ROLE OF TRADITIONAL AFRICAN MORAL VALUES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The sustainable development and self-reliance of any nation are dependent on the traditional moral values held in high esteem by the members. This in turn is a direct reflection of the quality of moral education of that country. Among the major constraints to sustainable development of Nigeria is that there is no creative indigenous moral order to sustain the people. The failure of Nigeria to sustained indigenous moral values for the formation of the citizenry, particularly the young people, accounts for the decline of moral values in national development. This study examined the role of Traditional African moral values in national development. This study adopted expository research design. It explored the African traditional religion and the traditional moral values in the context of sustainable national development. Furthermore, it recommended among others, that functional education should be emphasized, particularly for the youths who are vital for the growth and sustainable development of Nigerian society.

INTRODUCTION

In every human society, values are pivot upon which future sustainable national development hinges. They are the bedrock and potential sources of national stability and sustainable development. Through ages and in most countries, values are the underlying fundamental beliefs and assumptions that determine behaviours. In Africa as well as the western parts of the world, these beliefs and assumptions often remain unchanged even after there has been a religious conversion. Thus, many African societies may have converted to Christianity or Islam but they still cling to traditional beliefs and assumptions that determine how they act morally. It is therefore critical to know and appreciate the role of values in the study of moral actions. The failure of European scholars to understand key elements that regulate African morality led them to misinterpret African moral life. They applied terms such as "moral" to African beliefs and actions as they were perceived as perversely irrational and ghost-ridden. But the European scholars were wrong as expressed by Authur (1965) who wrote on the people of Lower Niger thus:

> *…the Lower Niger's are in the strict sense of the world a truly and deeply religious people, of whom it can be said, that they eat religiously, drink religiously, bathe religiously and dress religiously.*

What Authur said about the Lower Niger, applies to most African societies. African moral values are expressed in art, institutions and oral traditions in the absence of codified western values. They serve as standard values in terms of established norms, rules and traditional values. When such values are accepted by the people and the beliefs about human nature and destiny associated with them assimilate into actions, then there is understanding,

participation in religious rituals and open dramatizing of the significant elements of identity. Values permeate and pervade every aspects of human life in the society. They are knit to human life than to extricate them. One would need to consider the traditional elements that are involved to avoid distortions. For this reason, it is pertinent that we should examine the role of African moral values in national development. It is rather unfortunate that the concept of Traditional Moral Values and development have been misconstrued and grossly undermined in Nigerian context as well as Africa. The clarification of these keys concepts would better our understanding of the issues under discussion.

The term Traditional Moral Values involves common place terms traditional, morality and values. The word "traditional" is part of ordinary linguistic usage. It refers to customs, beliefs or culture of the people of a particular group or community that have been part of their life for a long time. Morality is derived from the Latin word "more" which means "manner". According to Joseph and Damian (2005), morality deals with the principles of human behaviours to ascertain whether an act is good or bad, right or wrong and all what not, for the well being of man and his harmonious living with the Supernatural Being. Orhungur (2003) describes morality as the formation of character, manner or custom in a way that a distinction between what is right and wrong is known by a person and society.

According to Orhungur (2003), moral refers to behaving exactly according to what is considered by the society to be good and acceptable. It also involves action, attitude, virtue and the way of life that makes up a moral person. In this context, traits such as tolerance, love, honesty, kindness, loyalty, fair-play and so forth, are accepted as morals. Anti-social behaviours such as stealing, money laundering, bribery and corruption, inflating contract sum, election rigging, injustice and so on are immoral acts since they are out of steps with what is regarded as proper conducts in the society.

Imo (1984) states that value is one of the great concepts whose meaning is multiple and complex. Ushe (2007) in his work, Values in Transition, attempts to define value as the determiners in man that influence his choices in life and thus decide his behaviour. Adegbesan (1987) informs that out of experiences may certainly generally guide to behaviour. These guides tend to give direction life and are called values. Rogers (1969) was of the opinion that valuating is the tendency of a person to show preference. Apart from these 'utilitarian' definitions, a rather functional one is offered by Idohosa (1998) in his essay entitled The Study of Values. In his view, a value is a selection or an orientation towards experience, implying deep commitment or repudiation, which influences the ordering of choices between possible alternatives in action. In everyday usage, the word "value" refers to the intrinsic worth, the fair equivalent or goodness of something. Philosophically, value deals with the notion of the good in the widest sense, embracing not only the morally but also the beautiful and the true.

Certainly values are stratified and organized into a fixed hierarchy. Divisions are made between material values and spiritual values. At the material values are the values relating to the natural order of things and at the spiritual values are those concerned with the supernatural order. These values guide the daily affairs of people and constrain individuals to live in conformity with the well being of the society. These values are of different types,

namely: Cultural values, social values, economic values, political values, moral values, among others. In classifying values, the primary concern is the degrees to which each set of values will help man attain his ultimate end in creation. With the beliefs that since man's ultimate goal is unity with the spiritual order of reality, religious values must be considered superior to the natural values. In the context of this paper therefore, the traditional values simply refer to those beliefs, moral codes, and mores that are passed down from generation to generation within a culture, subculture or community and are acceptable by the society as relating to natural order. Traditional moral values therefore, refer to those indigenous moral values, which gave the people distinct cultural personalities and are transmitted through informal and formal means.

Development have differences in length, description and degree of definiteness. According to Kukah (2002), the word development refers to a process of improving or making to poorer and unindustrialized countries to develop. Edwardo (2006) describes development as the growth or formation of something over a period of time which is likely to have an effect on an existing situation. These involve increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, material well-being of individuals and the society. Development has to do with labour and improvement on the implementation and technology employed by labour. The faster way work is done or things are produced connotes the concept of development. National development in this context is seen as a multidimensional process that normally connotes changes from less desirable to a more desirable state. National development therefore is a normative concept, which has no single accepted definition. Ajani (2003) sees national development as relative to time, space, circumstances and thus cannot be reduced to one universal application formula.

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

Religion is a difficult subject to inquiry including attempts at definition and conception. Egwu (2001) observes religion not only because of the problem of objectivity one encounters in defining but is emotion laden, even more so because of the difficulty of penetrating the "inner essence" of religion. Thus, Ajani (2003) list seventeen definitions of religion which can be organized into theological, moral, philosophical, psychological and sociological perspectives. Pratt (1947) describes religion as:

> *The attitude of self focus towards an object in which the self genuinely believes what is true; a serious and social attitude of individuals or communities towards the power or powers which they conceive as having ultimate control over their interests and destinies. This attitude is mechanical, coldly intellectual, or faint touch of social quality which we fed in our relations towards anything that can make response to us.*

Egwu (2001) describes religion as the belief which sets essentially adorations to God in human morality. Religion is the law in us, in so far as it attains emphasis from a law giver and judge over us. It is morality, directed to the recognition of God (Downes, 1973). It is in religion that we take up into our lives and allow ourselves to be moved in these influences. The one and everything in religion is to face all that moves us in our feelings (Idowu, 1973).

Ekpo (1999) posits that religion is the attitude of the mind which covers motives and beliefs that are expected in acts of worship such a prayer and ritual. Nigosian (1995) defines religion as the feelings, conducts and beliefs which are essential in all adorations in human morality. Its essence is the means by which God as spirit and man's essential-self communicate. Idowu (1973) asserts that religion is man's intuition of the ultimate reality and expression of that awareness in concert life. For North-cote (1969), religion in Africa society permeates every facet of people's life, including beliefs, values and traditions.

Bilton (1977) describes religion as a system of belief about the individuals which provides order and reason for existence in the world. It is the only way by which people comprehend reality. Thus, Adegbesan (1987) opines that religion is a system which relates man to ultimate value epitomized in God and embodying worship or communion. The Marxists sees religion as the opium of the masses and a creation of the ruling, exploitation and oppression of social order which is favorable to the class in the society.

Kumu (1987) quoting Kart Marx asserts that religion is the sign of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, as it is the spirit of spiritless condition, and it is opium of the people. The analysis of the above definitions of religion reveals the fact that religion, if properly utilized can prove to be a veritable tool for the development of the society. This is because it encourages free and total interactions between man on the one hand, and his creator/nature on the other. Religion as a perception of the infinite, which according to him implies a psychic activity of the whole person (Garvie, 1933).

Huntingford (1953) observes that religion is a matter that involves a kind of private relationship between man and God. A third party, a fellow human being has no business at all with this relationship. Thus, religion is depicted as a personal affair between man and God no other mortal is expected to interfere. Imo (1984) defines religion as a way of seeking the truth about life that is based on a system of beliefs or convictions that a Supreme Being exists as a source of all men. Adegbesan (1987) describes religion as belief in God, spiritual beings. It is the life of God in the soul of man and a mystery that is awesome and attractive. It is the profound experience and a feeling of absolute dependence on the power which is usually personified as a Supreme Being, but is sometimes conceived as being diffused through powerful spiritual beings or is held to be an impersonal, mysterious or supernatural force. Imo (1984) defines religion as the recognition of all our duties as divine commands. Bella (1970) defines religion in a functional sense as a set of symbolic forms and actions that relate man to the ultimate condition of his existence. Kukah (2002) citing Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines religion as reverence, service and worship of God or the supernatural commitment and devotion to religious faith or observance, a personal set of institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs and practices. From this, it is clear that Christianity, Islam or Traditional Religions are all forms of religious expression. The word "tradition" denotes backward, archaic, indigenous, old, ancient, retrogressive and conservative. African Traditional Religion therefore means:

> *A system of rites, rules and practises that aims at preserving and strengthening the fellowship of the people, the tribe and the family, and at increasing power (Thompson 1994).*

Ikenga-Metuh (1987) describes African Traditional Religion as:

> *Institutionalized patterns of beliefs and worship practiced by various African societies from the time immemorial in response to the supernatural as manifested in their environment and experience.*

African Traditional Religion is simply defined as the beliefs and practices of our forefathers which have been passed on from one generation to the other (Ushe, 2010). This definition is the best because it describes African indigenous Religion which for a long time has been labeled as ancestral cult, fetishism, animism, pantheism, savage, superstitious, primitive, native and idolatry by the Europeans.

THE PLACE OF TRADITIONAL MORAL VALUES IN AFRICAN INDIGENOUS RELIGION

In African Traditional Religion, indigenous moral values play significant role in the development of human beings and the society. These values are universally accepted as the standard norms of the society. Ikenga-Metuh (1979), asserts that Traditional Moral Values helped in the formation of character and moral behaviours of the people, especially the youths in Nigerian society. They were transmitted to the youths formally and informally to the youths in the society. Some of these traditional moral values include hospitability, generosity, love, leadership, how to keep community secrets, respect for human life, marriage, respect for other people property and respect for elders, among others. The Nigerian people cherished traditional moral values and are highly upheld by them in their indigenous religious belief system. The traditional religion of the Africans emphasized these moral values to develop the citizenry, especially the youths to enable them behaved morally and to equip them for the challenges of building the society.

TRADITIONAL MORAL VALUES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

In the traditional setting, Nigerians hold certain things to be of great value. It is these values across the different cultures in Nigeria that gave them distinct cultural personalities and were transmitted through informal and formal ways. The informal way begins at home through socialization. The children were taught the acceptable ways of their parents and the entire community. While the formal way had to do with transmission of norms and values in schools, where children were thought different experiences and introduced through a number of subjects. The curriculum of the schools was modeled towards such desired values in certain subjects to internalized moral norms and values in the children. Thus, the traditional moral values of Nigerians were held to be of great value. The following Values were identified respect for human life, morality, marriage, respect for people's property, good leadership, community spirits, discipline, honesty, humility accountability, hospitality, hard work and fear of God.

Respect for Human Life: Human life is highly valued in the modern world. This was no different among the traditional African and Nigerian communities. The people highly valued life and have strong belief that everybody deserves the right to life from conception to

death. Nobody has the right to kill the unborn children or to murder the elderly people through active euthanasia. The government sole responsibility is to provide peace and security to its people. However, it was permissible to kill an enemy, just as is the case today. In all other cases, no one was allowed to take away another person's life. In fact, no distinction was made between murder and manslaughter; both were considered murder. Murder was punished according to the principle of compensation. According to Huntingford (1953), the essence of this principle was that if one man killed or injured another, he should either be killed or compensate for the injury rather than being merely punished for doing it. This means that although nothing could be done for a murdered man, his group could be indemnified. Among the Southern Agikuyu, Leakey (1977) observes that the fine was the same for any death, regardless of whether the death was caused accidentally or intentionally. Thus, if a male was killed by a member of another family, whatever the age, the standard fine was 100 goats and sheep. This fine was paid to the family of the deceased by the family of the killer.

Among the Akamba, the murder of a man was compensated for by the payment of 12 cattle (11 cows and one bull) or 14 cattle (13 cows and one bull), depending on location. On the other hand, the murder of a woman was compensated by payment of 4-5 cows and one bull or by the payment of 8 cattle (7 cows and one bull), depending on location. Among the Southern Agikuyu, the family of the deceased was paid 30 goats and sheep. If the deceased happened to be a married woman, 25 of these animals were paid to the family into which she was married and the remaining were paid to her brother. While in Tiv traditional society, the fine for murder varies from family to family, and community to community. The murderer was asked by the deceased's family to bring a coffin, goats, some fixed amount of money and to construct the grave, depending on the family or community involved for funeral celebration. The three examples cited above show that the fines for taking away a person's life were very heavy. This was done deliberately to make the fines so deterrent as to discourage the crime. It is important to point out that once a life has been taken away, it cannot be replaced. The best alternative was, therefore, to prevent it from happening.

Marriage: The institution of marriage was highly valued by all the tradition and cultures. To a large extent, especially in the rural areas, it is highly valued. The reason for this, is that marriage is the foundation on which families are built. On its part, the family constitutes the basic social group that operates most widely and most intensely in the activities of everyday life. All kinship relationships ultimately derive their legitimacy from the family. The rights and duties of the individual-economic, religious and political life either exclusively or predominantly work through channels of kinship.

> *"Marriage, therefore, had the specific purpose of perpetuating one's lineage and in the process bestowing social status on man. Thus, in general pre-marital sex was discouraged since it did not serve the purpose of matrimony and parenthood. Stiff fines were meted out to people who committed adultery, as we shall see later on".*

Morality: Is a quality that is highly valued by all tradition and cultures. Indeed, moral

values formed the bedrock of the education that was given to children as they grew up. Moral values were also impressed on people who were about to marry or who were going through one rite of passage to another. Leaders were also expected to be people of upright character. In general, people were warned against promiscuity. Pre-marital sex was also generally discouraged. In some communities, young men and girls could engage in intimacy but were not permitted to have actual intercourse. Thus, among the Agikuyu, young men and girls could engage in platonic love and fondling but were forbidden from making love (Ember, 1990).

While in Tiv society, young men and ladies were forbidden from having pre-marital sex. Any young man caught in such immoral act with a young lady was either forced to marry her or asked to pay certain amount of money to lady's parents for breaking her virginity. The Tiv people considered fornication and adultery as grievous offences against the society. Thus, people are highly discouraged from committing such immoral acts (Ushe, 2007). In many cases, adultery was a punishable offence. Among the Akamba, it was punished by a fine of a bull and a goat. The goat was killed and used in cleansing the husband of the offending wife before he got back to his house. The fine was much higher if an adulterous wife died in childbirth. In this case, the paramour had to pay 5 cows and one bull. The community insisted on this deterrent fine because the responsibility of the woman's death was considered to lie with the offending man. On the other hand, among the southern Agikuyu, the adulterer was fined three stall-fed rams which he paid to the council of elders. The offender was also made to produce a small ram or he-goat, and he took a muuma (oath) that he would never again visit that woman, and that he would never again commit adultery with any other woman (Cagnolo, 1933).

Among the Pokot of Baringo, an adulterous man was punished physically and materially. The man was first tied to a tree in which stinging ants resided. The ants were then disturbed and as they stung him, he was beaten as his lover watched. After this, he was fined 6 cows, 6 goats, a pregnant sheep and six ostrich feathers. In addition, he prepared a tin of honey with which to appease the offended husband (Dundas, 1965).

Respect for other People's Property: Children were traditionally social to respect other people's property. Through rewards and punishments, the children grew up distinguishing between legitimately acquired goods and stolen ones. Each family endeavoured to ensure that their children respected their neighbours' property. The idea was to inculcate in the minds of the young the virtue of honesty. It is therefore not surprising that in adulthood people were heavily punished if found stealing. Among the Tugen, for example, a thief had both hands tied, and a fire lit to burn dry grass that had been tied around his waist. The man's own brother was forced to push the man over a cliff as he burned to death (Akonga, 1984). The Agikuyu also went to great lengths to protect people's property. Habitual thieves were, therefore, not welcome in the community. They were dealt with in a number of ways. One method involved crucifying such thieves on an anthill, with their hands fastened to the ground by wooden slats across his ankles and wrists. The victim was then tied to a tree and the crowd invited to hurl rocks and stones at him. The second way was to throw the victim into a river to drown.

In this case, the punishment was that the man was bound hand and foot and then flung into a deep river (Cagnolo, 1933). In extreme cases, habitual thieves were burnt alive. The thief is bound inside a big bundle of dried banana leaves. A solid ring of spears makes the death circle more secure. A member of his clan is called upon to set fire to the bundle and for a few minutes there is an inferno of flames and screams (Cagnolo, 1933). The same case applies to the Tiv people of Central Nigeria. The habitual thieves were burnt alive or sent to jail term to discourage other young people in the society from indulging in such anti-social behaviours (Ushe, 2010).

Good Leadership: In every culture, leadership is considered a very important institution. This is because leadership tends to influence, if not to dictate, all the activities and affairs of that culture. This is, in spite of the fact that almost all the cultures did not have centralized systems of government. At whatever level of leadership, whether as individuals or members of councils of elders, the leaders had to possess certain qualities that were acceptable to the people as characteristics of good leadership. These qualities included seniority in age, wealth, reputation as a warrior and other characteristics of leadership. Seniority in age was considered to be important because old age was associated with wisdom. Wisdom was considered important because one of the main responsibilities of any leader was the settlement of disputes. A leader who did not have this quality, therefore, would have been at a disadvantage. Wealth bestowed prestige and influence on an individual.

But, more importantly, it enable the individual to offer hospitality to his people, give loans to his relatives and organize feasts for the community. It was recognized that once in a while, there would be people in the community who would need assistance from the leaders, especially in the form of food. Wealth was, therefore, measured in terms of livestock for the pastoralists, grain for the agriculturalists, and both livestock and grain for mixed farmers. Success in warfare served as a means of gaining wealth, and also bestowed prestige on the individual (Wagner, 1940).

In general, the person who led a successful raid for cattle ended up getting the lion's share of the war booty. In addition, the more successful the warrior, the more prestige he acquired among his people. It is, therefore, not surprising that reputation as a warrior was considered a good quality of leadership. Thus, for one to become a leader, one had to possess certain qualities. Among the Bukusu community, people capable of becoming leaders were "men who talk gently and wisely and who can make the people listen and return to reason when they want to quarrel (Wagner, 1940). Among the Gabra and Borana, leaders were people who were wise, kind, merciful and having full knowledge of all affairs within the community (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1971).

In Nigeria, to ascend a leadership position, he or she has to be culturally, socially, psychologically, intellectually and spiritually mature. It was not based on whom you know but who you are. The ability to lead in an acceptable way to the lay down attached a responsibility that was paramount. For example, if you are not a trained blacksmith, there was no way for you to be appointed or elected to head the ministry of blacksmith. Justice was the hub of the human interactions in Africa as a whole. To say the truth without fear of intimidation or favour, give to everybody what he/she is supposed to have without prejudice,

and maintain cordial relationship with the neighbour were moral values held in high esteem by Nigerians (Achebe 1964). Traditional religious leaders use these values to prove their sincerity in discharging their duties. African cultures attached great value to sincerity in one's words and pledge. It was an allied virtue to justice. The idea of 'leave all judgments to God' as we hear people say these days was unacceptable then. Unless the value of truth is restored, there can be no good leadership in Nigeria and Africa as a whole (Gana, 2007).

Collegiality Spirit: Community spirit or spirit of oneness particularly in Nigeria and Africa at large goes beyond a nuclear family. It includes all surrounding members of the communities. Members of each community come together not only for work and recreation but to settle disputes. Mbiti (1969) calls it corporate existence of African society. This view is reflected in all the responses received. The doctrine exhibited then was unselfishness or generosity and caring. Every child born into any family is seen to belong to the wider community. So, the training and upbringing was a collective effort. Kerenga (nd), added that the privilege of one's willingly to give food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, care for the ill, support for the aged, fathers and mothers to their orphans were aspects of African moral values. This means that the successes and failures of any member of the community concern the entire community. The need to cultivate community spirit can never be over emphasized if national development is to be achieved (Nyerere, (1968).

Discipline: This was highly emphasized in traditional African society until westernization and urbanization brought their effects on the society. Maquet (1972) laments that indiscipline has been entrenched in the society which makes it difficult for any meaningful national development to take place. A disciplined life is one of the most cherished traditional values that is lacking today. Mazrui (1980) affirms that the norms, taboos and prohibitions directed towards protecting and promoting peace and harmony in the community.

Moderation rather than excessiveness, good morals and good name without blemish were guiding principles. Abnormal behaviours that do not conform to norms of the society were instantly punished according to Nyerere (1968). Forbidden criminal activities such as theft, swearing falsely, fornication, murder, breach of covenant, among others, attract commensurate punishment and such culprits will not be entrusted with further sensitive position again in the society. Unfortunately, indiscipline individuals in today's political landscape are being rewarded with juicy appointments and elected or picked to represent their people or constituencies which they do not merit.

Hospitality Spirit: Gana (2007) regrettably confesses that before and shortly after independence, visitors were welcome even if the motive for the visit was not yet known. Hospitality is/should be a duty and so one needs not book an appointment in advance. Mbiti (1969), Maquet (1972), Egbuna (1973), and Nkrumah (1975), accept that Africans are hospitable. People were making sacrifices for the welfare of the society. Individuals make financial and material contributions to feed and build houses for the poor, sponsoring the sons and daughters of the community in tertiary institutions of learning. A total commitment, dedication and concerted efforts for the sake of progress and development of the society were not compromised.

Honesty and Accountability: Honesty, especially when entrusted with a position to represent the people and the community is paramount in African traditional setting. In all endeavours, absolute value for right at home, in business practice and leadership was not compromised. It is only the honest person that can give account of the privilege responsibilities given to him or her. Many Africans did not fine it difficult to give honest and satisfactory accounts of their stewardship. This means bribery and corruption have not been legalized in high places because they know their way of "nemesis". Consequently, it has been a changed perception. People no longer give account of their stewardship; that is why they always find their way with every government (Gana, 2007).

Hard Work: Reward and promotion were based on hard work or on how industrious a member is. Corrupt individuals were despised. Evidence must be seen by all on how individuals acquire their wealth or treasure. This motivates individual members of the society to put extra effort in their work. Ushe (2007) affirms that Africans are hard working. Idahosa (1998), remarked that the laziest person in Africa will survive in Europe and America. However, he cautions that a lizard in Africa and Nigeria cannot become a crocodile abroad. Based on this, one wonders why there is less or very little to show for all the toils of the African nations. It is like the adage that says "monkey dey work bamboo dey chop". Something must be wrong somewhere, it is either that Africans who are working hard are being exploited, or their works are not dividend driven.

Fear of God: The consciousness of the ultimate or Supreme Being or deity or gods or God, spirit or Ancestor is imbued in the lives and hearts of traditional African peoples. Therefore, they reverence them. Reverence for these unseen personalities made Africans to live in a manner that is pleasing to those supernatural forces. Thus, in African culture, deviant sexual behaviours such as homosexuality, transgenderism, lesbianism are seen as abomination and violation of African traditional moral norms and values. They are opposed to accepted standard norms and moral values of the society because such societal norms and values destroy the persons who have become addicted to them.

Patriotism: This is a moral value that is held in high esteem in traditional and modern society. Thus, every member of the society is taught to be loyal to the community or nation he/she belongs to, and to support the law enforcement agencies. Every member of the society or nation is to participate in the political process to enhance national development. As George Washington, (2005), the president of America in his farewell Address in 1796 noted that:

> *Popular government cannot exist without morality and morality is based upon Biblical and a traditional principle… The best government is the one that is self-government, not self-indulgence.*

The point George Washington is making here is that in underdeveloped nations, the dream of patriotism is hardly realizable. The adoption of a political system that does not aligned with the social and moral attitudes of the people create a difficulty which results into a conflict of interests between the different paradigms of the society and convoluted ideas, thereby making the moral values and political systems to act antagonistically to each other. Most nations in Africa fail the so called litmus tests when it comes to patriotism,

political correctness, religious sanctimony and other elitist ideologies. As Africans are playing the game of "catch up", and by the look of things can never catch up because African nations have long since abandoned their moral fabric, which held them together for so long in pursuit of a more "modern" and "acceptable" way of governance. It is time African leaders should work up and smell the coffee otherwise, the masses themselves will be held at ransom with the arm twisting tactics that characterize "foreign aid" policies of the first world nations. Though some African nations such as Malaysia, Ghana, among others, managed to hold onto their cultural values and to shun the existence customs and values of the developed cultures, yet they were able to westernize their ways of doing things. They were dynamic enough to adopt the desirable policies of the progressive or first world states that were totally foreign to them. The painful truth is that, this is an epitome of many African nations, like Nigeria who has become foreigner to its customs. We have a Tiv saying that "mzehemen ne mzehemen", which literally means that new developments have to be built on top of existing ones. African nations can only developed by borrowing a leaf from the developed nations of the world. They do not have to uproot everything to start from the scratch, just because we want perfection. But we need to follow the footsteps of some nations such as China, South Korea and other Eastern Asia nations who despite their level of developments, still cling onto their customs and moral values for national development. Traditional Moral values are what motivate people from within and they can be good and bad. However, when a society adopts the bad values such as materialism, greed, nepotism, bribery and corruption, fornication and adultery, the resultant effects is underdevelopment. This is unfortunately the kind of tragedy that has fallen some African nations such as Nigeria, Sierra-Leone, Liberia and Rwanda.

Traditional Moral values system ultimately produces good and sustainable development in the society that is value-based and tried to cut across all spheres of societal values such as integrity, fair play, social justice, honesty, social decorum, hospitality and patriotism. These values which dominate developed nations of the world can be infused into the modern leadership style of Nigeria like those of other nations for meaningful national development. It is only when this infusion is achieved that national development in Africa can be achieved. When such moral values become central to the society and people, then vices such as corruption and gross inequality in the distribution of wealth can be eradicated in the society and the focus of people would be changed from loyalty of the nation to ethnic groups. It will also permit one to lift the nation to its true direction and potential.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing discussion, we have seen that traditional Africans valued human life, marriage, good leadership, morality, respect for people's property, justice, community spirit, discipline, hospitality, honesty and accountability, hard work, fear of God and patriotism. These traditional values provided moral codes for people's behaviours and were regarded as taboos and sanctions. Anyone found wanting or violating them was severely dealt with by the society. Thus, traditional Africans were forbidden from violating moral norms such as taking one's life. Marriage which provided people with institution for procreation and the perpetuation of one's lineage and bestowed respect and honor on a

person was seriously encouraged. Morality and respect for other people's property were held in high esteem along side with discipline, community spirit, accountability, hospitality, hard work and fear of God as basic ingredients of good living and leadership in the society. Any person found wanting in these virtues was not allowed to vie for the position of leadership as it is the case in modern society. In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Bad values such as mismanagement of public funds, bribery, corruption and unequal distribution of wealth due to lack of purposeful leadership has to be revived (Ushe, 2004). For instance, Nigeria lacks the value-based leadership that would identify and apply common societal values to governance and build on those traditional moral values which add meanings to the society

2. Africans should try to imbibe the traditional moral values that would help in sustainable national development. These moral values include: community spirit, respect for human life, morality, discipline, justice, honesty, hospitality, hard work, accountability, marriage and fear of God.

3. Courses that teach morality and traditional values in the society such as moral philosophy and others should be given priority in our schools.

4. All those entrusted with leadership positions should strive to provide good governance and sincere accountability.

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