and party later at which part of *omoluwabi's* takings can be utilised to express the latter's humanism to the former. Even in doing so the opportunity should be seized at this state of euphoria of the *odaju* to preach to him that money and material is nothing compared with human feeling and camaraderie and human relations in which each person complements the totality of the humanity of the other. Perhaps—and this is a remote chance—sugarcoating refined life philosophy with wine and fineries in this way may make *odaju* have a change, a slight change, of heart. *Odaju* should be asked "what next? or what is the use of winning and accumulating materials and losing your soul as in losing sense of morality? or of what use is material if it is not meant simply for the use and comfort of man rather than man being meant for it?" By listening to these, *odaju* may want to deride *omoluwabi* as living in a state of idyllic innocence of not knowing to what use money and materials could be put. *Omoluwabi* knowing this pattern of thought should immediately let *odaju* know that he knows what money can do but he is not excited about it because he

is bound by a higher-order of values and virtues which he would recommend for *odaju* to consider and give a fair trial and see whether he would not derive personal feeling of satisfaction from doing so.

A Nigerian student during a snowfall in Washington D.C. U.S.A. one day saw an old whitewoman fell down. He quickly ran to the aid of the poor woman lifting her up by the arm. On turning her head and seeing that it was a black person that picked her up, the old woman shouted "why don't you leave me where you found me, nigger". The Nigerian was rather amazed that a drowning person who could have held on to any straw at all was having a choice of what straw to hold on to. But the young foreigner did not know to what extent the cancer of racism has eaten up the heart of the poor whitewoman. In this situation, what the *omoluwabi* should have done would have been to satisfy his own conscience and humanity by attempting to lift the woman up but at the same time dining to her ears how it would not have been right to leave her dead and dying when a fellow human was around. If she calmed down and is saved, then in unmistakable terms she should be made to know that something was definitely wrong with our human society that she should take the type of attitude she had shown and that there is need for an amend everywhere. For one thing, she did not even know that the helper was a foreigner who was not a party to the racial antagonism going on in the United States but was just a passerby motivated simply by humanity to save a fellow creature at the verge of demise. Perhaps, and this is a big Perhaps, such discussion might change the heart of this racist so that she too may influence others following her experience with the foreign black man who let her know the extent to which she had gone in human-hating. Certainly, this mission calls for patience and calmness even in the face of assault and a possible risk of unpleasant experience



NOR IS THERE ANY HEREDITARY OR OTHER BIOLOGICAL REASON FOR SUPPOSING THAT, JUST BECAUSE WHITE CIVILIZATION IS LEADING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRESENT HIGHLY TECHNICAL AGE, SOME RACES HAVE LESS APTITUDE FOR LEARNING TECHNOLOGICAL SKILLS (*Italics mine*). There is no reason, for example, why an African because he is Negro, cannot learn to drive a tractor or be a soil chemist, or any other of the tasks necessary for underdeveloped countries to help themselves. Such abilities cannot be considered racial ones.

Of course, children of a highly technical civilization have an enormous advantage over those who live in simple, isolated cultures. At an early age they learn the logic that two and two make four, they unconsciously learn the principle of cause and effect, they tinker with machines to see how they work. A Negro child born in the Jungle of Congo is brought up in a world with a different image of nature and its forces. If he is to adopt Western Technological culture he has to learn, not only how a machine works, but also to interpret natural phenomena according to rigid laws which no longer permit the intervention of spirits or magic. But these are cultural, not racial, differences.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Mass Communication, UNESCO, *What is Race?* Paris, France. UNESCO HOUSE, 1950, pp. 62-63.

## CHAPTER VII

### WHITHER AFRICA OR, WHERE ARE WE BOUND?

An analysis and description of the form undertaken here would not be complete should we fail to make predictions, pronouncements, or give what we consider as a blueprint for cultural development and expression in our continent, albeit, country. It is not only fitting that we should do so but essentially it will demonstrate our concern for or stake in the general task of the nation-building and progress in our African continent.

#### **The roles of the new African Elite**

It is our deep conviction that the elite of emergent, renaissance Africa who unlike their traditional forebears are possessors of the all-important skills and know-hows needed for the twentieth century sophisticated world, should *ipso facto* consider it their duty to explore and harness Africa's wealth of resources and heritage in the hope not only of offering better standard of living to the masses but of offering same in dignity through self-realization and self-appreciation. The elite in Africa will not be exception in performing these types of duties. For the role of elites the world over is to lead their peoples. Whether any country in the world progresses or not has often depended on the elites of that country whether or not they fulfil this their traditional sacred role. Elites are usually the possessors of the skills and knowledge of development and they normally put these to use for the development of their societies. Those who fail to do this are usually considered to be shirking their sacred responsibilities. Should there be such shirkers of responsibilities in the Africa's experience, (fortunately there are none or not many

at the present moment) they are better seen as immoralists who would desert mother Africa when she needs their reciprocal duty of a child to its mother after the latter, would have given birth to it. Incidentally those Africans who after their training stayed abroad to serve foreign gods are in this category. In cultural and other social matters, the role of elites is usually that of elitemediation in which they interpret the society's values and inheritance to the masses.

With the sacred duty idea established, a cadre of highly-motivated researchers and educators among the elite should undertake the role of probing into the past cultural heritage of Africa which the ethnocentrism of the colonialists had prevented from having full expression or which they had distorted in order to enhance their own declining civilisation which is holding its last straw. Having found out these facts, it would be the next duty of the elite to disseminate and propagate the information through schools and the mass media of entertainment and communication. This act will hasten to "restore the dignity of man" in the people whose colonial mentality has disposed them into thinking that everything African should call for apologies when in actuality the reverse should be the case as evidenced and testified to by outside scholars with a modicum of intellectual honesty in them. In things cultural, it cannot be over-emphasised that the leadership of the elite should include not only probing, analysis, interpretation and consequential propagation, but also propagation through personal examples. By examples, we mean that in the areas such for instance as the concrete forms of culture such as the arts, crafts etc, the elite should encourage the cultivation and use of these symbols of past ingenuities transmitted by patronising their producers and giving economic support where necessary. Through patronage, the western educated elite would be killing two birds with one stone. The elite would by so doing



be engaging in a practical way of self-emancipation through identification while at the same time providing means of livelihood to the artists thereby also aiding the cumulation of knowledge and know-how for today's use and subsequent transmission to posterity. An unemancipated elite lives in a state of perpetual insecurity characterised by malaise and ready apologies for his existence. By living in a foreign culture the totality of which he cannot imbibe, and if he does so to a certain extent he is not fully recognised as an indigene of the particular culture, he lives in a world of make-believe where he has no roots and no respect.

The present system, pattern and content of education in post colonial Africa should be revamped such that the African cultural values and history should be taught in schools basically so that the Africans may be said to be truly educated. After all, education is primarily a process by which an individual is inducted into the culture in which he is to be a participant. Our institutions of higher learning, the Institutes of African Studies of our universities should play leading roles in the search and researches into our African cultural values. They should be a jealous custodian and disseminators of these acquired facts. The facts should be made available through publications and exhibitions etc. to both the schools and teachers in them and to the general public. They in turn would be taught to the young. And if and when we should seek ideas from abroad to stimulate us, we should be discriminatory and critical knowing that foreigners have their own paganism and modernity. For example, the British that we are so much have their own paganism. The Christmas festival is based on, and celebrated at the time of the year when the pagan fertility rites used to be celebrated in England but only with a different hero at the centre now; the Christmas tree originated from the British pagan belief in the efficacy of the green leaves; the football

game which we play today had its origin in the pagan fertility rite in which the severed head of the human sacrificial victim was tossed from one hand to another with the belief that whoever caught it would receive some supernatural power. Of course, today the inflated rubber is substituted for the human head. And finally, even such a sacred edifice as the St. Paul's Cathedral of England was built on the very site where the pagans built the shrine to their god because the British simply wished to merge the old with the new and thereby maintaining a continuity understandable to the generality of the people.

We must point out here that we are by no means advocating a rigidity of culture because we know that culture changes as time proceeds. If our traditional African culture can be represented by a gigantic tree with roots deep down into the soil and a firm, robust trunk shooting into the sky with its branches and leaves, our modernisation should consist in pruning and trimming of this tree of only its decayed branches and leaves and grafting them, where necessary, with scions from other trees but by all means not up-rooting the tree itself. In other words, our modern progress should consist in the fusion of the elements of the traditional and modern in our African culture. Indeed, we should develop and modernise without losing our distinctive African characteristics. By so doing, and by that only, can we win the respect and admiration of those who otherwise would have laughed and railed on us were we the caricature of an alien culture and foreign god.

Indeed, we would not be accused of fanatical Africanism if we submit that today's African elite, albeit Nigerian elite, should go back to the villages and imbibe the spirit of Africanness which the process of formal education in the western, missionary institutions have destroyed either partially or totally in some of them. In addition to this, the

members of elite should go to the institutions of higher learning and register in courses dealing with the analysis of the structure and values of their African society. We are making this submission for the simple reason that the education which these western educated Africans received was devoid of the knowledge, in systematic and understandable manner, of their African values and world-view. In other words, the people are not truly educated in the real sense of the word. For isn't education a process by which a person is inducted into the culture of his environment in which he would participate? The very fact that the curricula of the institutions wherein these people were educated were lacking in the African values and characteristics and that the miseducated or 'educated ignorants' as the people may be called were made to shun their African values by looking at them in a derogatory manner make for our declaration that the colonial elite of Africa, albeit post colonial Nigeria, of today are not truly educated. The following account would support our definition of education: One eminent German educationist and philosopher, Friedrich Paulsen, has published reminiscences of his childhood as a Frisian peasant boy on the west coast of Schlesburg. From these we want to illustrate what we mean by education as an induction of the learner to his culture. In retrospect those years gave Paulsen unalloyed satisfaction and he complacently contrasted his early opportunities with those of modern city child. He and his mates, he declares, learned about nature as no young city dweller ever does. They watched the Sun and stars, waded through ditches, snatched birds, eggs, caught fishes, ploughed in the fields, and made hay in the meadows. "In short, the whole of Nature lay within the sphere not only of our eyes, but of our hands and feet, we lived with her as a part of herself". Similarly Paulsen got a firsthand acquaintance with the basic arts of life. The urban



child sees only the finished products; he (Paulsen) saw them come into being. Through object lessons he learned how people bake bread and brew beer. He watched the shoemaker handling awl and last, the carpenter his saw, the tailor his sewing outfit. A city boy grows up in a more complex world, but one he is unable to comprehend. As to social arrangements, a peasant lad did not have to cope with such difficult abstractions as the State; he could observe society operating at close range in the village, with its clear-cut strata of peasants, artisans, and a handful of professional men. And the basic facts of economics, of supply and demand, were daily themes of household conversation when parents discussed the effect of rising wool prices or the breeding of sheep. These are what constitute education. Whether in the city or in the village, the essential thing is the inculcating of the culture of the inductee into him. And our point here is that the curricula of education in colonial Africa were such that it could be said were calculated towards bringing England or France or the metropolitan country to the African country rather than orienting the African to the twentieth century world in their cultural environment and in self-respect and appreciation.

The consequences or effects of this foreign-oriented education are many. They manifest themselves, though sometimes unconsciously, in the indifference shown by the elites and leaders of the people and their lack of appreciation of their cultural heritage of which they normally should have pride. For example, in the geographical boundary called Nigeria today there were in the past more than four ancient civiliazation comparably as high and complex as any other in the world. These civilizations, the Kano, Nok, Songhai, the Yoruba, the Ife civilizations, passed to the present generations legacies of cultural values which today's leaders should have sought first and foremost to propagate.

Rather, there is a sin of omission and commission.

After about ten years of political independence, the intricate and exotic interpretative dance steps of Eastern Nigeria still have to be known beyond Eastern Nigeria not to say beyond the country itself. It is to be noted that these dances like the oral tradition of preserving history of the lands, do tell exotic stories of such traditional intricacies understood both by those entertained and the entertainers. They are some form of dramatic tradition of story-telling as well as being modes of entertainment. The *Akwete* cloth with its beauty and colourfulness still needs to be made known in a manner that its sister counterpart, the *Kente* cloth of Ghana, is known and appreciated round the world. In the area of carving arts or sculpture, while we appreciate the efforts made in preserving the Ife bronze heads, Benin bronzes and other archaeological finds, we believe that efforts should be made to cumulate knowledge of the know-how of these important arts. Failing to do this may make us Africans to be ready recipients of Picasso arts which have their origin from our African soil. Our music arts and the efforts to interpret them need not be such that we should wish to demonstrate that European classical or a Tchaikovsky piece can be produced from them. Nay, this need never be. The scales are not octave. Oriental music and the middle eastern ones are not exactly like the Euro-American ones. In their calmness and consonance they still evoke pride in their attempt to make time audible or attempt to express human emotions.

Lastly, we must say without apologies that if we appear to be blowing hot and cold over these issues we do not mean to do harm to our fellow compatriots. We mean only to shock them into conscious awareness of the degree of their roles in projecting "the African personality" culturally. We mean to indicate that their attitude toward, or definition

of progress needs to be re-examined in that it has made them to be prone to follow certain lines with obsession and in dire goal of imitating others. We mean to tell them in the language of the philosopher Aristotle who said, "man, know thyself", We mean to tell them, "Man know thyself, appreciate thyself, and express thyself." It is in their Africanness that they can win respect and make important contributions into this world plagued by greed and aggression. We mean to say to them that in their African philosophies of human relations and world view and such like moralizing cultural characteristics which are ideational rather than technological they would fulfil the hopes of mankind which is groping for peace and togetherness in God's glory on this planet.

#### **African Nation's or, Nigeria's Foreign Embassies and Legations Abroad**

Granted that we accept the premise—a premise universally accepted—that Nigeria's Embassies and Legations in foreign lands are her *bona fide* soils and properties in the particular countries where they may be, it stands to reason that Nigeria's character should be projected in those places through these media. In other words, those Nigerian African cultural characteristics and up-to-date informations about them and their interpretations ought to be available in these institutions having been well compiled and coordinated by officers competent and qualified to do so. The additional cogent reason making the question of cultural expression to be urgent and most important is the ubiquitously known and regretted fact that under the colonial masters, efforts were consciously made to distort what existed or not to give avenues for the accurate, full expression of what were even obvious. As a result of this Nigeria, and indeed Africa, has been seen through the eyes and in the shadow of the



metropolitan country, great Britain. Thus the conclusion had been readily reached by outsiders that Africa was a cultural vacuum that was only filled with European ways of life—a sacrilegious conclusion which only prompt action on the part of the indigenes of these areas could eradicate.

It is our view that in an Embassy or Legation, such things as exhibition materials ought to be available and continually exhibition be held to which the public is invited. Movies that depict the lives of the country and many other pamphlets dealing with aspects of life and general progress and problems of development should be available. A fellow Nigerian the other day paid a visit to the Chancery in Washington, D.C. and asked for materials that he could borrow for use in an international soiree night in which cultures of many areas of the world were to be displayed.

As a Chairman of the club, he felt that Nigeria ought to feature more prominently and take its rightful place in the community of nations. To his disappointments, disgust and sheer discouragement, he was told such materials were not available. In fact, it was his complaint that the officer in charge was rather indifferent to the whole thing. As the young man related, he went to Ghana Embassy and he came out with piles and piles of information which according to his words, "I could not carry in my hands. I had to call a taxi". Well, rather shameful as it is but true at least partially so! The excuses often heard when such matters were raised by our delegations to the Ambassador were that the information department in Nigeria is short of funds or that letters have been written to which there are no responses—at least not yet. It is our sincere and deep hope that a clearer definition of the roles of our foreign offices be had so as to include not only political and economic matters but essentially the cultural. This is because in comity of nations and frontiers of world cultures the characteristic peculiarities

which every culture brings with it wins it respect and admiration rather than contempt which often accompanies the thought that a people only appears in the shadow of another people. Finally, it is an unfortunate thing that the legate himself in most places and in conjunction with his subordinates too often exhibits a fear or suspicion of the student as a person ready to jump into extremes of action and perhaps expose the shortcomings of the officials without sympathy. This is not true. The students that I know, especially those in the U.S., are persons who are nationalistic and patriotic enough to make available the knowledge which most of them acquired in their deversified areas of concentrations for the utility and good name of their country. They would therefore be ready to cooperate with fellow compatriots in projecting a Nigeria that would not only demand world respect and "dignity of man" but would command it. They recognize the insecurity and frustration often exhibited by civil servants or other people in the lower echelon of any bureaucratic set-up, a condition brought about usually by the fact that they have to carry out orders passed down from above them and that they have to repeat same acts or duties every day with seldom or no opportunity at all for any individual initiative. This characteristic often makes them appear suspicious and uncooperative, and somewhat pettily exaggerated in personality assertion and in quests for recognition. But a people with an identity of interest, such as national racial interest, need not be suspicious of one another.

## THE AUTHOR



Born in 1933 at IROLU-REMO in Ijebu division of Nigeria of Irolu Parentage and of the genealogical line of the Oranmiyan-Akogun family of Ife-Ife, Dr. J. A. Sofola was educated at the Methodist School Ereko and the Ahmadiyya High School of Lagos (now the Ahmadiyya Muslim College). He obtained his B.A. and M.A., degrees in Sociology from Howard University, and his Ph.D. in the same field from the American University in Washington D.C. the capital of U.S.A. where he studied for ten years from 1956-1966 following a three-months stay earlier in London, England. His stay and experiences in these Western Societies, plus the fact that unlike a physicist or a chemist who deals with atoms and molecules he studied the Social Structure and Life of these communities, afforded him a unique opportunity of knowing the values and way of life of the western people. From these he was able to make

a comparative study and observation with his African Society. A strong believer in the development of the African Continent by the trained Africans, he was known to preach to the African Student colleagues in America to return to their countries irrespective of the financial attractions that the foreign Western Societies offered.

Upon his return to his country, Nigeria, in 1966, he has written mostly and advocated the maintenance of the integrity of the African Culture in the face of the impinging Western Culture. This is undoubtedly the result both of his rich, varied experiences and an unshaken conviction in the proven strength and virtues of the African Culture. His pamphlet, *Reckless Europeanisation: the bane to Nigeria's African Cultural Renaissance* has had a tremendous impact on the Nigerian Scene for many years. He was known to have staged in 1958 a one-man, placard-carrying welcome in Washington D.C. for the late Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah whom he termed "a symbol of the African Personality and Culture", spreading his *agbada* dress on the ground for the late President to walk upon in the manner that Sir Walter Raleigh respected Queen Elizabeth I of England in order, as he said, to show the Western world and the Americans in particular that the late president represented the hope and aspirations of Africa.

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