

“Culture Education” and the Challenge of Globalization in Modern Nigeria

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Introduction

Let me begin with a quotation from Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* that I find quite apposite to the main thrust of this paper (1967:168):

... the passion with which the native intellectuals defend the existence of their national culture may be a source of amazement, but those who condemn this exaggerated passion are strangely apt to forget that their own psyche and their own selves are conveniently sheltered behind a French or German [or any western] culture which has given full proof of its existence and which is uncontested.

I must also confess that the full import of the above statement by Fanon did not occur to me until I came across the same reference again in Toyin Falola’s *The Power of African Cultures* (2003:49) while in the course of preparing the present article. Fanon’s treatise is not only relevant to the present discourse but also directly foregrounds this paper’s philosophy.

For the purpose of clarity, let me explain the term “culture education” as it is intended herein. If “education” is the process of knowledge acquisition, “culture education” emphasizes the peculiar means and methods of instruction by which a society imparts its body of values and mores in the pursuance and attainment of the society’s collective vision, aspirations, and goals. Thus, anyone who demonstrates a degree of knowledge of his or her societal values and general education is said to be educated. In other words, “culture education,” as intended here, presupposes conscious and refined methods of acquisition and/or dissemination of the knowledge of societal values, philosophy, hermeneutics, and so on. “Culture education” is the means by which skills are developed in such areas as language, oral

traditions and customs, music, dance, rituals, festivals, traditional medicine, foodways, and architecture, as well as the internalization and socialization of societal values and skills by individuals in a way that engenders cultural adaptability, flexibility, and societal cohesion. Thus, “culture education” ultimately refers to a people’s pedagogy of cultural values, the teaching methodologies and means of dissemination, the acquisition of culture for the purpose of socialization, and the promotion of an ideal social order.

The Domains of Culture

Using UNESCO’s general definition,¹ domains of culture includes distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of a society or group, in addition to its art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs. In other words, culture is life; it defines a people and an identity. In discussing identity, Falola (2003:51) opines: “Culture shapes the perception of self and interaction between people and their environment. It [culture] explains habits...[and] defines norms of behavior...boundaries among people.... It is the basis of identity and ultimately of development.” Culture is the pulse of a living society. A “living” society, in this sense, is one that implies a transcendence of mere existence. Rather, it is a state of completeness and a consciousness that is holistic. A “living” society is one that is conscious of its beginning, its present location among a comity of societies, and one that progressively and determinedly charts its self-defined purpose and course that ultimately guarantees an ideal future—a future strengthened by meaning.

Culture defines a people’s civilization and determines its identity. Marriott (1963:34) puts it more succinctly: “No state, not even an infant one, is willing to appear before the world as a bare political frame. Each would be clothed in a cultural garb symbolic of its aims and ideal being.” By implication, while it is generally believed that so-called “modern” Western civilization serves as the apogee of cultures, I must add that a society which handles the affairs of its culture with levity, or unwittingly leaves its culture unprotected in the hands of uncultured politicians, all in the name of some covert globalization, risks cultural denigration (and subsequent miscegenation), decay, and imminent extinction. Césaire’s warning (1956:15) is apposite here: “There are two ways to lose oneself: by a walled

¹ More information about UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage Division can be found online at <http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/>.

segregation in the particular or by a dilution in the ‘universal.’” And now, in this age of globalization, the threat of cultural miscegenation and loss of identity is arguably far more pronounced than it has ever been before.

The Culture of Education in an Indigenous African Setting

In his 2003 Nigerian National Merit Award winner’s speech, entitled “Limits of Tolerance: the Future of African Cultures,” Akinwumi Isola argues that before the incursion of the West into the cultural nerve center of the now extant great African Empires, these Empires were dynamically culturally developed. According to Isola (2003:3), evidence for this cultural development abounds in the relics of the civilizations that existed then, including indigenous technologies in farming, architecture, music, textile production, sculpture, and warfare, among a host of others. Isola goes on to note that before the incursion of the West there existed a consistent tradition of knowledge dissemination and acquisition (3):

From the very first day in the life of an African child, they [*sic*] started hearing poetry performed, meant for their delight. It would usually be by the grandmother or some other women welcoming the new member by chanting the family *oriki*. During childhood, a proper and effective mode of socialization was ensured through the use of literature. So much essential information meant to ensure continuity of traditions and customs was packed into children’s literature.

According to Isola, information about plants, trees, and animal life, philosophical remarks about the language of nature, and the nature of language including non-verbal media of communication, mnemonics for counting, and moral instruction were integral in poems and stories for children: “Folktales were rich resources of night entertainment and there were folktales for every conceivable moral lesson...[that] immensely accelerated the process of socialization because they created unique occasions for moral lessons that might not occur so frequently in normal life” (4-5).

Commenting further on the process of socialization and the generation of socio-economic and moral awareness through literary education, Isola states (5):

Folktales introduced children to the socio-political problems of the society because the folktales of a society tend to reflect the fears and aspirations

of the people. A poor community would create reversal of roles in its folktales: the affluent prince became a slave and the hapless farmer suddenly came into riches! The arrogant was humiliated and the cheated avenged. Among the Yoruba, the various adventures of the tortoise demonstrated how dirty tricks in any form would always land the culprit [trickster] in trouble.

The effect of the educational process on the child was total; this was because of its all-embracing nature (5):

Listening to those tales the child began to feel the nature of some of the socio-political and economic relations existing in the society. Folktales in general, because they contain allegorical fantasy, tend to stoke the child's creative capabilities, and they [*sic*] got ample room for practice when they took their own turns at story telling sessions in the evenings.

"Literature," Isola notes (5), "played a servicing and monitoring role to all the other aspects of culture in traditional African society." The "other aspects" referred to here include religious worship through praise poetry, record-keeping through oral poetry, and curative and prophylactic healthcare through incantatory poetry. Isola concludes (7) that "up to the fifteenth century many African Empires had developed forms of state structures with effective political, legal, economic and other systems in a thriving culture," all of which had been established and had become common knowledge before a great dislocation caused by the forced incursion of the West set in.

Central to the ongoing USA/Africa Dialogue Series, a discussion group made up of academics from all over the globe and moderated by Professor Toyin Falola, are scholarly discussions on issues surrounding both Africans and Africans in diaspora. This series has proven to be quite revealing. Paul Zeleza's contribution entitled "A Historical Accounting of African Universities: Beyond Afropessimism," for example, addresses the problem of the so-called "falling standard" of education in Africa by tracing its origins and offering a possible long-term solution to the hydra-headed problem (2006). In Zeleza's article, the author identifies two wrongly held assumptions being peddled by Western critics and their African adherents on the subject of African tertiary education: first, that university education was introduced entirely by Europeans; and second, that the educational system has declined since independence. According to Zeleza, African higher education, "including universities," long antedated the establishment of "Western" style universities in the nineteenth century; in addition, the post-independence era was a period of unprecedented growth during which the bulk of contemporary African universities were established. Zeleza's

assertion is true not only of African universities, but of education at every level, as there is a long and established knowledge dissemination and acquisition tradition preceding the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Culture of Higher Education: A Legacy the World Learned from Africa

Zezeza (2006) traces the origin of higher education in Africa to three institutional traditions: the Alexandria Museum and Library, which was established around the third century BCE in Egypt and grew to become the largest center of learning in the ancient world; the early Christian monasteries, which began in Egypt around the third century CE, while during the fourth century CE the monastic tradition spread to Ethiopia; and the Islamic mosque universities that gave Africa its first *institutional* form of higher education, which has endured to the present. It is common knowledge that Africa has the world's oldest Islamic university, and some of the world's oldest surviving universities, including Ez-Zitouna Madrassa in Tunis (established in 732) and al-Qarawiyyin mosque university at Fez (founded in 859). Zezeza emphasizes the fact that the “Western” university—which was introduced to Africa in the nineteenth century—had definite Islamic roots. Her further observes that Europeans had “inherited from the Muslims a huge corpus of knowledge,” all of which later became central features within the “Western” university tradition that were exported to the rest of the world in the course of promoting western imperialism. Zezeza's article serves as a strong corollary to Isola's argument that the “culture of education” did not begin with Africa's first contact with the West.

The number of tertiary institutions that existed in post-World War II Africa was deliberately limited to a few, and largely existed for the purpose of fulfilling the agenda of the colonialists and their missionary agents who established a number of them. This strategy grew out of a suspicion that a “modern,” educated African could be a possible threat and competitor. This suspicion was later proven correct as the graduates of some of these universities were at the vanguard of the nationalist struggle. The capitalist-based colonial policies produced a complete psychosocial disorientation and dislocation of existing indigenous African communal structures—economic, political, ritual/spiritual, and so on—that culminated in a direct assault on the African psyche and a greater cultural disintegration. In other words, the informing philosophy of the colonial authorities made graduates of the colonial institutions serve only the imperialist vision, and as it were, made them cut the image of the proverbial “carrier of water and hewer of wood,”

engendering vulnerability for further exploitation of the colonial and post-colonial African by the colonial government and its agents. Again, this strategy is indicative of the enduring problems facing the adopted western educational system today in most African states, including Nigeria.

So far, three issues have been emphasized: that Africa in general—and Nigeria in particular—had strong indigenous systems of knowledge dissemination and acquisition prior to contact with the West; that the idea of the university education began in Egypt, not Europe; and that the intervention of the imperialist West and the subsequent imposition of its rather alien educational system and policies were largely responsible for cultural disorientation and general decay with which colonial and post-colonial Nigeria had to contend.

A Legacy Africa Lost to the West

Since culture is the aggregation of what defines a people, and “culture education” is the method of dissemination and acquisition of cultural heritage, I would like to discuss a very significant event that took place in 1977. In that year Nigeria played host to the black peoples of the world during a festival of arts and culture. Prior to this time, very little importance was attached to the study of indigenous African cultures and oral literary performance in most schools in Nigeria and, I suspect, elsewhere in Africa. Okpewho (1990) rightly observes that FESTAC ’77,² as this festival was called, helped to recover Africa’s lost, or eclipsed, cultural pride from ages of denigration and contempt. It was also of significance that FESTAC ’77 devoted a considerable portion of its activities to oral literary performance, and this focus is the primary reason why this unique festival becomes a significant reference point in this paper.

As of 2007, FESTAC ’77 took place three decades ago; the lingering question remains as to how oral performances and scholarship have fared in the interim. Undoubtedly, there exists a tendency to assume that Nigeria has made “considerable progress” in the area of culture propagation through the work of government agencies, voluntary organizations, and cultural associations. This assumption could be further buttressed by the fact that there has been a steady promotion of oral literature scholarship in a number of Nigerian universities. Although the national policy on culture is very clear regarding the need to teach Nigerian cultural history and tradition from the

² This acronym refers to the Festival of African Culture held in Lagos, Nigeria in 1977.

primary school level onward, implementation of the policy at the primary and secondary levels of education—arguably because of lack of political will—has hardly been conducted properly, given adequate attention, or handled with the seriousness it deserves by the stakeholders involved (proprietor-government and policy makers, parents, and teachers). Again, I do concede the fact that culture, as perceived through oral literature scholarship—and which hitherto has been one of the many sources of cultural discredit—has ironically been metamorphosed into a digging tool of enlightenment. A certain amount of important work has been done, however, thanks to the invaluable contributions of the Ibadan School of History and the work of Adeboye Babalola, Afolabi Olabimtan, Oludare Olajubu, Wande Abimbola, Olatunde Olatunji, Oyin Ogunba, Isidore Okpewho, Toyin Falola, Romanus Egudu, Godwin G. Darah, Ropo Sekoni, Onuora Enekwe, Oyekan Owomoyela, Benedict Ibitokun, Idris O. Amali, and a number of others. The argument for the claim of “steady progress” would be slightly more convincing were the number of local and international laurels won by the nation’s cultural troupes—dancers, masquerades, and so on—and the mass “exportation” of Nigeria’s cultural experts and oral literature scholars to foreign universities been taken into consideration. All of these factors then prove to be sufficient testimonies to justify the government’s otherwise incredulous assumptions.

Undoubtedly, Nigeria’s government has done something laudable in the publication of periodicals such as *Nigeria Magazine* and the various other books and journals that have been commissioned. Universities and academic associations have also held conferences, as often as funds would permit, both at local and international levels, during which cultural experts and oral literature scholars often pooled valuable ideas for the purpose of extending the frontiers of cultural studies, especially oral literature scholarship. Unfortunately, the beneficiaries of the dividends of such efforts, which otherwise could have been accrued by Nigerians as national gains, are the foreign universities and cultural studies centers scattered all over Europe, America, and Asia. These foreign universities continue to recruit Nigerian cultural experts and scholars that our own local resources have helped to develop. Besides having a tradition that recognizes the necessity for relevant infrastructures, or the adequacy of relevant tools for researchers to work with, “foreign institutions” operate under a system of incentives, moral support, and adequate remuneration, and because of these factors—with only a few exceptions—lecturers usually have little reason to go on strike.

The situation is very different in Nigeria. On matters relating to policies on education, for example, the government is hardly responsive or

responsible, kowtowing to the bidding and the fancy of its “benefactors”: the IMF, the World Bank, USAID, and so on. It is common knowledge that such recommendations have only succeeded in compounding the many problems of most developing nations that have fallen for their poisonous bait. Aside from the efforts of many university educators in Nigeria, stakeholders like the government and individual families behave generally as if they had nothing at stake! Thus, university lecturers must often embark on indefinite strikes in an attempt to compel the government to act on such crucial issues as inadequate infrastructures, lack of funding, and other related difficulties. Recently, the Nigerian government (under President Olusegun Obasanjo) appointed Chief Earnest Sonekan to head a committee to review the existing salary structures of its public and civil servants. The committee came up with a series of recommendations that equalize the salaries of a university Vice-Chancellor with a Brigadier-General in the Nigerian Army, a Professor with a Colonel (or with a Deputy Registrar in the same university), and a Deputy Vice-Chancellor with a Registrar. The complexity of such recommendations helps us to appreciate the many predicaments of oral literary performance and the challenges to its scholarship in Nigerian institutions. Unfortunately, neither the President nor Chief Shonekan were products of university education and therefore seemed not to appreciate what goes into the making of an academic, or a university professor—that is, before the Nigerian university was robbed of its true tradition in the course of the thirty-six or so years of military misrule.

With the incursion of the conquering Islamic jihadists and subsequent establishment of Sokoto Caliphate in northern Nigeria, there evolved an arabicized Hausa/Fulani culture, through the imposition of Islamic religious values and practices, Arabic language, and literature. However, according to Jegede (2004), despite apparent stiff opposition and threats of miscegenation, the pre-Arabic culture of the Hausa oral literary performance tradition continued to grow and develop side by side with literate Arabic culture. This has been made possible through the insistence and sheer determination of the Hausa traditionalists (Kukah 1993; Omobowale 1997; Jegede 2004).

The situation in the South was not too different. The southern part of Nigeria came into contact with Europeans first, through trans-Atlantic slavers. Following the abolition of the slave trade, legitimate trade began to flourish, pioneered by the United African Company (UAC), especially in cash produce, the influence of which spread to the north long before the amalgamation of the colonial Southern and Northern Protectorates in 1914. The steady injection of a capitalist economy and consciousness into the

indigenous cultural artery through the activities of outside multinational corporations had an understandably devastating effect on the general communal psyche, structure, and spirit of Nigerians and, subsequently, on the indigenous subsistence economy. Nigerian cultural values, under aggressive pressure from their European counterparts, had given way to accommodate the new spirit of “survival of the fittest” and other Western values that have since proved tragic to the continued health of the nation. The consequence was immediate: hunger, starvation, greed, avarice, self-centeredness, poverty, and diseases that became established in a previously unimaginable way. Farmers had to neglect their indigenous systems of food production and become actively engaged in the mass production and exportation of cash crops in order to remain viable on even the most basic level. Shortly after Independence on October 1, 1960, the nation’s leadership, inherited from the colonial government, became largely unresponsive and irresponsible, as a number of delinquent adults and charlatans infiltrated the ranks of the nationalists. The apparent socio-mental dislocation that had characterized direct colonialism is even now noticeably evident in post-colonial Nigeria.

Western education was formally introduced to Nigeria through the establishment of Christian mission schools. Regardless of the arguable advantages of this introduction, it also initiated an ever-mounting threat to the survival of non-literate indigenous traditions and cultures, especially oral literary performance. By the time Christian missionaries had quite literally colonized the psyche of the people through Western educational and religious doctrines, cultural values, belief systems, and philosophical hermeneutics had been completely ruptured. Indigenous belief systems had become “taboos” that “civilized” people (whom missionaries called “God’s people”) must not associate with any longer if they wanted to “get to heaven.” To a large extent, the introduction of Western education through the Christian mission schools marked a genesis of severe culture denigration.

Transculturation in Nigeria, especially through the influence of Islamic and Christian religions in the north and the south, respectively, has assumed frightening proportions to the degree that locating the “authentic” Nigerian citizen has become steadily more problematic. For example, most Nigerians, including those that are regarded as custodians of culture—*obas*, *obis*, *emirs*, priests of local shrines, heads of traditional cults, herbalists, oral literary performers, and so on—are Arab, Jewish, or Brazilian (or European or Asian) by name. The Nigerian situation is one in which a nation unwittingly compromises its identity and allows itself to be harassed by a dilution in the so-called “universal,” to use Césaire’s statement quoted

earlier in this essay. This dynamic portends sadly predictable consequences for the nation's identity and destiny, which are steadily dissolving into insignificance.

The state of Nigeria's cultures in general—and oral literature scholarship in particular—needs urgent attention, as my findings in recent investigations have revealed. Forty-six years after Independence, and three decades after FESTAC '77, culture, especially oral literature scholarship, has not attained an adequate level of development. Notwithstanding efforts on the part of the government, universities, voluntary organizations, and professional associations, there are several apparent problems that have endured to date. Such efforts as have been currently in vogue, such as conferences, workshops, and national/state festivals of arts and culture, now moribund, have usually not yielded expected dividends, and where they have, the country has not directly benefited. The likes of Soyinka, Okpewho, Falola, Irele, Ayindoho, Osundare, Sekoni, Owomoyela, Garuba, and Biakolo, among others, are abroad servicing African and African-American cultural studies. As far as these culture experts are concerned, except in a few cases like that of Osundare and Falola who are “oral” performers, critics, and theorists, most efforts thus far have been classroom/textbook-based and teacher-oriented, and have in turn helped to produce written literary theorists and cultural critics. Unfortunately, there are still few efforts to ensure the continuity, growth, and development of oral performance, even at the grassroots level. Unlike those few cases acknowledged above, scholars have seemed to be content with their reliance on archival resource materials. Furthermore, the total number of government-sponsored book projects, periodicals, and institutional and scholarly published journals are hardly adequate, available, or affordable. For example, to date, besides the Department of English library and lecturers' personal copies, not a single copy of Okpewho's valuable books is available in the main library of the University of Ibadan! I single out the scholar Okpewho because he was educated and even taught as a lecturer and served as head of the Department of English at this university. Using this as an example, one can clearly see how scholarly publications by other great scholars in oral literature might be severely limited in libraries such as these, despite repeated requests and recommendations to the contrary.

Similarly, promotional activities for cultural studies, especially oral literature scholarship, seem to have been limited, more or less, to the universities. Students very often come into contact with Nigerian and other African cultural products and oral literatures as an interesting and significant field of study for the first time in the university. It often requires a

significant effort on the part of teachers to correct students' initially negative impressions and attitudes, and to impart interest and excitement in the subject. At Nigeria's premier university at Ibadan, where I teach oral literature and other literature courses, the Department of English offers three courses at the undergraduate level: two introductory 300-level courses, "Oral Literature in English Language Expression" and "Heroic Poetry in Africa," and a 400-level course called "Folklore and African Literature." Only one such course exists at the graduate level, a class called "Oral Literature." The situation is much better in the Department of Linguistics and African Languages, however, where courses on differing aspects of indigenous African cultures are offered and taught at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Similarly, there are graduate courses being offered on different areas of African culture at the Institute of African Studies at the same university. These facts notwithstanding, the teaching of culture and oral literature must be introduced at the primary and secondary school level, as directly stipulated in Nigeria's cultural and educational policies. The intention of the policies is, of course, to provide students with the needed exposure and relevant knowledge for cultural integration and psychological stability, for the purpose of coping sufficiently, for example, with the rigors of the short but intense courses on African cultures in the university, and/or for the more important purposes of inspiring national cultural cohesion. Unfortunately, teaching of Nigerian cultures from the grassroots level, as required in the national policies on education and culture, is hardly given any priority at all by relevant agencies saddled with the responsibility of implementation in the nation's educational sector.

Undoubtedly, judging from the quality and scope of cultural studies and oral literature courses being taught at the tertiary level, these classes often do equip students with needed basic knowledge and research skills. Nonetheless, the duration of one semester (three months) is certainly inadequate to cover the material sufficiently in each of the courses. Besides, the course instructors/lecturers, though experts in their respective fields, lack the basic tools with which to work in the nation's poorly funded universities and colleges of education. Often lecturers have had to resort to teaching only theoretical approaches, primarily because of time constraints and the lack of availability of teaching materials. Thus, collective fieldwork and practical laboratory work that ought to constitute substantial first-hand experience for students are often skipped. This critical gap denies students the full value of the courses. It is sufficient to state that studies in African cultures and oral literatures, without the accompanying relevant fieldwork, amount to teaching modern poetry or a Shakespearean play without students having

access to the primary text.

At the level of theory and criticism, publications (including recent journals, books, and so forth) that are necessary for updating the knowledge of recent developments in the field of cultural studies and oral literature are either unavailable or too expensive for the home-based, poorly paid, and poorly equipped Nigerian educators to afford. A teacher may, however, be fortunate enough to have friends or colleagues who might send relevant books, journals, and other needed materials. Even then, such materials are hardly accessible to most students. Unfortunately as well, most university libraries are mere archives due to poor funding and thus recent publications become an uncommon phenomenon. For the past two decades or so, students have had to depend almost entirely on their lecturers' dictated notes, and sometimes on loaned books and other borrowed materials from a few generous lecturers. Fortunately, however, these difficulties have been avoided in the few Nigerian universities where internet facilities do exist, and relevant materials are often accessible on the internet by subscription; this is, of course, if Power Holdings Limited of Nigeria can guarantee electricity while the browsing lasts.

Quite often, the university calendar has often proven unfavorable due to its irregularity. Semesters in which relevant oral literature courses and fieldwork are scheduled have rarely corresponded with the existing calendar of institutional festivals. This irregular timing has often denied students who might be interested in gathering field materials the opportunity to experience the natural setting of live performance or to collect direct primary materials. I must also add that some institutional festivals, chants, and so forth are by tradition locked under an oath that forbids their celebration outside their calendrical schedule. If for any reason a makeshift performance is required by students conducting research, necessary rituals must be performed to unlock the oath and neutralize its consequences on the community or the individual(s). Besides the gravity of such rituals and their expense, permission is seldom granted by traditional authorities.

Similarly, most universities in Nigeria where oral literature is taught do not have back-up digital studios/laboratories with relevant equipment (audio-visual recording/playback tools, high-resolution digital camcorders, overhead projectors, and other equipment that course instructors need to process fieldwork data) for normal class instruction, auditioning, or general viewing. It is sad enough to note that in most cases there are no computers to facilitate data processing, no funding assistance at all to students conducting field research either from government, corporate bodies, individuals, or from the universities themselves, and no official vehicles to convey students to

field locations as often occurs in other countries. Since they have had to manage under these difficult and sometimes hazardous conditions, many students are unable to produce competitive work.

Sourcing, or developing primary materials for oral performance, growth, development, continuity, and sustenance, is under serious threat from the forces of globalization and capitalism. Although indigenous resources and knowledge still abound—especially in rural communities—these areas have suffered, and still suffer, gross neglect in the areas of basic infrastructure and social support in the hands of successive governments. Many rural communities are either inaccessible for lack of (good) roads and are untraceable, or have ceased to exist entirely. A good number of indigenous traditional leaders referred to by UNESCO as “living human treasures”³ have died and been buried with their irretrievable and valuable wealth of native knowledge. As the great Malian oral historian Amadou Hampate Ba famously described it, the death of an old man in Africa as a whole library set ablaze (Diallo 1992:13)! Some indigenous leaders have converted to either Christianity or Islam and/or have joined others forced to migrate to the cities in search of employment and other opportunities. Many feel stripped of their past glory, or feel that their skills are now irrelevant, and that their services as performers are no longer needed or remunerated. The implication is that their livelihood can no longer cope with the demands and daily needs of a global capitalist economy.

Worse still, there is the overwhelming impact of developments associated with new information and communication technologies on indigenous oral performers, including global challenges of religion and transculturation via digitalized technologies such as cable satellites, Western music and media, and so on. In light of this fact, as well as the overexposure of the nation’s children to foreign cultures and education, children are either unwittingly denied access to, or are no longer interested in, “local” or indigenous festivals, oral performances, moonlight stories, and so forth. Nor are they interested in taking up their parents’ professions as oral performers such as singers, poets, drummers, and storytellers. Many childrens’ minds are now broadened through the acquisition of a *globalized* knowledge, and imposed multiculturation encourages them to unwittingly “yank off” their cultural identity. Nigerian youth steadily become self-alienated and lose touch with their indigenous roots as a result of global culture and the capitalist economy, which severely mitigate the existing indigenous social

³ More information about UNESCO’s “Living Human Treasures” division can be found online at <http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/>.

order. Aimé Césaire (1956:15) identifies two means by which a people can suffer a miscegenation of cultural identity: “by a walled segregation in the particular or by a dilution in the universal.” The latter describes the direction in which Nigeria is headed if the country’s cultural situation remains unchecked. This reality is a serious threat to the continuity of indigenous African cultures in general and Nigerian cultures in particular.

A Crisis of Cultural Consciousness and the Way Forward

The previous discussion has illustrated only a few of the difficulties encountered in teaching students about fieldwork methodologies in Nigeria. By way of providing a conclusion for this discussion, then, and in view of the fact that culture defines the framework of a nation’s development, I would like to suggest a few possible ways to actively negotiate the present national predicaments.

Agencies that hold the responsibility of implementing the nation’s educational and cultural policies must develop a more responsible attitude toward their positions and must have the political will to execute several aspects that have to do with the promotion of indigenous Nigerian cultural systems. A two-way approach is necessary in this regard: the first must occur at the level of sourcing and encouraging the growth and development of primary materials, as well as human resources; the second must be negotiated at the level of cultural scholarship.

Under the sourcing of primary educational materials, the government must begin to do more than it is seen to be doing at present. It is not enough to maintain cultural centers where a handful of professional entertainers on paltry stipends serve the sole purpose of entertaining audiences at political events, or government VIPs, tourists, and other visitors. Promotion of culture goes far beyond such superficial activities.

At the level of Wards and Local Governments, existing indigenous institutional festivals that are rich in culture must be properly organized and supervised. Government, corporate bodies, and private individuals are required to make an input in the area of funding in order to insure the overall success of such festivals. For example, *Ogun* festivals in Ondo and the neighboring Ile-Oluji, both in the Ondo State, and the *Oloolu* masquerade in Ibadan (Oyo State) do have the potential to generate revenue as rich cultural events fit for tourism. Unfortunately, they have often been celebrated in a most disorderly and “uncultured” manner, resulting in violent clashes and even death in the recent past. Furthermore, since it is the annual practice of

the Nigerian government at the local, state, and federal levels to spend huge sums of tax payers' money to finance pilgrimages and Muslim and Christian Pilgrims Boards, as well as sponsor visits for friends and/or religious and political associates to Jeddah and Jerusalem, it is not unreasonable to recommend that the government should pay similar attention to funding and facilitating indigenous festivals and other traditional events.

Additionally, experts belonging to the same discipline should be encouraged to form associations and facilitate periodic competitions, which could be organized by the government at every level in conjunction with private companies and groups of individuals. These competitions could engage professionals such as traditional poets, chanters, dancers, singers, storytellers, acrobats, or wrestlers, as well as experts in, for example, indigenous cuisines, cloth dyeing, pottery, cloth weaving, hair dressing, and so on, for the purpose of enhancing skills, promoting a competitive spirit, and creating general awareness. At another level, competitions could be used to facilitate the training of new generations of performers. Such competitions, I suggest, should be funded by both governmental and corporate bodies. They should be elaborately staged and the winners should be greatly rewarded and celebrated.

The government should also consider the establishment of “summer schools,” using experts from different associations to teach school children traditions of indigenous Nigerian cultures (like cane crafts, calabash and wood carving, cloth weaving, pottery, indigenous dance, drumming, storytelling, poetry, and so on), which they are not likely to have learned within the confines of regular school education. The government could be actively involved in funding and supervising these indigenous schools. In order to achieve success, the government may have to appoint coordinating boards to oversee the organization, management, and general conduct of all these different activities.

Similarly, at the level of cultural scholarship, there is the urgent need for better funding—at all levels—for cultural studies programs in the nation's universities. This increased support is needed for the basic acquisition of relevant digital research equipment, bibliographical materials, and so forth. Second, there is need for a general revision of the existing university course content in order to determine and accommodate new and effective scopes and practices. The teaching of culture and tradition must begin at home and must be continued into primary and secondary education. School curricula must be made to reflect the necessity of cultural values, national pride, and integrity. Such curriculum must be capable of giving the Nigerian child a new and positive consciousness of self as a Nigerian. I

would like to end this article with a quotation by Ali Mazrui (1996:17) that summarizes my present argument: “A non-Western route to modernity is possible for Africa [and I specify here, for Nigeria], provided African culture is fully mobilized as an ally in the enterprise.”

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