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**A Critique of
Culture as
Condition for
Social Order in
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Abstract

The *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary* (9th edition), presents a pivot as “a point [especially in mechanical engineering] on which something turns”. It is based on this idea that we would wish to interrogate the interface between culture and social growth/agenda. This essay would be concerned with the imperatives of culture in every social existence and discourse. It tends to establish that at the helm of Africa's instability and underdevelopment is the menace of colonialism and later cultural hybridization that eventually paved the way to large scale erosion of African cultural system and knowledge base. This view is supported by the fact that dominant culture gains supremacy at the expense of any local culture it dominates. Through this process, the dominant culture often tends to dictate to the other by determining and/or restricting the language, other spiritual and material aspects of a people's existence. The consequence, then, becomes a virtual loss of identity. These notwithstanding, the misconception and/or overvaluation of local culture as the overarching condition for social order in Africa, have not been of immense help in African social engineering. The thesis of this work is that though culture points to the direction of societal growth, but the uncritical appropriation and overvaluation of culture does unimaginable harm to Africa's social growth. To have a proper handle on this necessitates the employment of qualitative textual review and analysis of relevant literatures.

Key words: Culture, Social Order, Reconstruction, Identity, Cultural hybridity

Introduction

For the contemporary Africa(ns), the prevalent condition resulting from the colonial obliteration of, in the words of Plato, the “standards and practices of our fathers” (Plato, Letter VII, 325d), offers us a good starting point. Having achieved political or flag independence, it is fitting to take stock of the victories, defeats, and compromises that constitute and inform our enigmatic present. The “enigmatic present” is a present of uncertainty and indeterminateness that has become our lived situation and experience (lifeworld), marked by social upheavals, economic dislocation, violence, state collapse, high mortality rate among others. Yet, it ironically looks promising as “we are able to talk of cultures and face the issue of intercultural relations in newly tragic, yet potentially hopeful, ways” (McLean, 2005, p. 298). It is a conundrum which must continue to remain, as aptly observed by Marcien Towa (1991) when he avers that:

Africa will not really attain its cultural [historic, political, and economic] maturity as long as it does not elevate itself resolutely to a profound thinking of its essential problems, that is to say, to philosophical reflection (p. 187).

TsenaySerequerberhan (1994) agrees with Towa on this as he adds that our problem of subordination rightly started at the Europe's (dis)guise “of introducing the maturity of the modern age”.

There is the need to impress on postcolonial African societies to search for alternative routes to the life pattern bequeathed to Africa by colonial Europe and “religiously” maintained by indigenous Africans in a neo-colonial outing. However, the search for alternative social directions requires, among and above other things, reflection; the necessity of which will be evident in certain fundamental questions on the nature and future of African society encapsulated in the need for reasoned and open-minded dialogue through which Africans can begin to find a new path to social development (Oladipo, 2009, p. 61). Such dialogue would, inevitably, come down to the point of removing the obstacles militating against the acquisition and securing of the appropriate cultural frameworks for thought and action in the contemporary world. Thus, it goes beyond the requirements for solving problems of African political economy to embracing cultural questions and hence, social engineering. Yes, there is a pride of place that must be accorded economic development as a crucial factor to the sustenance and growth of the institutions of the society – political, cultural, educational, etc, as Rosecrance (1986) holds that “economic power and economic diplomacy are central to state security in the contemporary age because economic capabilities are extremely ‘fungible’ (i.e., transferable into direct influence of power)” (p. 88). However, it is not a sufficient condition for wholesome social change. An obvious consideration of the African experience, since after independence, demonstrates that the process of change can definitely not be realizable and beneficial unless it incorporates with it the awareness of self-identity. This (awareness) has the tendency to boost Africa’s self-confidence to sort out certain pressing problems in a self-motivated approach. This necessitates the discourse on culture as a unique human phenomenon and its unique place in the society which we intend to explore here.

The culture question

In considering the question about culture, we must first and foremost, observe the inherent complexity of every human cultural phenomenon. It goes beyond a particular practice of song, dance, or art to include everything that has to do with the way of life of a people, including scientific and technological inventions. The inclusion of scientific and technological inventions as vital component of culture underscores a holistic conception of culture, which in the articulation of Kwasi Wiredu (1980), should include social imperatives, investigative principles, inter-societal relationships, and moral imperatives (p. 10). This picture of culture brings to our appreciation the intrinsic link that binds culture and society, as well as the place of culture in every developmental process. This idea succinctly tallies with William Abraham’s characterization of such link and the role of culture in development, where culture makes for order in the society. By this, it is assumed that state intervention in every social sphere and existence is not always feasible as well as necessary. On the contrary, the power of effective moderation and regulation is removed from the coercive strength of the state and vested in, according to Abraham, culture as a purveyor of social order. In a very clear language Abraham (1962) notes that “by uniting people in common beliefs and attitudes, or at least, in tolerance for certain beliefs, actions and values, culture fills with order that portion of life which lies beyond a pale of state intervention” (p. 27). This, thereby, essentially creates the foundation upon which the development “of common reactions, common actions, common interests, common attitudes, [and] common values” (p. 27), stand, and upon which basis a common destiny is formulated and the cooperation required in its pursuit advanced. Culture is here, and in a very large scale, functions as an instrument for social integration (Oladipo, 2009, p. 12).

Still, culture functions to mark significant and intelligible milestone in human experience, because, “human cultures represent, among other things, the historical accumulation of human values” (Pettman, 1979, p. 18), providing along the line standards of evaluation, criteria of right and wrong, good and evil, beautiful and ugly, as well as frameworks for interpreting events and determining what is significant in people’s life. This accounts for Menkiti’s (2001) assertion that culture “put in the language of ‘wholesomeness’,.... things are not whole because the values are not whole and, furthermore, things cannot be made whole until, somehow, the values are made whole and operational again” (p. 136). Part of this is culture’s ability to regulate change as Abraham (1962) asserts: “The strength of culture controls the extent to which disruptive forces have free and successful play” (p. 29). The Abrahamic view is sequel to the presence of disruptive tendencies inherent in

modern socio-economic trends as can be observed in the process of industrialization which prompts Abraham (1962) to allege that

the processes of industrialization, for example, initiate cultural change. They lead to urbanization, to the mass movement of labour from the country to the cities, to the break-up of those salient connections which make the family and the fellowship of rural life. They tend to replace a sense of community with a sense of individualism, because in the urban situation one's powers are continually taxed, and merit and success are individual. New problem of what one does with leisure arise because the setting of leisure is new (p. 29).

Basil Davidson (1992) could not agree less with this view of culture when he alleges, concerning the problems in Liberia, that the ancestral culture of the people have witnessed much abusive violence, though such ancestral cultures possess in them rules and regulations for the containment and repression of such abusive violence. These rules, for him, were prevalent "before the scourge of the slave trade and the colonialism that followed it". The rules function to enable the people "to evolve their sense of value of community ... and at any time, are able to emerge and grow strong in their rules and structural restraints, but are also able, if these should become lost or cast away, to fall into utter disarray or self-destruction" (p. 247).

The above passages suggest a certain view of the transformative character of culture. And this transformative ability makes culture a *sine qua non* for every human and societal developmental impetus. This is why culture, then, goes well above providing a framework for thought and action in a human society, to being a veritable source of identity. But the question that stares one in the face here is if, in the present (post-colonial) Africa, culture has achieved any of the tasks and/or functions identified for it above.

African cultural crisis and the challenge of social reconstruction

The uses of culture highlighted above, are means of providing a background for a useful characterization of the African cultural crisis. As has earlier been stated, one thing that is very clear from this characterization is that culture does not only provide a framework for thought and action in a society, as it is, in addition, a veritable source of identity. But a glaring fact in post-colonial Africa has been culture's inability to perform meaningfully in Africa any of the crucial functions identified and reserved for it. The new geographic boundaries necessitated by the colonial balkanization (amalgamation) of once distinct and autonomous groups of Africa, has made the problems posed by social order and national integration very endemic and as such intractable. The devastating impact of defining new geographic boundaries in Africa can only be imagined as such balkanization saw to the emergence of small groups and subgroups that are mutually hostile to one another. Of course, we do know what purposes the new boundaries were meant to serve. On the very face value, it makes for ease in colonial administration, as it aided the colonial plundering of the wealth of the colonized. Secondly, and most importantly, it eroded the self-confidence of the disparate groups and consequently created quintessential identity crises as each put much effort projecting as well as protecting very narrow interests. For example, through the balkanisation and amalgamation exercises, the colonial administrations in sub-Saharan Africa affected traditional cultures in many irreversible ways. These are felt in the following ways as found in Abraham (1992) in the following passage:

[They] put an end to the political hegemony of local cultures, not only by their assumption of powers of coercion and the introduction of new social institutions, new ways of doing things, and new reasons for doing them, but also by their juxtaposition of local cultures within newly defined geographic boundaries, which did not coincide with any previously existing (p. 27).

Abraham goes on to think, as most other African thinkers do, a deeper and more fundamental issue in the precipitation of the African cultural crisis remains the colonial influence on contemporary Africa, which he pointedly accused of ushering in unbridled economic exploitation and sapped sub-Saharan cultures of their strength and vitality. In this way, African cultures were "deprived of direction and internal impetus [as they] increasingly survived as pageant and ceremonial" (p. 27). The consequences became only obvious as

new ideas concerning individual accountability and individual reward, the spread of the sense of individual vision and the ascendancy of self-interest in contrast with community interest as a basis of action, the growing sense of private power arising from self-action rather than clan direction, all of these atomising factors, acting in concert, have loosened the internal bounds and efficacy of lineage-based clans (p. 27).

Added to this is the impact of colonialism in the life and lifestyle of every post-colonial African person and institutions, which leaves in these African personality and institutions a way of perception and assessment of events as significantly conditioned by cultural concepts alien (foreign) to us and having their origin from such colonial societies with neo-colonial imprints. Let us take a particular instance of globalization. Globalization, here, is assumed to be the intensification of the process of mutual reliance, interaction and interdependence among the societies of the world, drawing experience from the different parts of the globe with the aim of forging global integration (Oladipo, 2009, p. 17). The most prominent resource or experience upon which this process assumed to stand remains the world of economy and information, which mutual benefit, would, of necessity, imply a relationship of partnership and equality among the constituent groups. On the contrary, the reality implicates a different kind of interaction that is markedly uneven. In this interaction, economic relations and information are imbricated by Western culture and Africa is at the receiving end of its worst impacts. This is because of the disparities in the levels of economic progress and the capacity to use power to promote national interests among the regions of the world. It is this situation of unequal power relations, which has placed a majority of societies, like those of Africa, in a position of disadvantage (Oladipo, 2009, p. 17), while “the Group of Seven leading capitalist states (the G7), operates as a powerful forum for global economic coordination”, universalizing its culture. This group is said to sustain not globalization as a democratic process, but “a geometry of power relations which is conducive to the needs of global capital” (McGrew, 1992, p. 80). For this reason, the process of globalization has come under a virile suspicion in Africa and some other Third World societies, and gives Oladipo (2009) ground to conclude that

the reality for Africa... is that globalization, by drawing her deeper and deeper into the vortex of the unequal relationship between her and the industrialized countries, has become an additional condition for the intensification of her problem of cultural dislocation, which was generated by colonialism and sustained by neo-colonialism (pp. 17-18).

But there is no more scathing criticism about the negative impact of globalization on Africa than that made by Kwasi Konadu (2004) who alleges that:

Ancient cultures are being transformed through globalized social reengineering into an electronic, legal, linguistic and moral parking lot that blankets the earth in an undifferentiated paved uniformity. Both the lot and access to it are Indo-European (including clones and associates) owned and managed. Upon the certification of their postmodern Euro-American cultural reorientation, formerly distinct nationalities, states, clans, [ethnicities] are provided with bar-coded entrance keys and assigned parking spaces (fixed economic roles/status) to facilitate the rapid production, transfer and consumption of goods and services. Ownership and control of the means of production, rulemaking agencies, financial centers and the global telecommunications that facilitate the transactions are securely in the hands of the American, European, and Japanese business elite ... This is the current face of an old monster that feverishly reinvents itself. This is a wolf pack that changes clothes between slaughters. This is the rapacious and insatiable Indo-European expansionism (p. 33).

In his “Problems in Africa’s Self-Identification in the Contemporary World”, Kwasi Wiredu (1992) strongly alleged that no model of cultural change preeminent in Africa has been consciously self-initiated or original in its replacements. In this sense therefore, any perceived cultural change is deemed to have taken place not by any “critical and reconstructive self-evaluation” (Wiredu, 1992, p. 62), and neither through any deliberate, self-initiated and intended action. In such vein, forging a sense of identity by the Africans has not been an easy project. This is the case as identity is a condition for the development of the self-confidence and self-esteem required to tackle one’s numerous existential problems and for effective self-assertion with the intent at making significant contributions to human progress. Within this assumption, identity is characterized by freewill conceived as a basic human endowment as such should be nurtured as an ideal. Such inadequacy becomes the reason for which Africa is so considerably weakened and undermined in her interactions with other cultures in economic and socio-political issues. This is why Oladipo (2009) firmly believes “the prevailing situation of indiscriminate cultural syncretism ... has led to the erosion of those core values (of brotherhood, justice and compassion ...) which would have provided the basis for sustainable and human friendly development on the continent” (pp. 14, 17).

In Africa of the present, there is, therefore, a deep cultural crisis occasioned by exogenous factors that harbour disabling character and intent, which origins are basically Western. Their exogeneity notwithstanding, they are adequately sustained by other factors that are endogenous, some of which are seen as “the consequences of state failure and economic atrophy” (Harper-Shipman, 2018, p. 131). The African cultural crisis began with Islam’s and Christianity’s penetrating the traditional African cultures. With Islam and Christianity well settled in Africa, the subsequent entrance and eventual domination by colonialism was a *fait accompli* (Wiredu, 1992, p. 63). Thus, of these threesome influences on contemporary Africa, colonialism remains the most derisive and most criminally sustained in generating socio-economic, political and psychological crises in Africa. It introduced new and divergent institutions, e.g., formal education, constitutional and parliamentary governance, party politics and other paraphernalia of the modern state, for instance, a modern judiciary and the civil service, industrialization and the phenomenon of urbanization to enable it in this task (Taiwo, 1999, p. 258, Oladipo, 2000, p. 15-16, Wiredu, 1998). These institutions did irreversibly and unintended alterations that are considered the cause of African socio-political development crises even to a combustible manner. Hence Menkiti (2001) feels: “when this state of cognitive disarray is then added to the presence of raw centralized power that European statism introduced into Africa, we have on our hands... a combustible mix” (p. 133).

Cultural components of social reconstruction

Africa’s inability to create an appropriate cultural framework for building a new and humane society is incidental upon the crisis stressed above. And so, at the root of developmental crises witnessed in Africa, especially, since the so-called Africa’s independence, is the lack of the essential (cultural) foundation for decision-making. An important concern needing some reasonable response about Africa’s development, therefore, is the possibility of the evolution of African cultural renewal that can make it responsive in providing the framework for thought and action within which to effectively tackle Africa’s developmental shortfall.

It has variously been argued that one of the ways out of Africa’s cultural crisis is to go back to the pristine African era, when African customs and traditions held sway (Wiredu, 1992, p. 60). Such suggestion has as its *raison d’être* the feeling that Africa had a particular and indeed peculiar way of perceiving, interpreting and reacting to reality. It is believed tradition provided the cohesion that held social life together, and by indicating what was culturally normative, tradition established a framework for meaning and purpose. It is also said that African values and systems are unique to her. They are thought to be unique and distinct but not inferior to its Western counterparts. This way of seeing Africa is said to allow for stronger commitment to African culture and consequently, bridge the developmental gaps occasioned by her cultural dislocation. It aligns with cultural determinists’ claim that different cultural theories determine socio-economic realities of a society. Some cultural determinists, among whom Max Weber, argue that a given set of cultural factors will give rise to a given pattern of socio-economic life. This is a response to cultural denigration and degradation that Europe explored as a justifying rationale for interrupting in Africa’s socio-economic affairs and so believed that “salvation [to Africa]

must come from outside [as] nothing of value grows in the dark primitive forest of the uncivilized human mind” (Ki-Zerbo, 1995, p. 108). The cultural determinist project was similar to a project spearheaded by Léopold Sedar Senghor. This philosophy christened, by the Akans of Ghana, *Sankofa*, means “returning to the past to move forward” (Kanu, 2007, p. 68). It is a form of “cultural traditionalism”, which finds expression in the Senghorian negritude philosophy finely expressed in Aime Césaire’s 1939 poem *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (Return to My Native Land). Negritude was a protest against French colonial rule and the policy of assimilation in French colonized countries of Africa but above all, it signifies “the consciousness of being Black; the recognition that being Black the African refuses to lose himself in the non-Black”. This marks a social differentia, which Fanon advocates as a mark of distinction between cultures. For him, difference is negotiated and punctuated by the fear of being totally integrated into the culture of the oppressor or the fear of being swamped..

As human beings, we are embedded in our cultural traditions. Therefore, tradition, for Yatta Kanu (2007), goes beyond what can be accepted or rejected on the basis of mere rational analysis as it constitutes a remarkable part of every existence (p. 70). This suggests that the relationship between personal identity and tradition is far more intimate to the extent Anthony Giddens (1990) would argue that “in traditional societies, the past is honoured and symbols are valued because they contain and perpetuate the experience of generations” (p. 37). This further underscores the imperative of a people understanding and constructing their identities around and in terms of the traditions that are part of them and, as Fay (1987) claims, “coming to be a person is in fact appropriating certain material of one’s cultural tradition, and continuing to be a person means working through, developing, and extending this material and this always involves operating in terms of it [tradition]” (p. 160).

However, there was a note of caution by other African scholars against trivializing African identity in this manner, arguing it is too narrow, racial, parochial and chauvinistic to hang African identity on the stake of traditionalism. In other words, it is believed that being Black does not have to divide the African away from the rest of humanity (Onyeocha. 1996, p. 42). Similarly, Kwasi Wiredu (1992) clearly identifies the shortcomings of reverting to the pristine Africa. In the first place, he believes that Africans cannot reverse or undo the past and erase the cultural consequences of European colonialism (Hallen, 2004, p. 106). For him, rather than reverting to cultural traditionalism, the best way to achieve true African identity is by resorting to “critical and reconstructive self-evaluation” (Wiredu, 1992, p. 62). Similarly, Wamala (1999), in response to cultural determinist argument, advanced two important theses that gave credence to the Wireduan position. He posits that i) Individuals and human groups can identify elements within their cultures, reconstitute them and eventually change the superstructures supported by the reconstituted cultural elements; ii) Social reconstruction in Africa will ultimately have to require and build upon cultural reconstruction (p. 69). For the duo (Wiredu and Wamala), to reconstruct social life would require first to reconstruct those cultural/conceptual elements that support a given social phenomenon in question. That is, there is need to deal with specific elements within cultures (reconstructing them if need be) with a view to finally reconstruct the entire social spectrum. They further argue that rather than seeing a given culture as a determinant of a given social economic life, human persons would rather be seen as being able to change certain elements within cultures to make for a realistic reconstruction of social life. The urge here is to identify those elements Wiredu calls “complaints that can afflict society”, that is, those elements that can derail the positive development of society. Of these, Wiredu (1980) identifies supernaturalism, authoritarianism and anachronism (p. 2), arguing that they (and possibly others) are negative aspects of any culture and would remain negative in whatever cultural paradigm they exist. So, the mission to reconstruct actually starts with reconstructing the negative elements of cultural and conceptual order. To this end, it only becomes a given that practical social reconstruction can take effect through intellectual reconstruction of cultural and conceptual principles, where the starting point is “the sub-consciousness of the psyche of the individual and the body politic”. Wamala concedes that such project is never an easy one as it requires time, patience and sustained effort, such that as it materializes, “people can internalize slowly — and presumably firmly — more acceptable and desirable values and cultural traits, as well as their corresponding intellectual and conceptual frameworks” (Wamala, 1999, p. 74). The stress on the intellectual and conceptual framework here, underscores the need to critically, rationally and conceptually analyze issues at a very primary or fundamental level for better appreciation.

The question remains: what makes the issue of social reconstruction preeminent in Africa? This is a question that elicits critical and intellectual examination of the prevailing state of affairs in Africa. Its importance is to enable us to do away with the negative cultural tendencies that have enjoyed slavish acceptance in our culture. Cultural contingencies are the mark of authenticity every culture bears. Societies in regard to this aspect of culture do not welcome foreign substitutions and accretions as any, in this regard, could only come due to indigenous whims and caprices. This idea is succinctly captured by Kanu (2007) who saddles tradition with the arduous responsibility of shaping identity by imposing limits on possible acceptable changes that a society can tolerate, while at the same time make possible retention of “certain habitual ways of behaviour [that] will survive as important ingredients in the identities of the people “who are what they are because they so deeply share them” (p. 71).

There are such other components of culture that are in tune with other changing realities of humanity. These are anchored to and on truth values. And they constitute what Wiredu calls “areas of human experience in which the effects of cultural differences could conceivably be eliminated through the peaceful give-and-take of dialogue among cultures” (McLean, 2005, p 298). This give-and-take is a responsibility assigned to hermeneutics by McLean (2005) in his allusion that: “hermeneutics looks rather for an inner transformation of a culture, stimulated by seeing desirable elements in other cultures, but achieved precisely by drawing creatively upon one’s own cultural resources” (p. 303). Since these areas are domains of thought where truth (knowledge) is sought, it would be to the detriment of any one culture to ignore them, in the name of maintaining pristine qualities of individual cultures.

Cultural hybridity: A desirable philosophy of reconstruction?

Having come this far, we must pause to ask what the implication(s) of the Wiredian conception of cultural universalism (that is, domains of thought where truth (knowledge) is sought), is to social growth and development. The Wiredian cultural universalism is very much similar to the philosophy of hybridization in certain sense. However, it is quite unlike hybridization in that cultural universalism is a conscious appropriation of foreign cultural qualities to enhance one’s own culture while hybridity tends to occupy the mind of one who does not have a way of escape from his predicament. It is also a form of cultural appropriation but not in any conscious manner rather because there is no escaping the foreign influence bearing on one. A good appreciation of this point comes from Theodore H. von Laue. In his book *The World Revolution of Westernization*, von Laue, as represented by Menkiti, argues that European institutions have so widely spread to the rest of the world that a failure on the part of Third World peoples to deal adequately with European values is at the core of their malaise. The rest of the world wants industrialization and an efficient economy, but that is not possible without a collateral absorption of the spiritual and moral values that made the West what it is today and which helped expand its hegemony around the globe (Menkiti, 2001, p. 134). For von Laue, the consequence of not adhering to the Western paradigm is tragic and future prospects ominous because “indigenous ways did not harmonize with imported modern ways” as there are “values resistance”, on the part of “recalcitrant non-Western peoples”, who gladly relish in taking the latest fruits of modernity but very reluctant in giving in to discipline required to build such society (von Laue, 1987, p. 7).

So the consequence here is an availability of an admixture (*métissage*) of different cultural components; an eclectic arrangement to make for a whole. A hybrid is said to belong to, at one and the same time, several “homes” (and to no one particular “home”). This is the meaning of William Abraham’s postulation that the African is a man of two worlds who belongs to one world but being fiercely exposed to another. Ironically, as Onyeocha (1996) observes, his mastery of the two worlds is neither comprehensive nor definitive (p. 48). And in an extreme articulation, Mbembe (2001) describes the hybrid as one who presents himself through the art of “doubling” and “simulacrum”, where the one simulating ceases to inhabit one’s world, especially the one’s consciousness at the moment the one offers them to another. In his apt summation, “it works to preserve, in each time and circumstance, the possibility of telling oneself stories, of saying one thing and doing the opposite – in short, of constantly blurring the distinction between truth and falsehood” (p. 237). This means the hybrid has

had to renounce the dream or ambition of rediscovering any kind of “lost” cultural purity, or ethnic absolutism due to the fact of *translation*. Translation here bears a Latin etymology that means “bearing across”. One of the most striking contradictions of colonialism is its goal to “civilize” its “others”, and at the same time, to fix them into perpetual “otherness”. Colonial empires both fear and engender biological as well as intellectual hybridities. A story is told about an early 19th century Colombian Pedro Femín de Vergas, who advocated a policy of interbreeding between whites and Indians in order to “Hispanicise” and finally “extinguish” the Indians. Of course, the French policy of assimilation and its English equivalent ‘integration’, aim at exactly the same goal of fashioning intellectual hybrids through what Benedict Anderson (1991) called “mental miscegenation”. Mental miscegenation are those colonial educational policies which aimed at creating Europeanized natives, or a class of persons, colonized in blood and colour, but European (English or French) in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect (pp.13, 91). The end being to create a subject that will remain internally and socially split and agonistic, because, the Africa of the hue of colonialism, is an amalgam of cultures and entities with diverse experiences, apparent problems and innate promises. Owing to this practice, Africans have become passive, helpless and incompetent beings who are subsisting in a violent and poverty-laden milieu, and essentially are unable to wrest themselves from the factors presumably responsible for their dire conditions. This is, though, contrary to Homi Bhabha’s (1985) thinking that hybridity, as a critical element in research relating to the postcolonial condition, reserves the effects of colonial disavowal so that would make possible, denied knowledges to enter upon the dominant discourse and undermine the authority of that discourse (see also Gilroy, 1993). Bhabha posits hybrid or multi layered identities as a characteristic of the postcolonial and global condition, which cannot be wished away.

Let us recall Frantz Fanon’s conceptualization of the period of colonization in Africa’s history. This was a period less stable and incoherent because it was itself defined by a binary of colonizer and colonized, black and white; a signification whose coded meanings have continued to thrive into the period after direct colonial rule. The postcolonial stage in the history of Africa is, therefore, an “after” period of deepening contradictory complexities as there seem to be changes in the socio-economic and political order under which the African scholars articulated their thought. Political power is now said to be in the hands of a class of few blacks most of whom participate actively in the exploitation of their own people. In my local parlance, it is said that “*power has changed hands*” but unfortunately remains the same. This means that we have to understand, with the help of Fanon, that the usage of the controversial term “post-colonial” to analyse the processes by which people or social ‘subjects’ occupy new positions in the period after direct colonial rule does not signify any total break with the structures of colonialism; a structure that has held and continues to hold Africa down. That is why Jean Paul Sartre commented in his “Preface” to *The Wretched of the Earth* that “The status of ‘native’ is a nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler among the colonized people with their consent” (Sartre, 1963, p. 17). There is therefore, a contestation of structures (economic, political and cultural), in the new context of today by emergent power blocks albeit in a changed environment of more brutal forces of globalization. Globalization, Stuart Hall would aptly think, has seriously weakened and undermined though not completely destroyed national economies, borders, politics and cultures. In other words, that local African political and cultural space upon which global forces play themselves out in terms of domination and its resistance is one in which new bases of power proclaiming “new truths” of the nation are created. In these local spaces defined by common national borders, identities multiply, are transformed and circulate in a political environment made up not of one coherent “public space,” nor is it determined by any single organising principle. It is rather a plurality of spheres and arenas, each having its own separate logic yet nonetheless liable to be entangled with other logics when operating in certain specific contexts: ...Faced with this... the postcolonial “subject” mobilizes not a single “identity,” but several fluid identities which, by their very nature, must be constantly “revised” in order to achieve maximum instrumentality and efficacy as and when required. Fluidity in identities has one particular source: cultural incongruence within same cultural society.

The underlying premiss is, of course, that colonial subjects can mimic but never exactly reproduce colonial values and that their recognition of the perpetual gap between themselves and the “real thing” will ensure their continued subjection (Loomba, 1998, p.173) and possibly stagnated social progress.

Conclusion

One incontrovertible fact about post-colonial Africa with her colonial experience is that such experience stunted her social, scientific and technological development. This constitutes the exogenous factor to the development lacuna of Africa. There also exists the endogenous factor. The two combined helped in creating a wide vacuum in techno-scientific advancement and consequently made it impossible for Africa to record any appreciable advancement in the competitive sectors of culture, like military strength, industrial capacity, economic viability, information technology, science and invention, to name just a few. Because, Africa is left in “a permanent state of adjustment” to global social and cultural changes; changes she does not consciously intend or subscribe to follow. This came as a result of Africa not being able to regain the centre of her cultural being and/or existence, which disintegrated at the wake of Africa’s colonization. To turn around this state of affairs is not an impossible task neither is it a task that can be accomplished by mere wishful thinking. Social reconstruction program in Africa is a project that requires commitment, will power, freedom and patience. Reverting to the pristine state of affairs in Africa prior to colonialism may not be of much help; rather, there is urgent need for reassessment and critical re-evaluation of the lived experience of the Africa today. This will open new vista for openness; openness to ideas, inventions, innovations and advancement but above all, a philosophy of give-and-take kind of relationship that bears a complementary tinge between Africa and her Western counterparts. However, the give-and-take should not be on contingent characters and/or qualities of a society but on the things that bother on truth and knowledge.

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