

AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUES: THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates and examines the concepts, African cultural heritage and sustainable development, as living tradition, valuable and precious wealth that need to be harnessed and tailored towards African development. However, it is observed that African Cultural Heritage is enviably rich full of inspiration and vitality, but it remains a treasure largely unexplored in her continued quest for integration and ceaseless drive towards nation-building .This is an attempt to re-awaken African tradition and consciousness in order to unravel the primary material and concrete beliefs of Africans . Also, it aims at understanding more about the African world, and as well providing a new adventure for scholars in African Religion and Cultural Studies. Some of the concepts are defined in order to convey the exact meaning within which they are used in the context of the work. The link between the traditional African values; and African values in modern Africa are examined.

Keywords: Africa, Culture, Value system, Sustainability, Development, Modernity

INTRODUCTION

Many people quite often ask those engage in the study of African cultural heritage to tell them the benefits derived from such study. The benefits they ask for not only for the student but also to the society or the nation as a whole. African cultural heritage has been maligned in many ways. Many overzealous Christians and Islamic enthusiasts have branded it as barbaric, primitive, unprogressive and unrevealed. Many modern men who are engrossed in the influence of science and technology believed that it is a dead and useless religion which should be discarded and thrown over-board. In the same way, the fanatic and some parochial members of the so-called missionary religions, especially Christianity and Islam, always assert that theirs is, 'the only revealed religion' and what obtains in African traditional religion is the worship of non-existent spiritual beings and idols. They often assert that the traditional Africa do not honour and worship the true God, therefore the religion should be wiped out of the surfaced of the earth, forgetting that most of their members go to African priests and diviners secretly in the night to seek solution to their problems when they are faced with the realities of life. The practice of medicine, in its various forms, which is an aspect of this religion, also comes under serious attack by the practitioners of the orthodox modern medicine (Nabofa, M.Y 1988:92-93). African cultural heritage embraces all aspects of African life. It involves people's history, philosophy, poetry, psychology, medicine and health care delivery, ecology, various arms of the traditional government, ethics, economic and social activities, education, military strategies, mathematics (especially numerology) astrology, arts in its various forms and even including science and technology.

I wish to submit that there are many Africans who appear to be very fanatical about African culture. In view of this development, in the study of African heritage one should not set out to glorify the dead past of African, and this is a temptation which African scholars, especially the fanatical ones, should guide against. Therefore, one of the major aims of this paper is to find out whether there are any values by which the African forebear or ancestors lived and by which present generation are living, and if there is any heritage from the past which is spiritually and morally suitable for today. These are the things we have researched into, refined, if need be and to be preserved for posterity. It is both spiritually and morally wrong to approach the topic with the mind that for Africans whatever had or has been African, practiced traditionally by Africans, centuries ago or recently, must be good enough. One needs to avoid prejudice, and not approach the topic with too much sentiment. In part, the essay aims at discovering what African actually know, actually believe and actually think about God, the other spiritual forces and the supersensible world. Also it finds out how African beliefs have inspired their world-views and moulded their culture generally. Besides, this work gleans on emphasizing indigenous values and sustainable development as an overall appreciation of African cultural heritage. It informs that scholars and people can better comprehend the phenomenon of religion and cultural heritage by including the social forces that support sustainable development. Africans need to develop a sense of ontological nature of value and of the cultural lineage. In the context of this paper, African values require the development of new research modalities to overcome the simplified and romantic assumptions inherent in many previous efforts to understand the African World. Interestingly, African tradition in this new millennium is not a final product, stereotyped and fixed; therefore, it is to be reinvented every day by Africans. In order to set the bearing right, conceptual clarifications of the keywords such as: Africa and its location, the meaning of culture and the term value system are defined. The place of traditional African values and the link with African values in modern Africa are explicated, inclining towards sustainable development.

CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSES

Africa and its location

Ogungbemi (2007) reports that to know Africa is to have some knowledge of its geography and as well interact with its people and the environment. He intimates us with the general geographical view of Africa, that Africa and its Islands, has a land area of twelve million square miles. And that the land area could easily contain within it, and with room to spare the whole of India, Europe, Japan, the British Isles, Scandinavian and New Zealand. Also, he adds that the United State of America could easily be fitted into the Sahara Desert. Africa is geographically compact, and in terms of natural resources potentially the richest continent in the world. (Ogungbemi 2007:28). In collaboration to the above, Ukanah (2011) equally affirmed that Africa is the second largest of the world continents covering 23 percent of the world's total land mass and containing about 14 per cent of the world's population. It is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the West, the Indian Ocean and the red Sea on the east and the Mediterranean Sea on the North. In the northeastern corner of the continent is connected with Asia by the Sinai Peninsula. Presently, there are about 53 countries comprising 47 on the mainland and six island nations closely surrounding and which are part of the continent (Ukanah 2011:2-3). Africa is mostly divided by the Sahara, the world largest desert, which cuts a huge swath horizontally in the middle of the continent. The countries north of the Sahara make up the region of North Africa, while the region south of the desert is known as sub-Sahara Africa.

- North Africa region consists of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia.
- Sub-Sahara Africa is generally divided into the regions of West Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, and Southern Africa.
- West Africa include such countries as Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, the Gambia and Togo.
- East African nations are Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda.
- The central Africa countries include Angola, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of the Congo and Zambia.
- Southern Africa consist Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.
- Island nations on the coast of Africa are Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe on the Atlantic Ocean and Comorros, Malagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles on the Indian Ocean (Ukanah 2011:3). The land, water, air, and sun add to the economic wealth of Africa. Apart from the natural resources, human resources abound in all units of life.

What is culture?

Culture is a concept that is acknowledged universally. Its phenomenal relevance varies from society to society. What is acceptable in one society may likely be an abomination in the other. This view derives from the fact that culture is an all-embracing concept as far as man is concerned. It encompasses every bit of man's life and experience. This is perhaps why the concept has attracted various definitions from different scholars, but these definitions revolve round a similar meaning. For our purpose here, we tend towards Tylor (1958) and Malinowski (1931) definitions. Tylor (1958) explicates *culture as a*

complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Tylor,1958). From Malinowski's perspective, culture is a functioning, active, efficient, well organized unity, which must be analyzed into component institutions in relations to one another, in relation to the needs of human organism, and in relation to the environment, man-made as well as natural (Malinowski,1931citedby Adegoke et.al.,). Drawing an inference from the above, culture is an all embracing concept having a broad interpretation. Culture embraces religious beliefs, languages, dresses, style of living, political organization and all other aspects of life. In the context of this paper, culture is used as the totality of the way of life of African people including their tangible and intangible products, habits, customs, thoughts as well as the arts, technology, music, literature, theatre, health, drama and education. Besides, the following are the characteristics of the concept of culture under discussion. Culture is both stable and dynamic, explicit and implicit, shared and learned, ideal and manifest, covert and overt, organic and supra-organic, corruptible and reforming. An African person inherits a cultural heritage from the preceding generation which they use, add to and pass on to the succeeding ones (Adegboye and Olagunju, 1996:236-238).

Value System

According to Longman Dictionary the word value is defined, 'as the degree of usefulness of something, quality in something which makes it helpful, useful or desirable, a standard or idea which most people have about the worth of good qualities'. This notwithstanding, the meaning is not explanatory enough. The word values refer to the attitude, beliefs, behaviours and actions that are cherished and acceptable standards of behaviours which each society expects that the members should abide by. Although, values differ from person to person and from one society to another. This is because social groups or human societies have various beliefs, attitudes and standards that form their value system. In view of this development, Falade *et. al.*, (2009) in their own perspective explicate the term value as a coherent set of attitude, behaviour and action adopted and/or evolved by a person, organization, or society as a standard to guide its behaviour and preferences in all situations (Falade,D.A., Akinde, O.O. &Adejube., 2009: 482). The concept is hereby used and utilized as a coherent set of African attitude, behaviour and action adopted and/or evolved by African community as a standard to guide their behaviours and preferences. Also the word value is used as an enduring belief that specific mode of conduct of African existence is socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct.

The Place of Traditional African Cultural Values

The interpretive exposition and presentation of values generated by traditional African societies covers many aspects of the African cultural life. Although, it is important to note that talking about African cultural values does not imply that by any means there are no cultural disvalues or negative features of the African cultures. There are, of course many of it. This is because some cultural beliefs, practices and institutions that are regarded as cultural values may be regarded as cultural disvalues by others. Or even some aspects of what one regards as cultural values may require some refinement. Nevertheless, however, traditions need to be evaluated. The main reason for focusing on cultural values here is that some of these cultural values require appropriate and necessary amendment and refinement in order to be relevant to African modernity (Gyekye ,2002:171). There is no community or nation in existence to which religion has not formed the basis of her life. There has always been a sense of belonging to God in Africa, as well as the basic belief that this world is God's world. In Africa, the

belief is that God created the world and the whole affairs of the world are under his unitary control. African belief is that society is thus an ordinance of God, and every institution within society is therefore basically religious.

African people have various moral and societal values meant to regulate interpersonal relationship and to perpetuate the entire community. Africans have certain standards or norms to be observed. These standards or norms are meant for social cohesion and smooth running of the community. They are to prevent members of the community from becoming rebellious and thereby endanger the welfare of the society. In African society, there are a set of values that guide the behavior of every member. Specific mention could be made of values such as hospitality, chastity before marriage, truth, respect for old age, covenant keeping, hard work and good character. In African community there are proverbs, maxims used to inculcate social and moral values in order to regulate their interpersonal relationships. The following are illuminating examples from the Yoruba of Nigeria and Akan people of Ghana.

S/N	Values fostered	Examples of Proverbs/ Maxims
1	Respect and honour for elders	A i fi agba fun enikan ko je ki aye o gun (Failure to give regards to other is the fundamental cause of societal abnormality)
2	Regard and appreciation for one's family and benefactors	A ki i fi owo osi juwe ile baba eni (we should not point at our father's home with the left hand)
3	Self control and courtesy	Falana gbo tire, tara eni la gbo (Falana-a generic name, mind your business)
4.	Virtues of forgiveness, harmony and peaceful co-existence	Bi a ko ba gbagbe oro ana, a ko ni ri enikan abasere (Unless we overlook the past misdeeds, we will not be able to relate)
5	Diligence and industry	Ise ni oogun ise (Hard work is the cure for poverty)
6	Truth and honesty	Otito ki i sina iro nii fi ori gbogbe (Truth does not make mistake, falsehood lead astray).
7	Unity and cooperation	Ajeji owo kan ko gberu de ori (One hand cannot lift a heavy load to the head)

Sources: Falade, D.E *et. al.*, (2009). *Proverbs as Traditional Means of Moral and Social Learning among the Yoruba of Nigeria*. Ajayi, A. and Fabarebo, S.I (Eds.) *Oral Traditions in Black and African Culture (CBAAC)*, 485-489.

From Akan people of Ghana

S/N	Values Fostered	Examples of Proverbs/Maxims
1	Beauty	Beauty does not pay off a debt.
2	Chiefship, People and Political Authority	It is when a chief has good counselors that his reign becomes peaceful.
3	Children	There is no wealth where there are no children
4	Community	The reason two deer walk together is that one has to take the mote from the other's eye.
5	God	Goodness is the prime characteristics of God.
6	Humanity	Humanity has no boundary.
7	Immortality	When a person dies, he is not really dead .
8	Individually	It is by individual effort that we can struggle for our head.
9.	Knowledge	Knowledge is like a garden, if it is not cultivated, it cannot be harvested.
10	Morality	Life is mutual aid.
11	Parental responsibility	Absence does not bring up a child.
12	Personal responsibility	He who gets blisters from the hoe handle will not die of hunger.
13		Only he who goes into the forest comes back with firewood.
14		What one cultivates is what one harvest .
15	Virtues	Good character is a person's guards. An unpleasant truth is better than a pleasant falsehood
16	Wealth	When wealth comes and passes by nothing comes after.
17	Wisdom	The wise person is spoken to in proverbs, not in words.
18	Wife	The beauty of a woman is due to her husband.
19	Work	Treat your guest as a guest for two days, on the third day give him a hoe.
		There is no other things you get out of laziness than poverty.

Sources: Gyekye (2002). *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*, Ghana: Sankofa Publishing Company, 22-104.

Ifa Literary Corpus as Repository of Yoruba Cultural Education

Ajayi and Ojo (2009) observe that cultural education is such in which children and young individuals are educated according to the native custom, practices, beliefs and general life pattern of the society. Its main concerns are character, morals, physical and vocational development of the individual, as well as the inculcation in the children of the society right type of values as they learn to identify, understand and appreciate the cultures, norms and values of the society (Ajayi and Ojo 2009:40). In more specific terms Yoruba cultural education is concerned with the manner of greetings, dressing, house cleaning, taking one's job seriously, good behavior, respect for elders among others. The essential material which an Ifa

Priest uses to determine the problems of his clients is known as the Ifa literary and divinatory corpus. (Abimbola,1973:44 cited by Ajayi & Ojo 2009:40). The corpus is the storehouse of Yoruba culture. As the repository for Yoruba traditional body of knowledge embracing history, philosophy, medicine and folktale, it serves as the basic means through which Yoruba comprehend their environment and historical experiences (Abimbola, 1975:32 cited by Ajayi and Ojo 2009:41). Ifa literary corpus is the base of Yoruba traditional education rendered in a coded form and the meaning is only decoded by a veteran Ifa Priest. This is to show another illuminating traditional African cultural values in the Yoruba socio-cultural setting. The reserved ability of the Ifa Priest to interpret the message of Ifa is a proof of their knowledge, ability and confirmation of their importance since there is hardly any problem about which Yoruba will not consult Ifa. This fact is corroborated by Ifa poem which states that:

Ifa lo loni
Ifa lo lola
Ifa lo lotunla pelue;
Orunmila lonijo mereein Oosa daye

Translation

Ifa owns today
Ifa owns tomorrow;
Ifa owns the day after tomorrow
To Ifa belongs the four days created

(Abimbola, 1973:44)

The subject matter of *Ifa* literary corpus is a whole range of Yoruba thoughts and belief and there is no subject that cannot feature in it. Among the commonly found in *Ifa* corpus are the myths and histories of Yoruba land, medicine, magic, observations and various aspects of nature such as plants, animals, rivers and lagoons as well as abstract subjects which are highly philosophical and educative (Abimbola 1973:45). Above all, *Ifa* lays emphasis on good character which is much cherished in the Yoruba philosophies as:

O ba a lowo ko ju sekere lo,
Iwa re ni nnkan
(You maybe richer than a rattle,
Good character is more important)

Also, *iwa lesin*, good conduct is the essence of religion (Abimbola, 2006:85). Good character tagged *Iwapele* which includes being serious with one's job, taking responsibility as at when due, good comportment. This is because such vices as theft, laziness, covetousness, envy, slander, murder are regarded as bad character which Yoruba culture teaches against. (Abimbola 1975:392).

Olupona (2008) corroborates that in 1977, landmark conference took place, known as the Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) during which large gathering of the African Diasporas assembled in Lagos under General Yakubu Gowon. He remarks that the conference was set to reaffirm the authenticity of African traditions and culture, to promote the values in national development, and to ensure that national goals and objectives included cultural dimensions. Fafunwa cited by

Olupona (2008) equally affirmed that traditional education and early childhood education in one's mother tongue provide a better, more lasting foundation than an educational system using foreign language and culture. In a similar but different perspective, Professor Lambo, a psychiatrist and Professor of medicine also established the fact that in the field of medicine with reference to traditional psychiatry, as practiced on the African continents, provides significant results. Significantly, Prof. Lambo never condemns western psychiatry, but his work at the World Health Organization (WHO) established that the two systems of healing could complement one another to benefit the patient (Olupona 2008:10-11).

Apart from the above, another eminent example of African cultural value is on the use of symbols. Symbols are objects, acts, relationships or linguistic formation that stands ambiguous for multiplicity of meanings. In traditional Africa, symbolism has found spontaneous expressions in several religious and secular processes among many different people of Africa. These expressions could be seen in religious emblems, ideograms, icons, rituals, songs, prayers, myths, incantations, vows, customary behaviour and personifications (Nabofa 1994:4). Symbols can be classified into the following groups: natural, artificial, communicative, artistic and ritualistic. In traditional Africa, symbols served several vital purposes. Apart from the obvious fact that they evoke in human beings deep emotions and easily spur and motivate them into taking definite actions. Besides, symbols achieve seven major broad-based goals: to maintain order and coherence for communication, preserving knowledge to be transferred from one generation to other, for expressing inner feelings and external truths, for remembering important events, as aids in meditation and for the promotion of spiritual development (Nabofa 1994:13).

Traditional African Cultural Values in Modern Africa

Many of the cultural values and practices of traditional Africa discussed, however, can be considered positive features of the culture and can be accommodated in the scheme of African modernity, even if they must undergo some refinement and pruning in order to become fully harmonious with the spirit of modern culture and to function most satisfactorily within that culture (Gyekye 2002:174). These are some of the traditional African values that are fully harmonious with the spirit of modern cultures and as well function most satisfactorily and bring about sustainable development in modern Africa.

Humanity and Brotherhood: Traditional African cultures recognize the dignity and integrity of the human being as a creature of God. Our common brotherhood is intrinsically linked with our common humanity. There is only one universal family, to which all human beings belong. This family is fragmented, however, into a multiplicity of peoples and cultures. The recognition of all human beings as brothers in the light of our common membership in one human species is a lofty ideal, that is, of great importance to the African people.

Communalism and Individualism: The value that traditional African societies place on communalism is expressed in the sharing of a common social life, commitment to the social or common good of the community, appreciation of mutual obligations, caring for others, interdependence, and solidarity. At the same time, the claims of individuality are recognized. African ethic, however, urges the avoidance of extreme individualism, which is seen as potentially destructive of human values and of the whole meaning and essence of a human society. Attempts are therefore made to balance communalism and individualism so that they can co-exist.

Morality: The morality espoused in both traditional and modern cultures, and societies of Africa is a social, non-individualistic morality. This kind of morality is held as enjoined by social life itself. There is a preoccupation with human

well-being in the African moral thought and practice. The African moral system puts the ethic of responsibility above the ethic of individual right, even though the latter are also given due recognition. The importance of character as the engine of moral life in practice is stressed.

The Family: Marriage is considered as a valuable institution, for without it there would be no family, that is, the basic unit of social life. Without the family there would be none of the kinship ties that are essential to a comprehension social life, with an intricate network of social relationships. Values associated with the family include recognizing the responsibility to share life with a wife or husband and children in the nuclear family and with members from an entire lineage in the extended family, recognizing the need to have and to care for children, respecting parents, taking care of our parents in their old age and so on.

Economic Ethic: Africans seek and put a high values on wealth, both private and family (clan). The right to, and the importance of private property are recognized in the traditional African economic system, where private ownership exist side by side with public (command, state) ownership. Families (i.e. lineage, clans) operate independently of the chiefs, who, thus, do not control all the dynamics of the traditional economy. The traditional African society is a welfare state, functioning on the ethic of fair distribution. Everyone has access to the resources and goods of the community or state, but this system is not socialist in any Marxist sense.

Chiefship and Politics: In the political thoughts and practice of the traditional African society consultation and consensus are highly valued, for they are outstanding features of political decision-making. This practice allows for the involvement of all the people in the political process. The chief who is the highest political authority, rules with the consent of and in accordance with the will of the people. In the actual exercise of power, the people in effect, are the sources of authority, directly or indirectly through their representatives on the chief's council. The political authority of the Chief is based on a trusteeship principle that ensures his accountability of the people. Freedom of expression, of political opinion is appreciated and practiced. Misrule by a chief is not tolerated and can lead to his being disposed.

Human Rights: The most important values in which human rights are rooted are put into practices in the traditional African cultures. These include individuality, personal responsibility, the dignity and integrity of every person, the intrinsic values of every person, consideration of every persons as an end in himself or herself and worthy of respect and equity of the moral worth of all people. Other rights that are acknowledged and protected include: the right to the use of lineage land, right to food and protection from hunger, the right to a fair trial and the right to own private property. These rights are fundamental to the social structure, customs and ethic of the traditional African society and do not need to be vociferously demanded and belligerently fought for.

Knowledge and Wisdom: In the traditional African culture, knowledge is highly valued especially practical or empirical knowledge. This type of knowledge is based on observation and experience. Practical wisdom is most relevant in the reconstruction of the African society and the promotion of human well-being.

Aesthetics: Art in traditional African cultures has both functional and aesthetical dimension. Beauty is seen not only in works of art and in the human figure but also in human conduct, in humanity itself and in a person's character. Among the

criteria of aesthetic value and judgment are appropriateness and fittingness. For instance, music, dancing and even clothing must be appropriate to the occasion. (Gyekye 2002: 171-178).

Dime (1993) asserts that traditional African cultural values are now gathering momentum and sweeping aside any obstacle such as intolerance and mistreatment on its ways. An illuminating example is the Orisa Worshippers Movement with its Headquarters at Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria, which is now becoming global, gaining adherents not only in Africa but also in the Caribbean, Latin America and the United States of America. *Elerii Ipin: The Magazine of the International Council for Ifa Religion* (2006) affirms the above by revealing the Calendar of Events for International Council for *Ifa* Religion as stated below:

The Calendar of Events for International Council for *Ifa* Religion throughout the Year

S/N	EVENTS	DATE OF EVERY YEAR	VENUE
1.	Traditional Festival Day	10 th January	Republic of Benin
2.	Oke Ibadan day	20 th March	Ibadan, Oyo state
3.	Carnival	March	Brazil, South America
4.	Ose Meji <i>Ifa</i> Festival	8 th March	Ibadan, Oyo state
5.	Ela Iwori <i>Ifa</i> Festival	15 th March	Iseyin, Oyo state
6.	Yoruba Temple Festival	21 st May	Washington DC USA
7.	Annual World <i>Ifa</i> Festival	4 th June	Ile-Ife, Osun State
8.	ADACI Ancestral Communication	10 th June	Washington DC USA & All Braches Worldwide
9.	Odunde Festival	June	Philadelphia, USA
10.	Annual Harvest, Ijo Orunmila	6 th August	Ebute-Meta, Lagos
11.	Osun Osogbo	8 th August	Osogbo, Osun State
12.	Isese day	20 th August	All Yoruba State
13.	Oro Festival	September	Iseyin, Oyo State
14.	Ogiyan Day	15 th September	Ejigbo Osun State
15.	Ancestral Day	11 th November	Republic of Togo
16.	Ogunda Meji <i>Ifa</i> Festival	17 th November	Ibadan, Oyo State
17.	Ebedi Day	December	Iseyin, Oyo State

Source: *Eleri Ipin: The Magazine of the International Council of Ifa Religion, Issue No 2, 2006, 49.*

CHALLENGES OF PROMOTING AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUES

- Activities of Western explorers, missionaries, traders and colonial administrators have insulted in the loss of respect for our traditional objects, symbols and rituals relevant to cultural identification.
- Our collective and, or inaction have further dampened any hope of an immediate revival of the lost glory.
- Haunted by her history of colonial and neo-colonial exploitation, economic pillage as well as decimation of her tangible and intangible heritage material resources, Africa is still at the verge of matching her cultural resource endowment with her development potential.
- The cultural and artistic achievements of the African people in various fields of human endeavour, including science and technology, are attested to by the widespread cultural sites which are increasingly becoming object of systematic plunder, destruction, and illicit trade, aided by greed, ignorance and prolonged neglect.
- The task before African scholars, particularly in the field of history and culture, is to commence the systematic recording, documentation, preservation and the use of oral tradition in the service of the owner's of the traditions and deploy them in addressing issues of common concern to all (Babawale, 2011: 8-11).

PROSPECTS OF AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUES

In order to reclaim the humanity of African communities and assume the rightful heirs of our founding fathers, there must be a conscious effort to assert African historical traditions and consciousness. We must explore African oral traditions and its prospects for economic liberty, natural integration, and stability.

Africans need a psychological and physiological liberation. In doing this, they must draw lesson from Asia to where nature and environment are valued and celebrated. The challenge before Africans as individuals, institutions, government at local, state, national and trans-national is to rededicate to the appreciation, development and patronage of African cultural resources and values.

It is high time, Africans identified with one another with good knowledge of relics of the endowment and versed in the history of various cultural sites. Africans can only make gains rather losses by investing resources in individuals with powers of management of the cultural resources. African pride as continent lies in the values placed on her cultural endowment, the inherent system of ideas as well as those values that define peculiar personal and group perceptions and ways of life.

Placing premium on African cultural endowment would earn the people respect, global recognition, international co-operation, development, and aid effective dissemination of African culture by projecting the best of her history. It would naturally encourage the preservation of African heritage for future generations and for the development of knowledge and cultural understanding as being experience in other areas (Babawale, 2011:5-8).

CONCLUSION

The growth of human culture, its capacity to avoid decadence and dysfunction and to adapt itself to new situations and demands, its capacity to constitute itself into a credible and visible framework for human fulfillment is due to the re-interpretation and critical re-evaluation of a cultural tradition as it moves through history. The critical re-evaluation of a

received cultural tradition will not only suggest refinement or appropriate amendment that ought to be made to it, but also direct the attention to the aspects of it that ought to be engaged from the cultural life and thought of a people. The principle of democracy is an illuminating example, by whatever interpretation, democracy cannot be said to be alien to Africa. History is replete with varying democratic practices that cut across the traditional institutions in Africa. There are existing traditional practices among African community that are synonymous with contemporary expositions on democratic governance both in principles and practice. Such traditional practices among the Igbo village democracy and cross-cultural extended family tradition as in Yoruba, Tiv, Nupe and so on could be incorporated into the conduct of politics to instill discipline, re-enact integrity, respect and such other virtues as could promote peaceful coexistence. These can provide the basis for sustainable development in democratic governance unlike the present wholesale adoption of the costly western system which is not entirely suitable for African needs and peculiarity. For most African countries with the obvious exception of Egypt, exploitation of the immense cultural heritage has been minimal. The application of products of studies in science and technology has been minimal, while governance and development in Africa appear to have been impoverished by a general neglect of knowledge especially indigenous knowledge, in the management of nations and societies. This perspective requires the development of a new and responsible hermeneutics that focuses on culture, orientation to the transcendent and sacred, and what religious culture means to the people within that culture.

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